



FBC News

“<sup>18</sup>All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation;”

2 Corinthians 5:18

APRIL 2022

## A Ministry of Reconciliation

Before I retired, I pastored congregations in West Virginia, Indiana, and Wisconsin, and then for 17 years served The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) as denominational executive for higher education and leader development. In that role, I met a number of LGBTQ young people. The excellence and diversity they brought to congregational life and ministry strengthened our denomination and also reinforced my commitment to equality. When I moved to Pennsylvania, I looked for a congregation that makes it an explicit part of its mission to welcome, affirm, and nurture the gifts of LGBTQ people, and I was thrilled to discover FBC.

I grew up in a small northern Pennsylvania town in a family that valued fairness and acceptance of others, although my church, school, and community took it as a given that homosexuality was beyond the pale. That was an era when the rare mention of sexual orientation or gender identity came in anti-gay slurs, casually but cruelly, tossed around.

When I entered college, I came to know a number of gay men, and though — in tune with those times — they were closeted, they allowed me the privilege of their confidence, and I learned of the struggles they faced in their everyday lives and in reconciling their sexual orientation with their Christian faith. They touched me with their honesty and the integrity of their spiritual searching, but I felt saddened by all the ways their faith communities did not return their devotion.

One of those acquaintances died by suicide while still a student. Another, who voiced the deep despair of self-loathing in our college years, sounded much the same when I ran across him decades later. Discrimination and ostracism inflict deep emotional damage. My friend's inability to overcome that damage even in late middle age showed me how the toll inflicted on people rejected by their communities is not some hangover from a bygone era. Bigotry against LGBTQ people continues to impose a significant cost on our society, beyond the trauma endured by individuals it rejects.

[According to a 2020 survey](#), one in three LGBTQ Americans, experienced discrimination — in public spaces, on the job, in schools, and in their own neighborhoods — in just 2020.

That number rises to 60% among [transgender people](#), who experience exceptionally high levels of unemployment, poverty, and homelessness. They are also stalked by violence, with [a record 44 hate-motivated murders](#) nationwide in 2020.

I have the gift of transgender friends and family members, and though they are fortunate to enjoy support from family and church, they still face difficulties, injustices, and indignities in their employment settings and elsewhere.

[Black and Latino LGBTQ people](#) face greater poverty rates than communities of color generally. Less than half the states protect the community's [youth](#) from bullying in school. And, [elders](#) often find themselves having to re-closet themselves, with nearly half of same-sex couples reporting discrimination in seeking senior housing.

LGBTQ Pennsylvanians still enjoy [no statewide nondiscrimination protections](#), and there is no law protecting youth from school bullying or harassment.

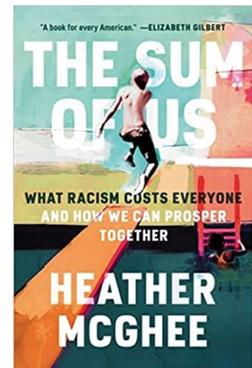
I was excited and grateful to become a part of a Welcoming and Affirming congregation like FBC, and I am even happier that as we think about how to revitalize and renew our ministry, we are considering how we can help provide a safe place for LGBTQ people, especially vulnerable young people.

Paul says the Gospel "... is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation..." (2 Corinthians 5:18). I feel blessed to be part of a congregation that wants to take that seriously.

—Dennis Landon

## **The Sum of Us**

Our Book Group is starting a new book! We've chosen *The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together* by Heather McGhee. In "unlikely places of worship and work, McGhee finds proof of what she calls the Solidarity Dividend: the benefits we gain when people come together across race to accomplish what we simply can't do on our own. *The Sum of Us* is not only a brilliant analysis of how we arrived here but also a heartfelt message, delivered with startling empathy, from a black woman to a multiracial America."



Reach out to the office to find out how you can get a copy of the book, and check the Group Life page of our website for the link to join the discussions on April 5<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> at 7pm on Zoom!

## **Poetry Open-Mic in April**



Have you been able to join our Pottstown Poetry Group for one of the Poetry Open-Mic Nights? You have another chance on April 10<sup>th</sup> at 7pm when we'll be joined by guest poet Lucia Herrmann.

"Miami-raised and Philly-based, Lucia Herrmann writes, performs, and collaborates on all kinds of artistic projects. She does comedy shows and poetry readings, and was selected for two Philly Fringe Festival productions in 2019. She is an educator in Philadelphia and a former online poetry editor for Toho Journal. Often caught in reveries of language and love, she seeks to connect her passion for arts and literature with a dedication to teaching, empowering, and uplifting individuals and communities."

## What's Happening at FBC!

Check out these upcoming events! Visit us online to find links at [www.FBCPottstown.org](http://www.FBCPottstown.org).

- March 17<sup>th</sup> at 7pm Ministry Coordination Team Meeting
- March 19<sup>th</sup> at 10am Save, Repurpose, and Recycle Team Meeting
- March 20<sup>th</sup> at 9:15am Podcast Study – “Understanding Easter: Part Three”
- March 20<sup>th</sup> at 10:30am Worship with Pastor Marcia
- March 20<sup>th</sup> at 2pm In-person Community Project in Echo Hall
- March 20<sup>th</sup> at 5pm Ministry and Money Team Meeting
- March 21<sup>st</sup> at 6:30pm Board of Spiritual Life Meeting
- March 22<sup>nd</sup> at 7pm Guided Meditation
- March 27<sup>th</sup> at 9:15am Podcast Study – “Understanding Easter: Part Four”
- March 27<sup>th</sup> at 10:30am Worship with guest pastor Rev. Robert Walk II
- April 1<sup>st</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> Crop Walk
- April 3<sup>rd</sup> at 9:15am Podcast Study – “Understanding Easter: Part Five”
- April 3<sup>rd</sup> at 10:30am Worship with Natalie Massaglia
- April 5<sup>th</sup> at 7pm Book Group – *The Sum of Us*
- April 10<sup>th</sup> at 9:15am Podcast Study – “Understanding Easter: Part Six”
- April 10<sup>th</sup> at 10:30am Palm Sunday Worship
- April 10<sup>th</sup> at 7pm Poetry Open-Mic with guest Lucia Herrmann
- April 13<sup>th</sup> at 7:30pm Community Care & Connection Board Meeting
- April 14<sup>th</sup> at 7pm Maundy Thursday Worship
- April 15<sup>th</sup> at 10:15am Good Friday Community Cross Walk
- April 17<sup>th</sup> at 9:15am Podcast Study – “Understanding Easter: Part Seven”
- April 17<sup>th</sup> at 10:30am Easter Sunday Worship
- April 19<sup>th</sup> at 7pm Book Group – *The Sum of Us*
- April 21<sup>st</sup> at 7pm Ministry Coordination Team Meeting
- April 24<sup>th</sup> at 10:30am Last Sunday Worship with Seminary Intern Natalie Massaglia
- April 26<sup>th</sup> at 7pm Guided Meditation
- May 1<sup>st</sup> Special Afternoon Service for Licensing of Joel Dugan

## Financial Info

We continue to come together to do the work of ministry in our neighborhood and in the world. Your gifts make this happen! Thank you!

Offering Income in Feb	\$ 5,278.37
Rental Income in Feb	\$ 8,141.67
Other Income in Feb	\$ 86.96
<hr/> Total income in Feb	<hr/> \$13,507.00
 Expenses in Feb	 \$13,579.21
 Net Loss for Feb	 \$ 72.21



**Do you have anything you'd like to add to the next edition of FBC News?**

Email details to the office at [office@FBCPottstown.org](mailto:office@FBCPottstown.org) by April 13<sup>th</sup>!