



Sunday Forum ~ January 2026

***Progressive Presbyterians:
Working for God's Justice***

***Sundays,
9:45 AM
Shaw Rm.***

A Strong Progressive Theology: Seeking a Pastor

Jan. 4

**Presenters: Nancy Brown, John DeHority,
Cori Wolfgang Rainbeaux, & Mary Rees**

Jan. 4

Five years ago DUPC's Transition Team surveyed the congregation, and discovered many fascinating and a few seemingly contradictory convictions. Now we are again in a search for our next pastor. Prominent in the current job description is the phrase, "the pastor is expected to have a strong progressive theological background." This need was and is core to who we are. Come take part in an interactive conversation as we seek unity & a pastor.

Conveying Progressivism Through Music:

Jan. 11

DUPC's Resonant Ministry

Jan. 11

Presenter: Lee Wright, Director of Music Ministry

Are our values expressed when we change hymns to have inclusive language? Can sacred music be political? Should it be? Resistance to slavery in early America and the liberation theology of Latin American Catholics in the 1960s both expressed their desire for progress in music, and we still sing hymns written by Martin Luther as he worked to transform the church. Lee will share his work to create inspiring and progressive worship experiences.

The Social Gospel and More Light:

Jan. 18

130 Years of Progressivism

Jan. 18

Presenters: Ralph Carter and Ry Foye

Rochester's Third Presbyterian Church was forever changed in the late 1800s by Rev. Paul Moore Strayer, who launched one of the first church social service programs in Western New York. Between 1978 and 2011, as the PC(USA) struggled over ordaining LGBTQ elders and pastors, Third became a More Light church. Our guests, Ralph and Ry, will relate their congregation's journey of discernment across generations and issues.

**From Integrating Water Fountains to Marching on
Washington: One Man's Progressive Spirituality**

Jan. 25

Presenter: Windsor Wade

Jan. 25

In 1952 Windsor's parents, Louis and Katie, fled the Jim Crow South. Ten years later, on a trip South to visit family, Windsor drank from a "Whites Only" fountain. Heeding the Dalai Lama's admonition, "It's not enough to be compassionate, you must act," Windsor became a teacher and has continually worked for progressive justice, including service with two Rochester organizations, Metro Justice and the Gandhi Institute. He is also a long-time member of Veterans for Peace, and a member of its national board.



Third Presbyterian Church, Rochester, NY

Social Justice History (personal highlights)

Charles Finney (1830-31)

equal education for all, refused communion to slave holders, women led prayer

Paul Moore Strayer (1903-25)

applied Social Gospel to ministry, active union supporter,
helped form precursor to United Way

William Hudnut (1946-64)

active in Civil Rights Movement, first woman elder ordained at Third

Lillian Alexander (elder)

led overture to allow ordination of women to ministry in 1955

Eugene Bay (19778-87)

Third Church became a More Light Church in 1987

John Wilkinson (2001-20)

Rod Frohman (1998-2021)

initiated and sustained many social justice and community ministries
addressing hunger, housing, education and discrimination

Elders Beth Laidlaw, Laurie Mahoney and Ralph Carter

formed Antiracism Team in 2020

Rebecca Segers (2022 -)

first called female Senior Minister and Head of Staff

Third Presbyterian Church

Rochester, NY

Social Justice Ministries

Hunger:

Grocery Run
Food cupboard
Dining room ministry

Housing:

Family Promise
Habitat for Humanity

Education:

School Tutoring
Great Schools for All

Advocacy:

Antiracism Team
More Light Team
IPeace Team

Collaborations: RocACTS

Kenya Partnership
Community Table

Presbyterian Church (USA)

1974

David Sindt, Chicago, forms Presbyterian Gay Caucus (forerunner of MLP)

1977

GA study paper "Concern for just treatment of homosexuals, protection from social and economic discrimination..."
- PCUS (Southern church) affirms GA statements not binding

1978

- GA adopts "Definitive Guidance" that self-affirming, practicing, unrepentant homosexuals not eligible for ordination.
- GA adopts "grandparent clause" to protect currently ordained persons

1985

GA PJC rules in Western New York case that congregation's right to elect officers is bound by the constitution

1987

- GA refuses to revoke status of PLGC
- GA recommits to eliminate laws governing private behavior of LGBT persons

1991

- GA rejects report of Special Committee on Human Sexuality which calls on the church to consistent ethic linking justice and love
- GA rejects same sex unions if considered same as marriage

1992

- GA refuses to adopt policy to not ordain persons in "unrepentant homosexual practice"
Stated Clerk files amicus supporting decriminalization of homosexual acts
- GA PJC rules 1978 "grandparent clause" not binding in Janie Spahr case

1993

- Synod of Northeast adopts commitment to inclusiveness and encourages safe space for dialogue
- GA calls for 3-year dialogue & study

1995

- Presbyteries reject change in Book of Order that would prohibit blessing of same sex unions (2000)

1997

Presbyteries approve G-6.0106b, "fidelity in marriage, chastity in singleness"

1999

GA approves "no church should insist that gay and lesbian people need therapy", cautions churches to follow professional guidelines

2000

GA votes (60%) to remove ordination restrictions. Presbyteries fail to ratify.

2001

- GA instructs NMD to develop resources for LGBT ministries
- Several GA commissioners come out
- Katie Morrison ordained as 1st openly lesbian Minister, field organizer for MLP

2002

- Two dozen charges brought against out GA commissioners, More Light churches, those involved in Morrison's ordination
- GA PIC requires high burden of evidence in

- GA Council rejects call for special GA to consider "constitutional crisis"

Presbytery Genesee Valley

1970's.

Same gender covenantal ceremonies conducted:
Twelve Corners Church, John Calvin Church.

1979

- Downtown United Church approves More Light statement.
- John Calvin Church approves More Light statement.

1980

- Calvary St Andrews Parish approves More Light statement.
- Presbytery forms CREATE*:Justice, mission project to develop ecumenical civil rights advocacy network for lesbian and gay civil rights

1982

Presbytery receives presentation by
CREATE*:Justice

1987

- Rochester Gay Men's Chorus invited, then dis-invited to sing at Presbytery meeting
- Rochester hosts national More Light conference

1988

- Summerville Church hosts 8-week series in response to controversy of a lesbian member who agreed, when asked, to serve as Sunday School teacher
- Presbytery approves statement on the inclusive nature of church membership

1991

- Presbytery approves (twice) the call of Janie Spahr as co-pastor of Downtown United Presbyterian Church.
- Rochester hosts national More Light conference

1993

- Downtown United Church forms "That All May Freely Serve". Janie Spahr called as evangelist to work for welcome of LGBT people into ministry.
- Westminster Church approves More Light statement.

1995

Rochester hosts national More Light conference.

1997

Presbytery votes to defend any congregation who cannot, in good conscience, comply with G6.0106b ordination restrictions in Book of Order.

2000

Rochester hosts national TAMFS leadership conference.

Third Presbyterian Church

1980

Third Church affirms that sole criterion for membership is confession of faith in Jesus Christ as lord and savior.

1981

Third Church session forms Human Sexuality Study Group

1983

Third Church forms gay/lesbian support group

1987

Third Church approves More Light statement. (23rd church of 108)

1989

Third Church Session holds first of biennial workshops on More Light for congregation's leadership

1993

Third Church forms Daily Bread food and fellowship program for People with AIDS with Lutheran Church of Incarnate Word and AIDS Rochester.

1995

Third Church approves Covenantal ceremonies for same gender couples

1996

Third Church begins advertising in Empty Closet newspaper.

1998

Third Church first marches in Rochester Gay Pride Parade

2000

Third Church approves overture to GA to remove ordination restrictions in Book of Order.

2001

- Third Church first advertises in ImageOut Video & Film Festival
- Third Church hosts regional conference, "Becoming the Welcoming Church"
- Third Church co-sponsors regional conference in Buffalo with Westminster Church, "Unity in Diversity"

2002

- Third Church organizes "Celebrate the 21 Year the Journey" as part of congregation's 175th anniversary
- Third Church is one of almost 500 Presbyterian churches who have demonstrated commitment to a welcoming denomination