

# LAKE AVENUE BAPTIST CHURCH NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2021, ISSUE 2, VOLUME 84

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February is Black History Month a month to celebrate the achievements by African Americans and a time for recognizing their central role in U.S. history. Also known as African American History Month, the event grew out of “Negro History Week,” the brainchild of noted historian Carter G. Woodson and other prominent African Americans. Since 1976, every U.S. president has officially designated the month of February as Black History Month. Other countries around the world, including Canada and the United Kingdom, also devote a month to celebrating Black history.

The story of Black History Month begins in 1915, half a century after the Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery in the United States. That September, the Harvard-trained historian Carter G. Woodson and the prominent minister Jesse E. Moorland founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH), an organization dedicated to researching and promoting achievements by Black Americans and other peoples of African descent.

Known today as the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH), the group sponsored a national Negro History week in 1926, choosing the second week of February to coincide with the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass. The event inspired schools and communities nationwide to organize local celebrations, establish history clubs and host performances and lectures.

Did you know? The NAACP was founded on February 12, 1909, the centennial anniversary of the birth of Abraham Lincoln.

In the decades that followed, mayors of cities across the country began issuing yearly proclamations recognizing Negro History Week. By the late 1960s, thanks in part to the civil rights movement and a growing awareness of Black identity, Negro History Week had evolved into Black History Month on many college campuses.

President Gerald Ford officially recognized Black History Month in 1976, calling upon the public to “seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history.”



## YOUR PASTOR'S ARTICLE

At the January 20, 2021 inauguration of President Joseph Biden, youth poet laureate Amanda Gorman offered a very powerful poem. (The poem she wrote and read is included at the end of this newsletter). Chock-full of memorable lines, what stood out to me was her calling that we as a country work diligently to build ourselves up as a country of diversity. She wrote “We are striving to forge a union with purpose, To compose a country committed to all cultures, colors, characters and conditions of man.” She claimed, at least as I

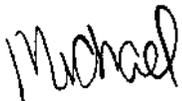
interpret it, that we are a country that is at its best when it is committed to diversity: cultures, colors, characters, and conditions. Only when we are at our most diverse are we are at our best.

I would certainly agree with her. And I think that the same holds true for the church. I realized that I have been at LABC almost 9 years now (the Sunday after Easter 2012). It is so hard for me to believe that! I think the reason that it is so hard for me to believe is because the things that attracted me to LABC in the first place are the same things that we hold so dear in our values and our practices. At our core is our commitment to diversity: cultures, colors, characters, and conditions. I knew that LABC was a unique place, and I longed to be part of this place. What drew me here was what motivates me each day to engage in the ministry to which we have been called. In the midst of the most trying circumstances that have struck our nation in the past year, we have sought to maintain who we are. I honor that and lift it up to you as something that is care of our identity: diversity, working together for something greater than ourselves.

As we begin a new year, we do not know what the year will bring. In the past month we have heard about more people being vaccinated (or at least getting their appointments for vaccination) against Covid-19. We have seen the inauguration of a new President. We have seen movements in our community and across our nation that I pray will help make us a better people. Things are, we pray, starting to slowly, however slowly, move in the right direction. However, we cannot stop now. We cannot become complacent.

Let us commit as a people of faith to play our part in helping to see Gorman's words come to fruition. We want to do what we have to do to continue to commit to our core values as a church community ... our values of love and diversity. And let us commit to helping to share that which we see exemplified in our church community with the world beyond our walls.

Together may we take up the mantle that Gorman presented us with at the inauguration: a call to diversity. And may we affirm in word and deed, both in the church and the nation, that we too are committed to be a people who acknowledge and live into the fact that "We are striving to forge a union with purpose, to compose a country committed to all cultures, colors, characters and conditions." Diversity. It is who we are. And who we are made to be.



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## THE CHURCH MODERATOR'S FEBRUARY ARTICLE

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Dear Friends,

I hope that all of you are staying safe, warm and well as we enter this chilly month of February. February has officially been recognized as Black History Month in the United States since 1976 when it was officially recognized by President Gerald Ford. It was first proposed by Black educators and students at Kent State University in Ohio in 1969. I did not know those two pieces of Black history until I looked them up just now as I began writing this letter to you. Did you know them? Forty-five years have gone by since President Ford made Black History Month official and I must confess that I still do not know much of the history of Black people in the US or the very long and rich history of Africa.

The group of us who are meeting weekly to attempt to educate ourselves regarding systemic racism have just started reading a new book together. It is called "[Be The Bridge: Pursuing God's Heart for Racial Reconciliation](#)" by Latasha Morrison. She begins her book by sharing her experience of taking an African American History class in her first year of college. As a Black woman she wondered why she had not learned any of this history in her high school history classes or from her family. I know that I learned almost nothing about Black history in high school or college. In fact, most of us educated in the US know very little about any of the non-White cultures that are a part of the United States.

Ms. Morrison asks all of her readers to begin conversations regarding racial reconciliation from a position of humility and to commit ourselves to learning more about non-White cultures. I hope that during this Black

History Month each of you will increase your knowledge of Black History. I can recommend a couple of books and a documentary that Steve and I watched just this week but there are many choices that can be found from a quick search of the web. The two books are "The Warmth of Other Suns" by Isabel Wilkerson and "The Bad-Ass Librarians of Timbuktu" by Joshua Hammer. Steve and I have both read the first book which traces the migration of Black Americans from the south to the north to escape the Jim Crow laws enacted in the southern states. I plan to read the second book which is about the real-life adventure story of finding and saving ancient Islamic manuscripts by real librarians in the 1980's on the recommendation of Jane Grant. The documentary we watched is a NOVA production titled "Forgotten Genius" and is about the life story of Percy Julian. Some of you may recognize his name from the civil rights movement of the 1960's. I recognize his name because he is a ground breaking chemist. All of us who have ever used a cortisone cream or had a cortisone injection owe him a debt of gratitude.

Let me know what you decide to read or watch and please share what you learn with others. Happy Black History Month!

Peace be with you,

*Laura Tubbs*

## KEN'S KORNER, MUSINGS OF YOUR OFFICE MANAGER



When I take my dog Lilly out for her morning walk we usually leave the house at 6:00 am. At that time it is still dark outside and I carry a flashlight with me to make sure any passing vehicles know we are there. As we walk by the shadowy woods behind my house, Lilly will often start barking for what seems to be no reason at all. I have learned that she is barking at something she has smelled that recently passed by, or she is hearing movement which my ears are not sensitive enough to hear. Although neither of us can see into the woods, Lilly can sense something is there by scents or sounds.

When I think about this it makes me think about how we hear, what is audible to us and what is not.

That also brings up the question as to how the prophets of old heard the word of God. Was it an audible sound or was it "a still small voice" within. Was the burning bush visible only to Moses and were the words that God spoke to Moses from the bush able to be heard by others? And how about Elijah and Isaiah, and Samuel? I often think of the prophets as stenographers writing down the chapters of the Bible as dictated by God. But, how much of these writings came from an audible voice of God? Were they schizophrenic or eating hallucinogenic mushrooms? or... was the voice they heard the "still small voice" within each of their souls which makes much more sense to me. So, I have concluded that when Moses was in front of the burning bush (which he saw through his mind's eye), he wasn't hearing God's booming voice from the heavens! (Sorry, Cecil B. DeMille, but I still love your movie.)

It is rather interesting that God spoke more during the Old Testament to single individuals than he does in the New Testament. In the New Testament, Jesus, God incarnate, becomes the spokesperson for God, speaking out loud so others can hear the news he brings from heaven. It is only in moments of solitude and silence that he hears the "voice" of God and speaks with God.

But, is God still speaking today? Is he speaking to me? Is he speaking to you? To quote Maya Angelou: *"Solitude can be a much to be desired condition. Not only is it acceptable to be alone, at times it is positively wished for. In silence we listen to ourselves, and in the quietude you may even hear the voice of God."* And in this very timely quote by the late Methodist Bishop, Arthur James Moore: *"Healing of the world's woes will not come through this or that social or political theory; not through violent changes in government, but in the still small voice that speaks to the conscience and the heart."*

Lilly knows there is something in the dark woods that I cannot hear. What it is, I don't know. But, when you are alone or on a solitary walk, talk to God and pray to God and don't be surprised if God answers you back.



## BETTER

Our Getting To Know You Better adult education series has been very successful. We may think we know someone but it is truly amazing all the stuff we DON'T know! There are three more sessions of this class. The next one, on Sunday January 31st is a talk with our office administrator, Ken Setera. On the following week, February 7, the person we will be getting to know will be Don Lee (Hkadin Lee's husband.) The interrogator for both these Sundays will be Tom Argust. On February 14 the subject of the inquisition will be Carolyn Argust. And due to the fact that Carolyn is Tom's wife, Sue McMeekin-Davis has agreed to be the interrogator for that day. (The link for these Zoom meetings is posted on our lakeavebaptist.org website.)



## ASH WEDNESDAY & THE BEGINNING OF LENT IS ON WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 17, 2021 THE ONLINE ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE IS AT 7:00 P.M.

Join us for an online *Ash Wednesday service* as we begin the season of Lent together.

Each year, Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent and is always 46 days before Easter Sunday. Lent is a 40-day season (not counting Sundays) marked by repentance, fasting, reflection, and ultimately celebration. The 40-day period represents Christ's time of temptation in the wilderness, where he fasted and where Satan tempted him. Lent asks believers to set aside a time each year for similar fasting, marking an intentional season of focus on Christ's life, ministry, sacrifice, and resurrection.

We invite you to this special service of song, prayer, reading, meditation, and the marking of the ashes. It is an important time to begin the season of Lent together. Join us this year for this meaningful online service.

Join via computer: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82890074953?pwd=VVcwaVVaVVpIb1dHSCtDbFJDM0R3dz09>  
Meeting ID: 828 9007 4953; Passcode: 926513;

Join via phone: 1 929 436 2866 US (New York), Meeting ID: 828 9007 4953, Passcode: 926513



## SUPPER AND SOMETHING – LENT IN THE TIME OF A PANDEMIC Thursday February 18, 25, March 4, 11, 18, 25 at 6:00 p.m.

Join us during the Thursday's of Lent for a journey through Lent in the Time of a Pandemic. This series will help us to explore the theme of Lent and how it relates to our own personal journey of life and journey of faith. It is an opportunity to have your supper (if you wish) during a time of conversation and prayer helping to prepare us as we move together to the Easter event. This season of Lent will be a journey unlike any other (well, except maybe last year, but that feels like ... well ... a year ago). We invite you to be part of

this walk with others in our family of faith here at LABC. Join us!

Join via computer: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87333844091?pwd=N2twZ2l1SEowY2ZZRE5zMjBya2hvUT09>  
Meeting ID: 873 3384 4091, Passcode: 890596

Join via phone: 929 436 2866 US (New York); Meeting ID: 873 3384 4091; Passcode: 890596

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## OUR CHURCH FAMILY

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● **Alice Santiago**, a member of Lake Avenue Baptist Church, passed away on January 10, 2021. Please keep her family in prayer, especially her grandson, Jose.

● We remember long time member **Peg Witmer** who passed away on January 3, 2021. Peg was a kind, caring, generous person who sparkled with her love for others. She extended this non-discriminating love and caring to all people. Peg was a fourth grade teacher and a math resource teacher at inner city School Number 4 for 25 years. Our condolences are extended to her husband Larry Witmer and family. A memorial fund for School #4 has been set up in her name. Details of this special memorial fund can be found on the last page of this newsletter.

● We keep in our prayers member **Timothy Rollins** whose mother **Malease Rollins** passed away on December 26th, 2020.

● Keep in your prayers **Rev. Gordon Webster** and his family. Gordon remains hospitalized with a serious illness.

*Our Website Has Been Updated!*

**Did you know that we have an updated website?** Everything that takes place during the week can be found at [lakeavebaptist.org](http://lakeavebaptist.org) ... it is your home for everything LABC! If you are looking for links, videos, updates etc., all of these can be found on the website. We invite/encourage you to head over to [lakeavebaptist.org](http://lakeavebaptist.org) and check it out! Bookmark it today to make sure you have it readily available and check back often.



LABC's Creation Care team is in a "simmer" phase right now. At some point we will be "cookin'," but Covid has interfered with our functioning. However! - --it can be reported that the church garden will soon be graced with a custom-made composter. Composting is an important element of a new movement called "regenerative gardening," which emphasizes soil health without chemical additives. This attention to soil health also helps to sequester carbon and thus helps with keeping it out of our atmosphere.

Our composter is designed and being constructed by Kevin Stewart, the same person who began the Ambrose St. community garden across the road from our building. He is repurposing a barrel from nearby hot dog maker, Zweigles, adding a lumber frame, and a rotating mechanism, and voila!--we will have a composter that is raised off the ground (to discourage vermin) and will have the capability of aerating the contents.

When we return to in-person worship, fellowship coffee time, and congregational dinners, there will be a place for all the coffee grounds, tea bags, and food scraps. Money for this project came from the Mission budget with a line for "Creation Care initiatives." We appreciate Kevin's ingenuity and willingness to make this for LABC

*Article by Jane Grant, Chair of the Mission Committee*

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## NEWS AND EVENTS IN THE LARGER COMMUNITY

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● On **February 10, 5-6:30pm** there will be a virtual presentation that you may be interested in. Here is a brief description:

*To advance racial justice, we must understand our past. Join local experts Simeon Banister, Vice President of Community Programs at the Rochester Area Community Foundation, and Shane Wiegand, Educator and Researcher, to learn about the history of segregation in Rochester and the enduring impact of racist policies like redlining, racially restrictive covenants, and exclusionary zoning policy. Explore solutions that can lead to a more equitable and vibrant community.*

*Stay for an extended Q&A from 6:00 - 6:30 pm immediately following the event.*

To register go to:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/a-tale-of-two-cities-redlining-racist-policies-in-rochester-ny-tickets-132852723071>

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## *The Hill We Climb by Amanda Gorman*

*As read at the Inauguration of President Biden on January 20, 2021*

When day comes we ask ourselves, where can we find light in this never-ending shade? The loss we carry, a sea we must wade. We've braved the belly of the beast, we've learned that quiet isn't always peace and the norms and notions of what just is, isn't always justice. And yet the dawn is ours before we knew it, somehow we do it, somehow we've weathered and witnessed a nation that isn't broken but simply unfinished.

We, the successors of a country and a time where a skinny black girl descended from slaves and raised by a single mother can dream of becoming president only to find herself reciting for one. And, yes, we are far from polished, far from pristine, but that doesn't mean we are striving to form a union that is perfect, we are striving to forge a union with purpose, to compose a country committed to all cultures, colors, characters and conditions of man.

So we lift our gazes not to what stands between us, but what stands before us. We close the divide because we know to put our future first, we must first put our differences aside. We lay down our arms so we can reach out our arms to one another, we seek harm to none and harmony for all.

Let the globe, if nothing else, say this is true: that even as we grieved, we grew, even as we hurt, we hoped, that even as we tired, we tried, that we'll forever be tied together victorious, not because we will never again know defeat but because we will never again sow division.

Scripture tells us to envision that everyone shall sit under their own vine and fig tree and no one should make them afraid. If we're to live up to our own time, then victory won't lie in the blade, but in in all of the bridges we've made.

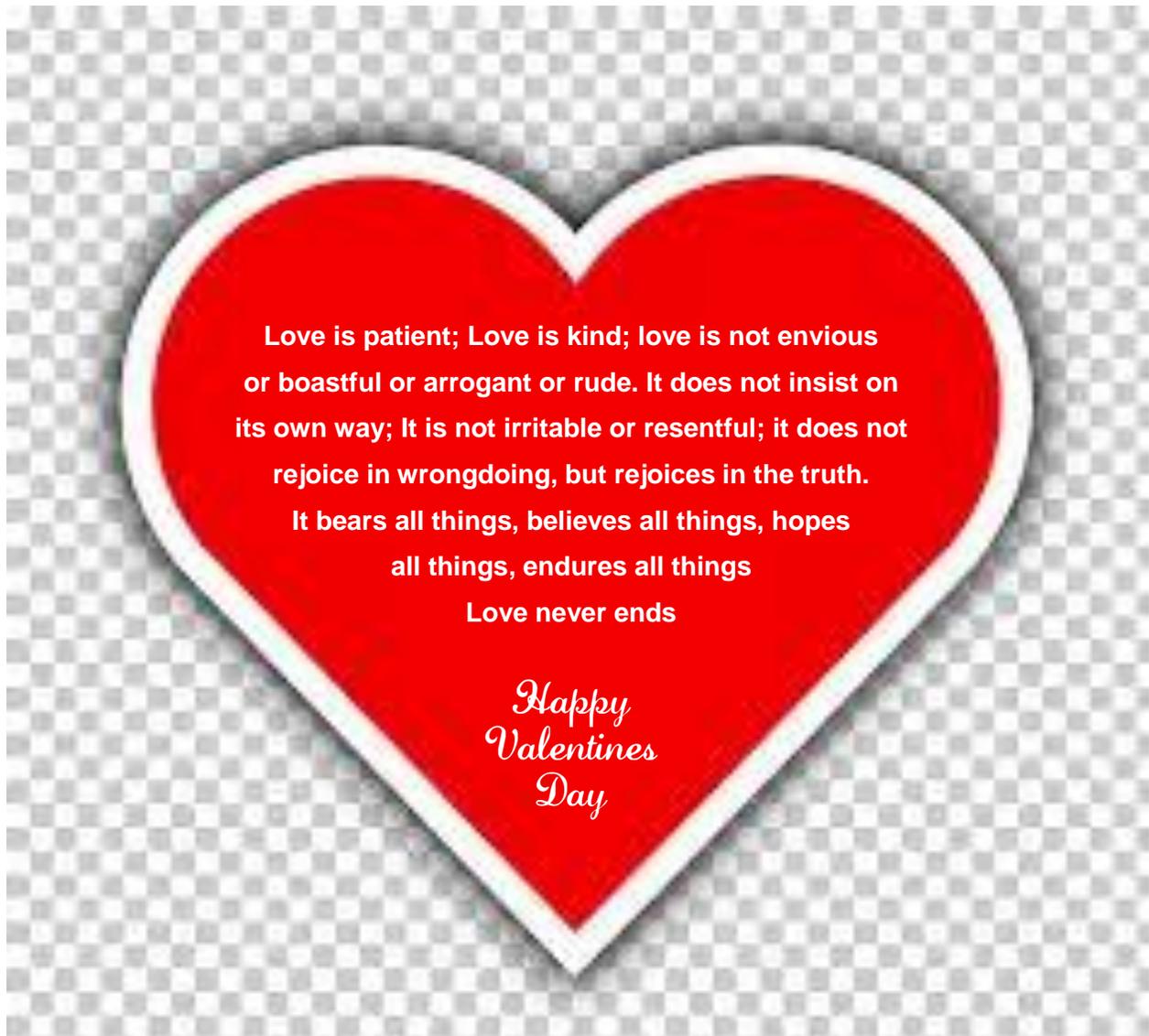
That is the promise to glade, the hill we climb if only we dare it because being American is more than a pride we inherit, it's the past we step into and how we repair it. We've seen a force that would shatter our nation rather than share it. That would destroy our country if it meant delaying democracy, and this effort very nearly succeeded. But while democracy can periodically be delayed, but it can never be permanently defeated.

In this truth, in this faith, we trust, for while we have our eyes on the future, history has its eyes on us, this is the era of just redemption we feared in its inception we did not feel prepared to be the heirs of such a terrifying hour but within it we found the power to author a new chapter, to offer hope and laughter to ourselves, so while once we asked how can we possibly prevail over catastrophe, now we assert how could catastrophe possibly prevail over us.

We will not march back to what was but move to what shall be, a country that is bruised but whole, benevolent but bold, fierce and free, we will not be turned around or interrupted by intimidation because we know our inaction and inertia will be the inheritance of the next generation, our blunders become their burden. But one thing is certain: if we merge mercy with might and might with right, then love becomes our legacy and change our children's birthright.

So let us leave behind a country better than the one we were left, with every breath from my bronze, pounded chest, we will raise this wounded world into a wondrous one, we will rise from the golden hills of the West, we will rise from the windswept Northeast where our forefathers first realized revolution, we will rise from the lake-rimmed cities of the Midwestern states, we will rise from the sunbaked South, we will rebuild, reconcile, and recover in every known nook of our nation in every corner called our country our people diverse and beautiful

will emerge battered and beautiful, when the day comes we step out of the shade aflame and unafraid, the new dawn blooms as we free it, for there is always light if only we're brave enough to see it, if only we're brave enough to be it.



# The Peg Witmer Memorial Fund for School #4

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A partner with the  
Rochester Education Foundation

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Peg Witmer was a 4th grade and math resource teacher at the George Mather Forbes School #4 in Rochester, NY for 25 years. Peg’s ways of nurturing and enjoying the students, teachers, staff and volunteers in the multiracial #4 School community, led a student at her retirement party to describe her as a “bridge builder.” Peg’s family established this fund to serve as an ongoing resource to enrich learning opportunities for students at School #4.

School #4 is located in an economically disadvantaged Rochester neighborhood, and students at the school face multiple challenges in and outside of school. Peg always felt a strong sense of dedication to her students and their families, and sought ways to provide support in the classroom and beyond.

About the Fund:

The Peg Witmer Memorial Fund for School #4 will provide students with enriching materials and experiences not otherwise provided by the City School District or other support programs.

Some examples of supports the Fund will provide include:

- board and card games to aid in socialization, and in math and language skill learning
- educational field trips, with a focus on Rochester history, the real-world application of STEM skills, and fine and performing arts
- manipulative objects to support math concept learning
- classroom instructional charts and cards as supplementary visual learning supports

### To donate:

Please go to: [rochestereducation.org/pegsfund](http://rochestereducation.org/pegsfund)

or mail a check (with ‘Peg Witmer Fund’ in the memo line) to The Rochester Education Foundation, 250 Mill Street, Rochester, NY 14614

**The Witmer family and the School #4  
community thank you for your generous  
donation.**

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The **Rochester Education Foundation** is an independent, not-for-profit organization whose mission is to improve learning and success for all Rochester public school students through the provision of programs and cultivation of partnerships with educators, businesses and the community.

For further information, go to:  
<http://www.rochestereducation.org>  
or call 585-571-5790.