



## Tools to Sustain Our Missional Congregations

*A topical newsletter for Pilot Series teams*

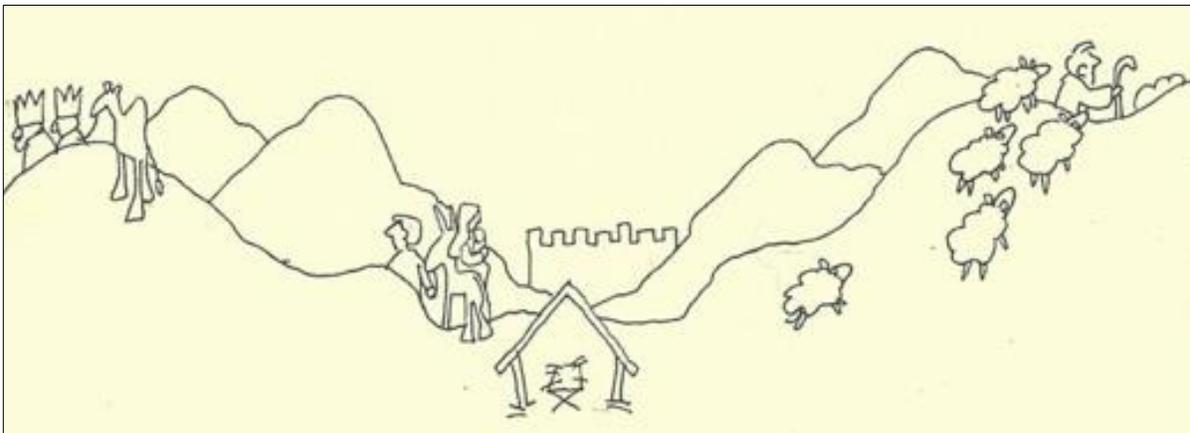
Presbytery of Genesee Valley

Know Christ ■ Live Christ ■ Share Christ

*Roderic P. Frohman & James S. Evinger (Eds.)*

*#8 in a series (January, 2019)*

### “When the song of the angels is stilled...”



When the song of the angels is stilled,  
When the star in the sky is gone,  
When the kings and princes are home,  
When the shepherds are back with their flock,  
The work of Christmas begins:

To find the lost,  
To heal the broken,  
To feed the hungry,

To release the prisoner,  
To rebuild the nations,  
To bring peace among brothers,  
To make music in the heart.

Howard Thurman  
'The Work of Christmas'  
The Mood of Christmas (1973)  
New York, NY: Harper & Row

Covington United Presbyterian Church  
*Pavilion*

First Presbyterian Church  
*Pittsford*

Central Presbyterian Church *Geneseo* — Third Presbyterian Church *Rochester*  
First Presbyterian Church *LeRoy* --- Irondequoit Presbyterian Church

First Presbyterian Church  
*Batavia*

First Presbyterian Church  
*Chili*

## These days after Christmas, what is the music in your hearts?

Howard Thurman's touching poem concludes with a line which returns us to the beginning – the events at the stable in Bethlehem, the birth of Jesus Christ. To begin the work of Christmas is to carry the angels' music in our hearts. Here resides the faith which sustains us.

Thurman was no sentimentalist. He was 73 when his poem was published. Born in the segregated South (his grandmother had been a slave), he lived through two world wars, the Depression, atomic bombings, the Civil Rights Movement, and the beginnings of the war in Viet Nam.

Reflecting on the anticipation of Jesus' birth, he writes: "To walk in the light while darkness invades, envelops, and surrounds is to wait on the Lord. This is to know the renewal of strength. This is to walk and faint not."<sup>1</sup>

Sounds of holy music in our hearts, bright images of walking in the light – God's Spirit will sustain us as we begin the work of Christmas.

## Howard Thurman

Thurman (1900-1981) earned his seminary degree in 1926 from Colgate-Rochester Theological Seminary, Rochester, New York, and was ordained a Baptist minister. Already influenced by the pacifism of Quakers, in 1936 he led a delegation to India where he met Mahatma Gandhi, and was inspired to a life of non-violence. He was a pastor (founder in 1944 of the first interracial, multi-cultural congregation in the United States), seminary professor, and college dean.

As a published author, essayist, and poet, his influential works, including 20 books, combined a deep concern for people's personal spiritual well-being with an abiding concern for improving conditions which adversely affected God's people.<sup>2</sup>

A number of his books are collections of prayers, sermons, meditations, and commentaries. We commend the witness and writings of Howard Thurman to you.

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<sup>1</sup> Thurman, Howard. (1973). "To Him That Waits." [The Mood of Christmas](#).

<sup>2</sup> For more on Thurman's life and works:  
<https://blackpast.org/aaw/thurman-howard-1900-1981>  
<http://www.howardthurmanfilm.com>  
<https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/thurman-howard>  
[https://www.pbs.org/thisfarbyfaith/people/howard\\_thurman.html](https://www.pbs.org/thisfarbyfaith/people/howard_thurman.html)  
<http://www.bu.edu/today/2011/who-was-howard-thurman/>

“Iron sharpens iron, and one person sharpens the wits of another.”

Proverbs 27:176 (NRSV)



## Study Teams continue to sharpen our Workbooks and our Workshops!

One musical theme in our hearts continues to be gratitude to God for the wisdom and insight your Missional Study Teams bring to the series of workshops. Truly. Here are two examples from Teams presently underway.

### First Presbyterian, LeRoy & a Workbook

- Last fall, LeRoy's Team organized a luncheon after worship as part of the timeline event (assigned in Workshop 2, Missional Identity). Team member Ann Verhagen, an architect, led the creation of a very long timeline – the Church was founded in 1814, afterall.

Posted in the Fellowship Hall, their timeline included details like when the church building was constructed (1825-1826), and when it was remodeled and a steeple added (1866) – details an architect would notice.

Our directions for the assignment had not mentioned anything about land purchases, building construction, or capital improvements. These details were hiding in plain sight! They can contain important pieces of a congregation's continuing story.

Thanks to Ann and First Pres, LeRoy, the directions in Workbook 2 now are more complete.

### Irondequoit Presbyterian & Workshops

- Typically, we would not invite a congregation with an interim pastor to participate in the series. Such a major transition is a priority. However, the Study Team members from Irondequoit Presbyterian are highly determined and their resolve is persuasive. They are the 8<sup>th</sup> Team in the series.

Thanks to this Team's dedication, we have adjusted our *lesson plan* for each workshop. The *lesson plan* is the agenda we prepare in advance. It allocates time for each portion of the workshop. Irondequoit's Team taught us we needed to shift the emphasis.

We were planning for too little time for Teams to report on what they learned from their research assignments since the previous workshop. They wanted and needed more time to hear other's experiences and reflect on the results.

Irondequoit politely kept going beyond the apportioned time. They made the right call. This, indeed, was more important to their learning, and our lesson plans needed to honor the reality. Thanks to Irondequoit's steady insistence on listening to everyone in depth, our the structure of our workshops has shifted for the better.

# What is ahead in 2019?

## Outcomes, Outcomes, Outcomes

- Like Magi following a star, Rod and Jim will be journeying to the sites of all the Pilot Project congregations. Like Magi, we'll be seeking to discover what God has been doing. The Pilot Teams finished their respective series of workshops between June, 2016, and July, 2017. We'd like to collect data on what have been the **outcomes** since then for your social mission projects, your communities, and your congregations. Expect to find our camels in your neighborhood.

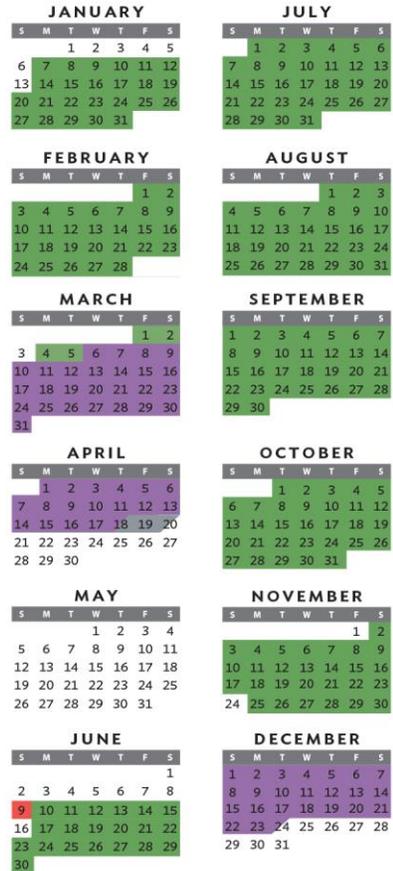
## Opportunity, Opportunity, Opportunity

- Our friends at **Covington United**, in Pavilion, will share their case study on January 30, Wednesday, 6:30 p.m. This is the 4<sup>th</sup> presentation in our Pilot Teams post-series support network. Previously, we've benefitted from Team's experiences where things went well. Covington models for us how to learn from experiences where not everything went as hoped. Join us at First Presbyterian Church, LeRoy, in the comfortable Fellowship Hall. (Yes, we're gathering in January. Wear your woolies and say some warm prayers.)



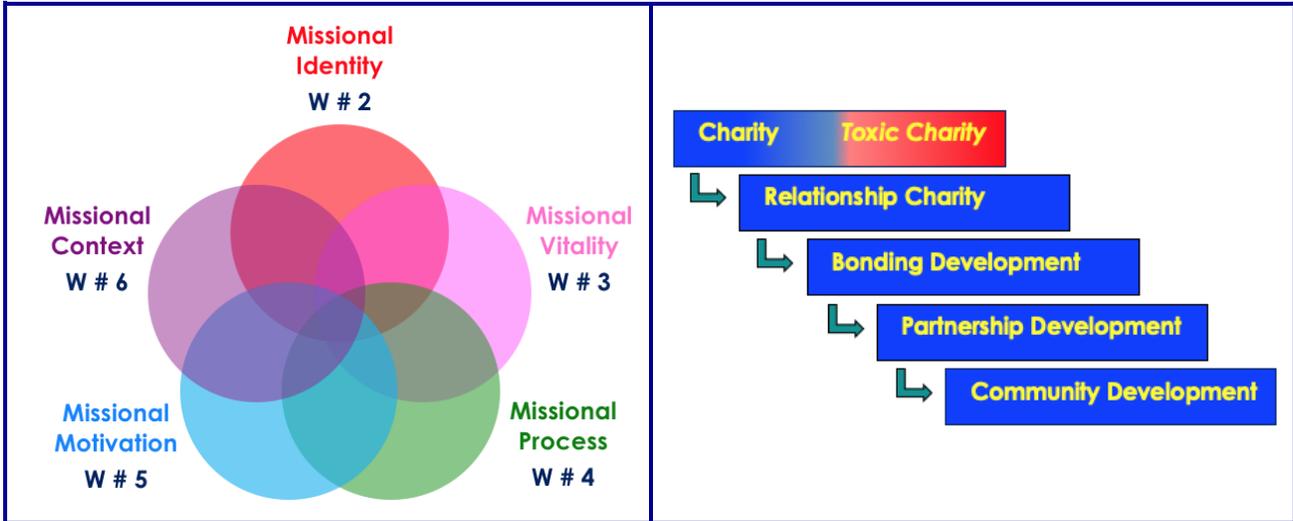
## 2019 Liturgical Colors

From the 2018–2019 Presbyterian Planning Calendar



## Maybe, Maybe, Maybe

- In recent months, we've had conversations with a number of people about this workshop series. In particular, national Presbyterian and regional (Synod of the Northeast) staff have encouraged us to present this work. One setting is the Church's national event, Big Tent, scheduled for summer. Another is a Synod event in the spring. This is all preliminary and quite tentative. It remains to be seen where the Spirit will be moving. However, what is clear is the affirmation of the value of the hard work of our Pilot Project congregations!



5 Dynamic Missional Factors

5 Steps to Missional Development

<p>Ecology of Missional Culture</p> <p>Connect this newsletter with your Team's study of Workshop 4, Missional Process</p>	<p>Do you have a topic you would like to see explored?</p> <p>Do you have a question other Pilot Teams are asking, too?</p> <p>Let us know! <a href="mailto:cityrevRochester@gmail.com">cityrevRochester@gmail.com</a> 727-2676 (cell)</p>
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Look ahead! (Proverbs 14:8)  
 Pilot Congregations Support Workshop # 4  
 Covington United's case report!  
 January 30, Wednesday, 6:30 p.m.  
 at First Presbyterian Church, LeRoy  
 (bring your own food)

"...to equip the saints for the work of ministry,  
 for building up the body of Christ..."  
*Ephesians 4:12*