

The SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH in the City of New York
Weekly pastoral email for the Week of Sunday July 5, 2020



Flowers in bloom last week in Ralph Bunche Park, across from the UN.

Ralph Bunche was a U.S. diplomat who was a key member of the United Nations for more than two decades, and winner of the 1950 Nobel Prize for Peace for his successful negotiation of an Arab-Israeli truce in Palestine. (He was the first African American to be awarded that prize.)

Dear Friends in Christ,

On this July 4th weekend, I'm thinking about freedom. The freedom NOT guaranteed to so many people, despite the beautiful claims of the Declaration of Independence. The freedom celebrated on Juneteenth, marking the day when enslaved people in Texas finally received their freedom. I think of the four fundamental freedoms articulated by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, that people "everywhere in the world" ought to enjoy: freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, freedom from fear. The freedoms protected by the Bill of Rights - and how those freedoms are sometimes misused.

And then there are other freedoms treasured by many of our sibling citizens. The freedom to own guns, even when NOT part of a "well-regulated militia." The freedom to "stand your ground." The freedom to let your religion rule someone else's life. And, lately, the freedom NOT to wear a mask. As Jesse Wegman wrote in the New York Times on Friday: "It's a strange sort of freedom that includes exposing other people to a potentially deadly virus. What's to resist about showing respect to your fellow

Americans? Why turn a straightforward public health issue into a political one? The virus doesn't care whether you're a Republican or a Democrat. It ravaged blue states in the spring, and now it's plowing through red ones. All it cares about are finding open mouths and nostrils. It's crazy that we are having this debate after all. Dozens of countries have already mandated mask-wearing in public. It's not a coincidence that the United States remains the world's coronavirus hot spot."

I know I'm preaching to the converted, as they say (which most preaching is, by the way!). But as we celebrate our ideals of freedom, I'm thinking about the freedom not to be killed by an automatic assault weapon. The freedom of people of color to walk through their own neighborhoods assaulted. The freedom of all of us to walk down the street without being exposed to a deadly virus. Freedom from want, FDR said. Freedom from fear.

And I'm thinking about freedom in Christ. The freedom to not make ourselves the center of the world. The freedom to love our neighbors as much as we love ourselves – but not less than. The freedom to fail, and the freedom to try again. The freedom that comes from knowing that we are deeply loved by God, and so are free to deeply love others.



I would like to be known as a person who is concerned about freedom and equality and justice and prosperity for all people.

(Rosa Parks)

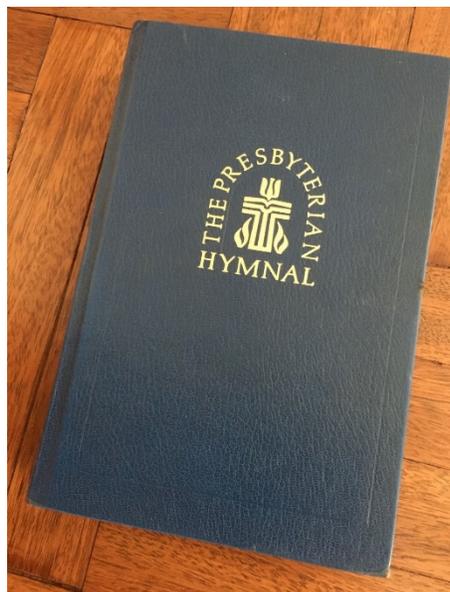
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Next Sunday, July 12th, we will again celebrate a Stay at Home Lord's Supper. So please prepare your elements, the bread and the wine, in whatever form you choose: crackers and grape juice, pita bread and merlot, rice cakes and Gatorade - whatever the Spirit moves you to and your cupboard allows. As always, you're encouraged to listen to our worship podcast via the website at 10:15, and then join the Zoom meeting at 10:45. This gathering will be more like a regular

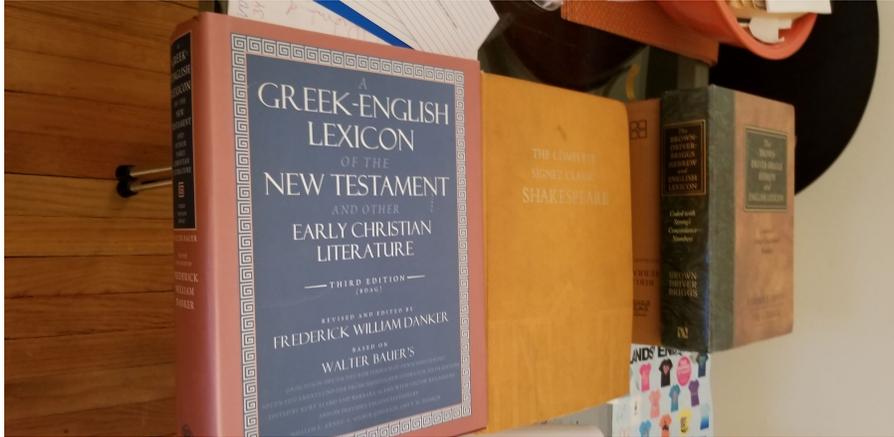
worship service. We'll begin with prayer and scripture readings, a (different) meditation on the scriptures by me (as we always celebrate Word *and* Sacrament, never Sacrament alone), and then the Communion. After that, there should be time to lift up (briefly) the prayers of the people. I look forward to sharing this holy meal with you!



We have blue Presbyterian Hymnals (1990) to give away to anyone who wants one! Contact Nancy Hughes.



Finally, in case you were wondering if pastors actually used their fancy Greek and Hebrew lexicons and Bibles, not to mention their complete Shakespeares...



I use mine all the time – to prop up my computer. After all, it's important to have the most flattering camera angle for your Zoom video meetings!



God be with you, until we meet again.

love and light,
Rev. Lindsay