

THE LIGHT RACIAL JUSTICE MINISTRY E-NEWSLETTER

Spotlighting Diversity Through Artwork

BY LEA GILMORE
MINISTER FOR RACIAL JUSTICE AND MULTICULTURAL ENGAGEMENT
FIRST SERVICE MUSIC DIRECTOR
GOVANS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Following the 2015 riots sparked by the death of Baltimore resident Freddie Gray while in police custody, our church entered a period of self-reflection and committed ourselves to becoming anti-racist. By 2019, Govans hired me as the Minister for Racial Justice and Multicultural Engagement, and shortly afterward, we became a Matthew 25 church, a Presbyterian designation for churches that commit to building congregational vitality, dismantling structural racism, and eradicating systemic poverty.

As part of our attempt to see ourselves through a lens of racial justice, we looked around our sanctuary at the many Euro-centric depictions of Jesus and knew we could do better. As Kamila Alexander says, "It made me wonder how my family could see themselves and how God works in our lives when the images around us were so starkly different from us." We focused on the Christ the Consoler stained glass in the front of the sanctuary. Rather than remove the artwork, which is dedicated to a founding member who enslaved human beings, we decided to add new artwork that reflects our current values.

On February 9th, we will celebrate new artwork commissioned by Baltimore artist Ky Vassor that will hang on either side of the Christ the Consoler stained glass window in the front of the sanctuary. Please join us during our regular service that Sunday at 10:30 and afterwards for refreshments.

Thank you to Patreena Parsons and the many racial justice and church members who have worked so hard to make this dream a reality.

Please feel free to contact me anytime at lea@govanspres.org.

Peace,
Lea Gilmore, Minister for Racial Justice and Multicultural Engagement

GOVANS  **Racial Justice
Ministry**
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

In This Issue:

Introductory Letter
by Lea Gilmore
PAGE 1

Events
PAGE 2-3

Books for Teens
PAGE 4

Thoughtful Readings &
Resources
PAGE 5

Racial Justice Ministry
Working Group
PAGE 6

**"The Holy Spirit
reminds us that
something needs our
attention."**

**Jermaine Ross Allam,
Director, PC-USA's Center
for the Repair of Historic
Harms**



EVENTS

Unveiling of the New Sanctuary Artwork and Reception

Govans Presbyterian Church Sanctuary
Sunday, February 9, 10:30 AM

After receiving six inquiries and four proposals to commission a Black Baltimore artist to create and display two pieces of art in our sanctuary to provide racially diverse images in our worship space, Ky Vassor, a mixed-media illustrator, muralist, and curator with an emphasis in collaborative community art, was selected. They will be present as their artwork, Sanctuary City Parts 1 & 2 are introduced and celebrated during the worship service.

Ky Vassor is a mixed-media illustrator, muralist, and curator with an emphasis in collaborative community art. One of the many themes of their multidisciplinary practice includes under-represented voices. They received an MFA in Community Arts from the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA).

HAUNTED KOREAS

Dreaming Unification Protest Peace Mina Cheon with Kim Il Soon

EXHIBITION ON VIEW February 12 - May 17 (Closed March 17-22)

ASIAN ARTS GALLERY, TU CENTER FOR THE ARTS

1 FINE ARTS DR. TOWSON, MD 21204

Gallery Hours: Monday - Saturday, 11 a.m. - 4 p.m.

OPENING RECEPTION & ARTIST TALK

Saturday, February 22, 5:30 - 6:15 p.m.

Co-sponsored with the Korean American Foundation - Greater Washington & the Baltimore Changwon Sister City Committee. The most extensive collection of global activist artist Mina Cheon's series of "Unification Dream" paintings, offering a new perspective on the flags of a unified Korea.

EVENTS

Spirituals and More... Featuring Laura Sligh & Roderick Demmings, Jr.

Live in concert
Monday, February 10, 2025, 7:00 PM
Free admission
Govans Presbyterian Church
5828 York Road



Laura L. Sligh, performer, teacher, director and visual artist, has a degree in performance from Morgan State University and a masters of fine arts degree from the Maryland Institute College of Art and has worked extensively in the Baltimore/Washington area for over 20 years.

A child prodigy, Rod began playing the songs he heard at church on his parents' piano ... while he was in preschool! By age 12 he had performed at Carnegie Hall, and before his 20th birthday he performed for Pope Francis in the Vatican.



Hip Hop Culture and Its Social Relevance Fridays with Friends Special Presentation

Friday, February 7th (2:30-4:30 pm) On the Anne Arundel Community College Campus (CALT 107) & Simulcast Zoom Webinar. 15-minute Musical Prelude*: On-campus seating and Zoom webinar opens at 2:15 pm *** Presentation starts promptly at 2:30 pm *** "Learn and appreciate the history, poetry and musicality of this genre, and how this culture offers a window to other perspectives and life experiences. With a focus on Pulitzer Prize winning Rap artist Kendrick Lamar just two days before he headlines the Super Bowl halftime show. Facilitated by PLP Member Kurt Svendsen ([link to flyer with more information](#)). *Musical Prelude includes Bob Dylan's original, and Red Hot Chili Peppers cover of, Subterranean Homesick Blues, Blondie's Rapture, and Dylan's The Times They Are A-Changin. RSVP [here](#).

BOOKS FOR TEENS

Just Mercy by Bryan Stevenson

Bryan Stevenson, founder and executive director of the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI), a nonprofit law office in Montgomery, Alabama, dedicated to defending the poor, the incarcerated, and the wrongly condemned, explores the inequity in our criminal justice system.

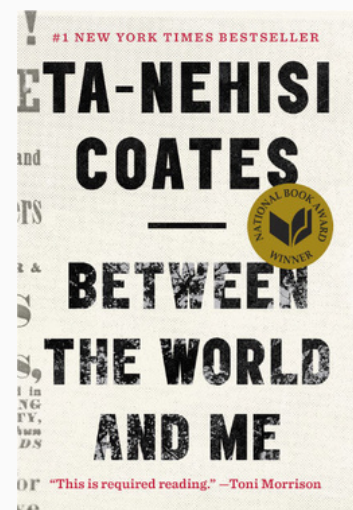
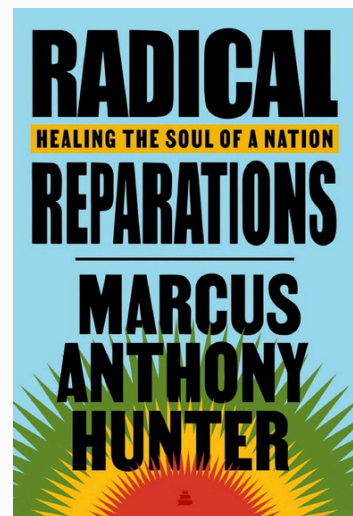
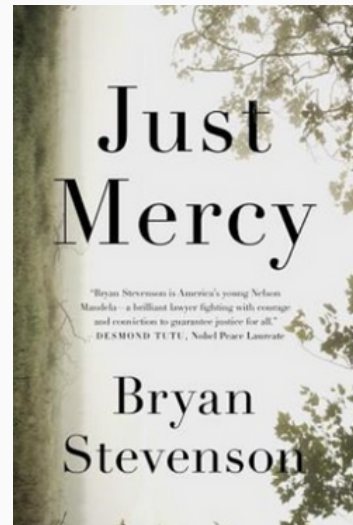
Just Mercy tells the story of EJI, from the early days with a small staff facing the nation's highest death sentencing and execution rates, through a successful campaign to challenge the cruel practice of sentencing children to die in prison, to revolutionary projects designed to confront Americans with our history of racial injustice.

Radical Reparations by Marcus Anthony Hunter

This new book “imagines reparations as a framework of repair and support for the descendants of enslaved peoples” (review from UCLA Press). While written by an academic scholar, the book is written as a narrative using parables to enter this topic, making it more accessible to all.

Between the World and Me by Ta-Nehisi Coates

An open letter from Coates to his then teenage son, this is a relatively short book but packs a punch. Coates is clear about the systematic racism in the US and that African Americans need to be on alert at all times. It is harder to read, both in its frankness and in the writing style as Coates is erudite and doesn't dumb down what he is saying. Teens may be interested in what he has to say because of his work with Black Panther comics and movies. He is also a native of Baltimore.





Thoughtful Readings & Resources

[Native American History Timeline](#) from [History.com](#)

1492: [Christopher Columbus](#) lands on a Caribbean Island after three months of traveling. Believing at first that he had reached the East Indies, he describes the natives he meets as “Indians.” On his first day, he orders six natives to be seized as servants.



April 1513: Spanish explorer [Juan Ponce de Leon](#) lands on continental North America in Florida and makes contact with Native Americans.

February 1521: Ponce de Leon departs on another voyage to Florida from San Juan to start a colony. Months after landing, Ponce de Leon is attacked by local Native Americans and fatally wounded.

May 1539: Spanish explorer and conquistador [Hernando de Soto](#) lands in Florida to conquer the region. He explores the South under the guidance of Native Americans who had been captured along the way.

October 1540: De Soto and the Spaniards plan to rendezvous with ships in Alabama when they’re attacked by Native Americans. Hundreds of Native Americans are killed in the ensuing battle.

Full timeline available [online](#).



Racial Justice Ministry Working Group

Leader Lea Gilmore **Co-Chairs** Akilah Atkinson
Julie McDill

Members **Secretary** Tiffany James

Kamila Alexander	Kaye Gooch	Susan Saunders
Beth Allen	Deletta Gillespie	Keith Snipes
Myra Brosius	David Harris	Wendy Smith
Laila Ali	Gwen Lloyd	Maria Wong
Lisa Beacham	Julie McDill	McKenna Traynham
Shelley Ensor	Tanya Morrel	

Advisory Members Rev. Dr. Heber Brown, III
Professor Ron Williams
Rev. Jennifer Williams

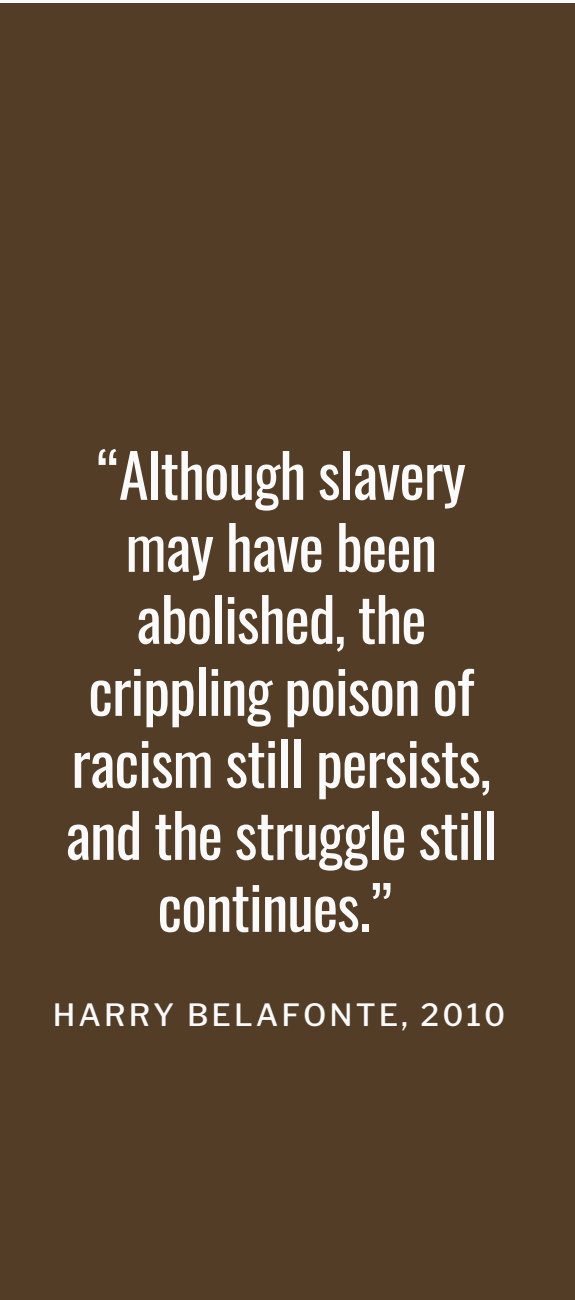
Mission

We are Govans Presbyterian people who have come together in response to what we believe is God’s call to understand, address, and dismantle racism in ourselves, and our society.

We want to:

- Provide opportunities and a safe environment at Govans where we can openly share thoughts and feelings, and ask questions about racism.
- Educate ourselves about the history and continuing presence of personal and systemic racism.
- Publicly advocate for racial justice in our society.

To generate this kind of learning and action, we will utilize book discussions, films, speakers, museum exhibits, prayer groups, partnerships with other organizations, and other modes yet to be determined. We are open to ideas and suggestions, and would welcome your participation in any aspect of this work.



“Although slavery may have been abolished, the crippling poison of racism still persists, and the struggle still continues.”

HARRY BELAFONTE, 2010

For more information about the racial justice ministry, please email lea@govanspres.org or go to <https://www.govanspres.org/what-we-do/racial-justice/>.

Govans Presbyterian Church
5828 York Rd.
Baltimore, MD 21212
410-435-9188