Cultivating Justice in an Era of Polarization
What Burdens the Heart of God?

The opening prayer at the Ash Wednesday service had us pray in unison: “Lord God, our Rock and our Redeemer, help us to love as you love and to have our hearts burdened by what burdens your heart.” I was moved in the moment to wonder, “What burdens the heart of God?”

During Lent my series is on cultivating justice in an era of polarization. It is my thesis that, as Reformed Christians, in all conversations, but especially polarized conversations, we must look first to the Scriptures, look first to God’s heart, mind and will as expressed in God’s words and deeds. And what do we discover in the Scriptures about what burdens the heart of God? The answer is found in the predicate!

For those of us who cannot recall the specifics of our English grammar, (and I couldn’t until reminded by my wife who is taking Hebrew and connected the dots for me!), the predicate is what comes after the verb, as in God (subject) loves (verb – action) ____ (predicate)… but who is the predicate? Here is a brief, not even close-to-exhaustive list of Scripture verse on God calling for justice from his people, each taken from a different book. I have highlighted the predicates to make it easier for us to notice what, or more precisely, for whom God’s heart is burdened.

- Exodus 23:6-7 - Do not deny justice to your poor people in
Who are the predicate in our communities? I am tempted to say, “I will let you draw your own conclusions,” but I don’t actually believe that is how these things work. Let me say rather, “May God’s Spirit direct your heart to be burdened by what burdens the heart of God.”

Blessed to be a blessing,
Brad Munroe

Read more missives from Brad

NEW WEEKLY FEATURE
Grand Canyon Partners in Mission

Valley Presbyterian Expands its Reach through Ministry of Hope

Valley Presbyterian Church has had a connection with Ministry of Hope for over 10 years now, after a “God Moment” during a meeting in 2006 when a Valley member met Fletcher Matandika, the founder of Ministry of Hope. This led to the first mission trip in 2007 to Malawi.

For years now the folks at VPC have walked alongside our partners in mission at Ministry of Hope. We’ve helped provide support to thousands of orphaned children and widows over the years. Mission
Team members have delivered clothing, school supplies, medical supplies, formula, scholarships and most recently been involved in a food security program, called the Lean Season Project. More importantly our lives have been changed forever due to our partnership with MOH, it forced us out of our comfort zones, helped us engage in God’s priorities, grew our faith and expanded our world view. VPC has traveled to Malawi on seven different mission trips, and have had our partners here for a visit three times, and now Daniel Moyo returns this May.

Daniel is the Director of Education, Spiritual Development and Volunteer Coordination for the Ministry of Hope. He will be visiting Valley Presbyterian Church (VPC) during the period from May 1-7, 2017. VPC is one of several Presbyterian Churches that are major supporters of the Ministry of Hope.

The Ministry of Hope has “developed a variety of programs for orphaned and vulnerable children in Malawi”, one of the poorest countries in the world. In addition to its worship and discipleship program, Ministry of Hope operates a mobile medical clinic, feeding centers for orphans, a two crisis nurseries.

In Malawi, Daniel coordinates educational and worship activities among the orphans supported by Ministry of Hope. He also coordinates the visits of supporting volunteer groups from the United States. Several Presbyterian churches in the U.S. support the Ministry of Hope.

While he is in the U.S. Daniel will be meeting with churches and volunteers who support the Ministry of Hope. He is willing to speak to our presbytery staff and others in the presbytery who might be considering supporting the Ministry of Hope.

If you have any questions about the Ministry of Hope, please click on this link. Other questions related to Daniel Moyo’s visit to Phoenix can be directed to Gary J. Green, VPC Mission Committee Chairman.

In each weekly edition of EFOCUS in the coming year, we will be featuring mission work done by one of our congregations. We are calling it GRAND CANYON PARTNERS IN MISSION. We want to hear from you! Please email a mission story and photos for a project you want to share with your brothers and sisters doing Christ’s work in the Presbytery and beyond!

pbyoffice@gmail.com

ARCHIVE OF MISSION STORIES

Nominations Open for the Senior Service Award

Now in its 33rd year, the Senior Service Awards luncheon has presented churches an opportunity to honor those "saints" who have been doing God's work through the years. This year's luncheon will be held on Thursday, March 30 at Valley Presbyterian. Sessions are encouraged to nominate an older adult and send a couple of guests along for the luncheon. Nominations close March 10, so start your selections today!

More information and a nomination form
Leslie Vogel Schedule- Important updates!

Leslie Vogel, co-mission worker with CEDEPCA in Guatemala, will be visiting in the Valley from March 2 – March 7. Here is her updated schedule:

**Saturday, March 4**
11:30 - Meet and Greet luncheon at Mesa First
6:00 p.m. Potluck dinner at University Presbyterian Church in Tempe. **Please RSVP**

**Sunday, March 5th**
9:00 & 11:00 Guest pastor at First Mesa for Women’s Gifts Sunday
5:30pm- Palo Cristi Presbyterian Church Potluck in Paradise Valley.

**Monday, March 5th**
3:00 p.m. Conversation at Faith Presbyterian Church- contact Rev. Kristin A Rice, Parish Associate at 623-974-3611, ext 106 with questions

Please contact Sue Eisenklam at 480-993-6512 for more information or to see if she is available for any other speaking engagement.

---

**Preaching in an Era of Polarization**
All teaching elders and CREs are invited to a best practices forum to share ideas, discuss, debate and kibbutz on the topic of how to proclaim the Gospel in an era of ever-increasing polarization. The forum will be held at the presbytery offices **March 23, 11:00-1:30** and is a part of the midday preaching cohort, who graciously invite all to join them for this topic. Lunch will be served so an RSVP is required - please and thank you.

---

Registration has just opened for the upcoming Arizona Benefits Connection to be held on Thursday, April 27th at Valley Presbyterian Church in Paradise Valley. The goal is to gather between 40 and 50 pastors, administrators, and personnel committee members (and Presbytery Staff!) for this important offering. Pat Haines, Executive Vice President for Benefits, and Andy Browne, Vice President for Church Relations will be joining me for the day. To register, click here.

---

**RESOURCES**
The Grand Canyon website has a wealth of...
Visit our website

- Congratulations to Cecil Patterson, Southminster, who has been honored by the Sandra Day O'Connor School of Law with a scholarship in his name!

TIDBITS: Church News from around Presbytery

News and Events

March
14- Aging Well Seminar- Chandler Presbyterian
24-April 1- Peter Pan at Mesa First
24- Ignite the Spark
25- Stated Meeting of Presbytery, Southminster
30- Senior Service Awards, Valley

April
1- Presbyterian Women Spring Gathering, First, Sun City
“Confronting Chaos, Forging Community – Racism, Militarism, and Materialism” April 21-24, 2017 | Washington, DC
27- Board of Pensions Retiree Luncheon

August
Peacemaking, Climate Justice and Faith in Central America