



Stewardship Creativity at NDPC

The Calvin Grant is designed to incorporate liturgical art and creativity into the cycles of the church life at NDPC. We installed a rainbow made of yarn that spans across the sanctuary and, Jill Jacques, chair of Stewardship, incorporated our rainbow installation into the 2020 Stewardship theme of "Covenant." Below is an excerpt.

Stewardship is an important spiritual practice. When we pledge and fulfill our promise, we experience God's covenant with us.

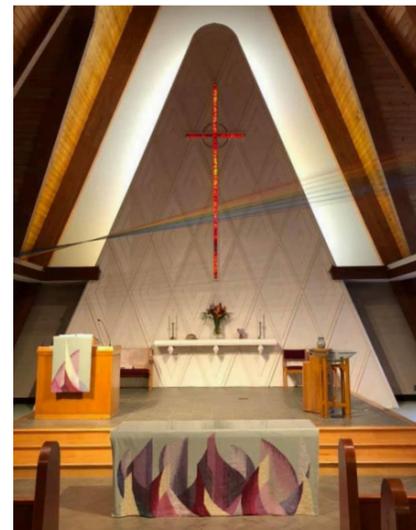
- **God is a covenant giver** who is in relationship with each one of us, rooted in unending love, care and grace.
- **God is a covenant keeper** who never turns from us, no matter what we say or do, providing forgiveness and blessings to us always.
- **God is a covenant equipper** who provides guidance as to how to give joyously of our time, money and energy.

Every day, we make a promise to dedicate our time and talents to furthering the light and love of Christ. And we promise to give

joyously of our money, so we can collectively strive for justice, peace, and unending love and compassion in this community and the world.

Looking at the beautiful rainbow installation in our sanctuary, I'm reminded of how many ways our gifts illumine and enrich the world:

1. One of the rays of light can represent the pastors, staff and interns who are constantly challenging us with what it means to be Christian and to be in community with each other
2. One of the rays of light can represent our beautiful property in which we gather every week to pray together, to worship God, to hold each other in sorrow, to laugh and to sing. It also provides shelter to those who are need – AA, Girl Scouts, young impressionable minds at Hess, DCM, Science of Fun, and more
3. One of the rays of light can represent our missions in Decatur, DeKalb, the US and the world
4. One of the rays of light can represent



how we reach out to one another in times of sorrow and joy

Each one of us is represented in these rays of light. Just imagine if there were only one string in the rainbow - you wouldn't be able to see it. It takes all of us bringing our light and love together to create God's complete rainbow.

~ Jill Jacques

Advent Activities

Dec. 1 – Advent Festival (all ages) 9:30 am

Dec. 7 – Alternative Gift Market, 10 am-3 pm

Dec. 8 – Youth serve and host at Hagar's House, 6 pm

Dec. 14 – Initiative For Affordable Housing Christmas Party, 1-4 pm

Dec. 15 – *Christmas on Medlock* 2019 Holiday Concert with NDPC Choir and Atlanta Philharmonic Orchestra, 3 pm

Dec. 22 – Christmas Pageant rehearsal, 9:30 am

Dec. 22 – Longest Night Healing worship, 5:30 pm

Dec. 24 – Family-friendly pageant at 5 pm

Dec. 24 – Christmas Eve worship (candlelight and communion) 9 pm

Dec. 29 – One worship service, 11 am

Jan. 6 – One worship service, 11 am, Epiphany service of poetry and music

Celebrate With Us

NDPC encourages families and individuals to celebrate the season through intentional practices of service, compassion and reflection throughout the week. Join us for the Advent Festival and the Epiphany Celebration during the Sunday school hour (9:30-10:30 am) on Dec. 1 and Jan. 6 to make objects for home rituals. Read In Touch every week in December to be inspired by a prayer and a poem for private meditation about the seasonal theme.

God's *Story* of Liberation

Be honest: most of us do not associate Christmas with freedom. If anything, Christmas and the month that leads up to it can feel like a burden of shopping, entertaining, gift-hunting, financial pressure, lots of emotion and stress. But what if Advent and Christmas became for you a month-long celebration of freedom?

In our 2019-2020 sermon series, "The Bible's 9 Big Ideas," the month of December is a celebration of God's liberation of humanity. God is a liberating God. From the exodus out of Egypt, to God's intervention in history of behalf of those who are poor, to the freedom we gain from sin and death, to Jesus, who liberates true humanity by coming in the flesh on Christmas morning, God's way in the world is to hear our cries and lead us into political, economic, spiritual, and existential freedom.

Each Sunday in worship, we will explore Liberation. Perhaps our celebration of freedom in worship will give you permission to seek out a liberating lifestyle this December; to put down old holiday habits that are burdensome, and to let the Spirit show you a way of living into Christmas that feels like freedom to you and to those around you.

~ David Lewicki



Magnum Mysterium, Joel Sheesley

Save the Dates

Feb. 28-March 1 NDPC's Women's Retreat at Montreat, N.C.

April 24-26 NDPC's Men's Retreat, Highlands, N.C.,

April 12 Easter Sunday, April 12, 2020

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

NDPC hosts grassroots community organizing groups Coalition for a Diverse DeKalb / Decatur every second Tuesday from 6:30 to 8 pm. Come and bring a friend.

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Calvin Grant Special Speakers

Saturday, February 8, 2020

Creativity Workshop with Karla Kincannon, author of *Creativity and Divine Surprise: Finding the Place of Your Resurrection*

Sunday, February 9, 2020

Karla Kincannon preaching

Sunday, May 17, 2020

Offsite lunch at park, TBD
Liturgical Media Art with Eileen Crowley

This program is made possible through a Vital Worship grant from the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, Grand Rapids, Mich., with funds provided by Lilly Endowment Inc.

Sounds of the Season Abound!

We have heard the music already, since before Halloween in some places, telling us that Christmas is coming. From Leroy Anderson's *Sleigh Ride* to Bing Crosby's *White Christmas* to Mariah Carey's *All I Want for Christmas is You*,

the holiday season is filled with music everywhere you go. We often attach memories with music as well. Christmas Eve Worship just wouldn't be the same without singing *Silent Night* by candlelight. These wonderful traditions bring us back from a world filled with the hustle and bustle of the seasonal parties, gatherings, and preparations for family events.

I have an album that I've listened to since it was released in 1987 – *Christmas Night*, performed by the Cambridge Singers conducted by John Rutter. I wore out the cassette and purchased the CD as soon as it was released. I have it on my iTunes. This album brings me back to late nights in college where I would take a midnight walk through the snowy campus. No one around. All quiet. Just me and the cold snow. Then I'd come in make some hot tea, put on this album, and work on a jigsaw puzzle until I couldn't stay awake any longer. It's a bit of nostalgia but we all have these "perfect" moments in the holiday. Every time I hear the music from this album (in any place, performance) I am carried back to the joy of these simple moments in my life. What music brings you to a sweet memory of Christmas? What rituals do you have that involve music during the holiday season?

We hope you will join us for our annual holiday concert with the Atlanta Philharmonic Orchestra, *Christmas on Medlock*, on Sunday, December 15 at 3 pm. It's our hope that this event will become part of your holiday tradition and the music can recall great memories or create new ones.

(Image by Woody Hickcox, member of NDPC, Watercolor of Savannah sparrow)

— Clint Miller, Director of Music



Children's Choir Moments

Kathy Smith joined NDPC three years ago and started to immediately work with the Children's Choir. She was beloved by the children and a great teacher and mentor to me. Her passing is a great loss for NDPC, especially for all of the children she taught. On All Saint's Day, November 3, 2019, Rev. Beth Waltemath and I created a space in the Children's Choir rehearsal to talk about her death and the unfamiliar emotions of grief and loss. This was the most touching moment I have ever encountered in my ministry. We all cried, laughed, and shared wonderful memories of Miss Kathy. We sang "It's Alright to Cry" to let us know that even when we feel sad it's ok to express our feelings—even when we aren't sure what we are feeling.

November is culturally a time to honor our deceased: All Saints' Day, All Souls' Day, Day of the Dead, and the fall season where the earth seems to "die off." South American cultures often create elaborate altars with pictures, candles, and food. How do we celebrate those who have gone on before us? What rituals do we have to commemorate our loved ones? "It's alright to know, feelings come and feelings go, and it's alright to cry, it might make you feel better."

On All Saints' Day, we honored members and friends of NDPC who died over the past year: Martha Hobson, Gay Arnieri, Frances Cribbs, Eugenia Cayce, Eleanor Moylan, and Kathy Smith.

Join NDPC friends and neighbors on December 22 for our Longest Night Service during which we invite God to come and help us hold our grief and loss.

— Clint Miller, Director of Music

Longest Night Service

Even as we joyfully anticipate the coming of the Christ child during the holiday season, we also experience anxiety, grief, loss and pain. The Longest Night service will offer a reflective, gentle and supportive space to gather in worship. The service will be held on December 22, the day after the winter solstice, which is the longest night of the year. All are welcome for this time of scripture reading, prayer, candles, silence and communion.

Revitalization Grant

Have you ever wondered what happens when a PCUSA congregation closes its doors? When the property is sold, proceeds are kept in a fund at the presbytery. Each year, the presbytery dips into this fund to give "revitalization grants" to churches that are hosting thriving ministries. This year, NDPC applied for – and received – a revitalization grant of almost \$60,000! The grant will support three projects:

- 1. Renovation of church grounds and playgrounds,**
- 2. Choral Scholars** - young adults to serve as section leaders in our choir, and
- 3. Ministries focused on young adults** (20s/30s) in our neighborhood.

If you are interested in supporting any of these initiatives, contact Revs. Waltemath and Lewicki.

Alternative Gift Market

In the past 20 years, the Alternative Gift Market at NDPC has evolved from selling Fair Trade coffee and chocolates to a bustling marketplace of vendors representing marginalized populations from all over the world. This year we have 25 vendors bringing their wares to sell. It has become a community event, bringing together members of NDPC with surrounding neighborhoods and churches. We provide a safe place for children to hang out in our Children's Corner while parents shop and refreshments around a firepit, making this shopping experience a time when one can truly feel like they are making a difference, one gift at a time. Please join us.

~ Submitted by Deedee Murphy

New Vendors last year:

- Peace of Thread a non-profit organization selling one-of-a-kind handbags that empowers women who have come to the United States seeking refuge from war, persecution and poverty.
- Heart for Africa, a faith-based humanitarian organization that focuses on the areas of hunger, orphans, poverty and education in Africa
- Refugee Sewing Society, a faith-based non-profit in Clarkston, that offers refugee women a safe place to receive training as they create beautiful handmade items

New this year:

- Noonday Collection - jewelry and accessories made by artisans across the globe
- Nancy Weitnauer - small art paintings and ornaments

Long time favorites:

- Mayan Hands
- Andes Gifts
- Women's Bean Project
- re:loom
- Karen Weaver's knitted scrubbies
- Woody Hickcox's watercolor notecards
- Sunavworld supporting various fair-trade micro-enterprises for women in Nepal
- Amani Women Center which provides life skills for refugee women

Foodies

- Just Bakery
- Sweet Sweet Syria, two bakeries founded by refugee entrepreneurs
- A new Syrian family will be offering their homemade baklava for sale
- Peacebuilders Camp-Koininia pecans and chocolates
- Equal Exchange - fair trade coffee, tea and chocolates

Support our local and global ministries

- El Refugio
- The Haiti EcoVillage School
- Peacebuilders Camp
- Shalom International Ministries
- Inspire Afterschool Initiative



Reflections From our Ministry Fellow

Anytime churches talk about their "brand" I think of a beautiful essay titled "Sniffing Glue" from Meghan O'Gieblyn. In that article, she talks about how churches have thrown out much of their tradition in an attempt to appeal to younger generations, but O'Gieblyn claims that this is a huge mistake, writing, "The church isn't Viacom: it doesn't have a Department of Brand Strategy and Planning. Staying relevant in late consumer capitalism requires highly sophisticated resources and the willingness to tailor your values to whatever your audience wants. In trying to compete in this market, the church has forfeited the one advantage it had in the game to attract disillusioned youth: authenticity." As new churches are cultivating their brand all around NDPC, the question doesn't have to be "how do we become more like them?" Instead, we can ask the question "how can we live into who we already are?"

Distrust in churches (or any institution for that matter) is sky-high among millennials and Gen Z. Many communities have responded to this by "modernizing worship" and "engaging the culture" and for a short time, the smoke machines and light shows work for us. But eventually, the smoke and the lights start to hurt our eyes (literally and figuratively). For many, myself included, we begin to wonder if there's a church out there that is serious when it means "We Welcome All." Eventually, when we rub the smoke from our eyes, we want to know that there is a church that will welcome us regardless of gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or our past. NDPC should be proud of the fact that the website ChuchClarity.org rates us as "Verified Clear," meaning we as a church are seen as a welcoming and LGBT affirming congregation.

As I've talked to folks around this church, I've been amazed at how long social justice and activism have been a part of the work here. I don't have answers to the big questions about outreach and mission, but I do know there are lots of folks in the DeKalb area who see our sign out front and wonder if we're serious. I also know that many people attend nearby churches, fall in love with the community, and realize way too late that they are not as welcome as their straight friends. These people aren't looking for trendy, brand-name churches. They're looking for somebody to invite them in. This church has so much to offer the next generation. They just don't know it yet. "And how can they hear unless someone tells them?" (Romans 10:14).

If you are or know a young adult desiring to connect to others for social and mission opportunities, contact rob@ndpc.org.

— Rob Schoonover, candidate, Master of Divinity, Candler School of Theology at Emory University

