

FIRST BAPTIST NEWS

SEPTEMBER 2020



First Baptist Church

SELF REFLECTION AND SELF IMPROVEMENT

I do not have a funny story or an interesting metaphor to introduce the topic of racial inequality in our world. But to be honest, if I used a metaphor it might only cheapen the importance of the topic. I know that talking about racial justice feels difficult. It can create controversy, and it makes a lot of people feel uneasy. But I also know why that is. It is difficult. It is controversial. It is uneasy. It is also the right thing to do and, I believe, the very calling of God. The work of racial justice has long been a part of the legacy of American Baptists. Here's a word from our denominational leader, the President of American Baptist Churches USA, Karen Podsiadly.

"American Baptists have a historic legacy of addressing racial injustice. It is this history that calls us today as communities around the nation galvanize around several recent high-profile instances of injustice and the relation of these injustices to racism. The church has an opportunity and an obligation to interrogate its responsibility to support our members and communities."

The first step in solving any problem is admitting that there is one. Racial injustice, racial inequality, racism and prejudice are plagues on our society, our communities, and on our faith.

I recall the story of the Ethiopian, a person of faith, who had traveled across the vast world to worship God in the temple in Jerusalem. Of course, he wasn't allowed in the temple; he was a eunuch and by religious law declared perpetually in sin for his sexuality. He was also very likely a person of color quite foreign to that part of the world. In Acts chapter eight, Phillip is sent by God to welcome this person into the fold of God's church. This person was not only welcomed into the community of Christ, he was baptized and celebrated.

I believe that is the very love, affirmation, and celebration we are called to live with and share in the world. But the only way we can accomplish this goal is through the disciplines of self reflection and self improvement. We must, each of us, look within ourselves for what is not Christ and then take steps to grow toward the grace and love of Christ.

Over the next several months we will be featuring reviews of books, films and other sources that you can use, and our church can use, to self reflect and self improve. Obviously, this is not the final solution, but it is a place to start. Each month in our newsletter you will find recommendations for resources that can help educate us on racial injustice. These are recommendations that are meant to provide you with quality resources for anyone who is interested in improving, not just as a human being but also as a follower of Christ.

As the days go on, especially as the Covid restrictions slowly dissipate, we will do more. There are African-American leaders, young activists, scholars and pastors in our community who can teach us so much. We will work on including them and learning from them.

Let us remember the grace of God and the love that is found in Christ as we travel this difficult path. Let us pray for the many people in our communities who are still living with persecution and threat. Let us pray for the upright police officers working to reform the systems they work in. And let us hold ourselves accountable because this is our world, this is our community, and God has placed this responsibility upon us.

We journey together, we serve together, and we grow together!

Pastor Rob Collins

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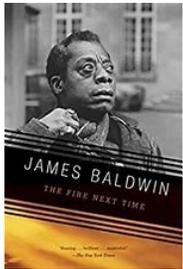
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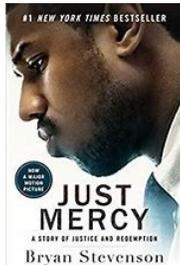


RACIAL JUSTICE REFLECTIONS: GOOD BOOKS

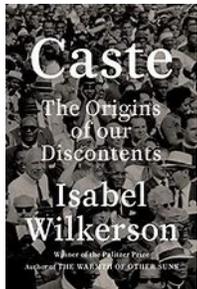
Seeking racial justice requires educating ourselves – and that can begin with reading a good book. This is the first of many newsletter articles to recommend books that will help us do that. We will be looking for books that reflect on our country’s racial struggles and help us abide by the commitment in our church covenant to understand Jesus’ demands for dealing with other people, especially “those of races and cultures other than our own.” – Barb Drake



1. “The Fire Next Time.” James Baldwin’s memoir of his youth in Harlem and his impassioned plea to “end the racial nightmare” in our country was a best seller when it was published in 1963. The Guardian called Baldwin “the great prophet of the civil rights movement” and the book “his seminal work.”



2. “Just Mercy.” Bryan Stevenson’s account of racial bias in our justice system – sometimes with deadly consequences – and the legal practice he founded to counteract that is passionate and stunning. CNN named it one of the most influential books of the decade. It has been made into a major motion picture, but it’s still a good idea to read the book.



3. “Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents.” Isabel Wilkerson’s new book provides a different take on our racial hierarchy, suggesting that more than a color issue, it’s a caste issue; we have a historically perpetuated caste system. Her just updated introduction suggests that the killing of George Floyd and the disproportionate impact of the corona virus pandemic on communities of color prove there is an entrenched American hierarchy that influences where you live, the quality of your education, your net worth and what you can do in life. Wilkerson, a Pulitzer Prize winner, is an extraordinary author, and her latest book is perfectly timed.

“IF BEALE STREET COULD TALK”

A Review by Chris Heine



Based on a novel by James Baldwin, this movie is the story of a love so sweet, so tangible, that you feel you can reach through the screen and touch it. This 2018 romantic drama is the story of Tish and Fonny, who have been friends since childhood and fall in love when they are older. They are doing the things young lovers do when Fonny is falsely accused of rape – framed by an officer who has it in for him – even though Fonny has witnesses that put him miles from the scene.

Fonny is in jail when Tish visits him to tell him that she is going to have his baby. Each of their families does everything within their ability to raise money to pay for a lawyer. But the victim disappears, and in the end Fonny takes a plea deal for something he didn’t do.

While you watch this, be aware of the impact race, family wealth and police-community relations have on this story. How would this story play out if it happened to your family? How was it different for this family?

The movie is available on Netflix, Amazon Prime, Hulu, Vudu and YouTube.

PRAYER CONCERNS

Tom Maulding
Rose Kimpling
Mary Hinch
Deb Houser

Char Austin
Mark Stanard
Jerry Edwards
Leon Vickerman

Sharon Polakow
Jim Ashton
Alyssa Russell
Karen Vickerman

Sharon Stanard
Rosemary Walk
Jacquelyn Kellogg
Mary Lou Russell

Betty Wenger
(heart valve
replacement,
in September)

AB MEN HELP WITH ROANOKE FLOOD CLEAN-UP

Below are a few not-so-good pictures that I took of our disaster relief work in Roanoke on August 5 and 6. We had four people from Area Three—Gordon Forbish, Jonathan Ellison, Dave Stroemer and myself—on Wednesday along with Duane Miesner & Ron McLaughlin from Area Four, who brought the trailer up.

We worked with Harold Booze and Ken Malinge of the Woodlawn Southern Baptist church of Peoria. We removed duct work, cleaned, power washed & sanitized the basement & removed flooring in the bathroom of one house. We also cleaned, power washed & sanitized the basement of a second house. On Thursday, Stroemer & Ellison could not come. But we were still able to power wash & sanitize two basements and clean out a third, finishing up the work that Harold had lined up.

The two home owners who were present were most appreciative. One insisted on giving us tomatoes and cucumbers from her garden, and the other bought our lunch. It was good working with the Southern Baptist guys, and I believe we can certainly be an asset to each other here in Area Three.

Dick Gillaspie
American Baptist Men's Group



FBC Peoria guys L-R: Dick Gillaspie, Jonathan Ellison, Dave Stroemer



L - R: Duane Miesner, Harold Booze, Ron McLaughlin, Ken Malinge, Jonathan Ellison, Dave Stroemer, and kneeling is Gordon Forbish

MUSIC ENSEMBLES

The fall schedule for music ensembles has begun, adapted for public safety:

Chancel Choir: For the time being, Chancel Choir will not meet. Much research indicates that having multiple people singing together in an enclosed space is a high-risk activity. Obviously, we will continue to follow any developments and updated guidance from health officials.

Chancel Bells: 5:45 p.m. Wednesday night rehearsals will take place in the sanctuary, masked and spaced according to health guidelines. Contact Leigh Grizzard with any questions.

Higher Ground: Weekly rehearsals are tentatively scheduled for 4:30-5:30 p.m. on Wednesdays, featuring one vocalist singing at a time with guitar accompaniment.

Youth Band: Group activities will resume on Sunday, September 13, featuring one vocalist singing at a time with instrumental accompaniment.

"Worship Ringers": While Chancel Bells will continue to create impressive and often virtuosic bell pieces to serve as anthems, there will also be an opportunity for bell ringers of any skill level to participate in worship by ringing simple bell parts along with service music on Sunday mornings. Members of Chancel Bells, beginning ringers, and those who have never played a handbell before are welcome to try out this relatively safe way to worship! Membership in this "ensemble" will be very fluid, according to worship needs and social distancing. Please contact Mark Grizzard if you are interested in participating.



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THE MISSION OF FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH IS TO MINISTER TO OUR CONGREGATION, THE COMMUNITY AND THE WORLD, SO THAT ALL MAY EXPERIENCE THE LOVE AND GRACE OF GOD.

COMBINED MISSION OFFERINGS

On September 13th we will collect a special offering for “**America for Christ**” and “**One Great Hour of Sharing**.” The special offering on this day will be split to contribute to both evenly. If you wish to give to one specifically or give different amounts, simply designate that on your contribution envelope or check memo line. If you have not yet returned to Sunday service, simply mail in your contribution by this date and indicate that it is for the special mission offering.

Bob Atwater, Mission Board Chair

FANTASY FOOTBALL

The First Baptist Fantasy Football season begins this week! Participants create an imaginary team of real NFL players and compete against each other based on how those players perform in real NFL games. Contact Mark Grizzard if you have any questions.

BABY SHOWER!

A drive-by baby shower for Leigh and Mark Grizzard will take place under the portico on Saturday, September 26- at 2:00 p.m. The Gizzards are registered at Target and babylist.com. Please contact Karen Pilgrim, Casey Collins, or Diane Tomsovic for more information.



Thanks to all who participated in our first Drive-In Movie night at the church (above). The Board of Education plans on having a second one on September 11th at 6:30. We hope more of our Sunday School kids will be able to join in the fun at that time.