



A NEWSLETTER OF THE CATAWBA CLERGY NETWORK

THRIVING THOUGHTS AFTER INSURRECTION



By The Rev. Betty Morton, Rev. Betty Morton, PCC – Leadership, Life and Spiritual Coach and Consultant to the Catawba Clergy Network

We could not wait for 2020 to end – COVID-19, jobs disrupted or lost, lives turned upside down, restrictions and isolation, our country severely divided. Surely, by 2021, things would be better. But 2021 is here, and things are worse. Compounded by the turmoil now facing our nation, anxiety is at an all-time high. The state of our communities, our nation and our world breaks our hearts.

Christian leaders, what can you do to keep these times from breaking you? What might you do to thrive in 2021 despite all the turmoil and devastation that surrounds us?

These days, I find myself not only heartbroken, but all over the place in my thoughts and reactions:

- Confused as to how anyone can associate lying, misinformation and violence with godly behavior
- Angry that so many leaders, religious and secular, are overtly complicit in such conduct or silent in the face of it
- Distracted and drained by the all the chaos, which I believe is its intent

So, what might you do differently to stay grounded, while also realizing your hopes for 2021?

I am resolving to stay grounded in truth, human kindness and God's love.

I intend to stand my ground in love.

I humbly offer this suggestion: **Stay awake.** Ground yourself in truth, mourn the moment and strengthen yourself through prayer and community. Matthew 26 tells us that when facing the truth of his impending betrayal and death, Jesus acknowledged these sad realities, deeply mourned them and prayed earnestly to steady himself for what was to come. He also pleaded with his disciples to "stay awake" and pray with him. Likewise, you are called to stay awake to the reality of these times, mourn them and then prayerfully act. Jesus grounded and strengthened himself in the love of God, and so must you. Although, at times, you may feel abandoned, remember the Spirit of the living God is always in you (Matt 27). God has not left you to face these times alone.

IN NEED OF A SHEPHERD

Prayers of the people written by the Rev. Dr. William Green, CCN Member and Catawba Alum

We are living in stressful times. A pandemic has caused loss, grief, and sorrow. The divisions in our country have spawned anger, hate, and violence. Racism is systemic and is the cause of pain, injustice, and inequity throughout society.

Who will lead us during these stressful times?

God has promised to raise up shepherds to lead us in these stressful times.

Because God is faithful to keep covenant with us and desires to bring wholeness of life to all creation, let us pray.

Leader: Good and gracious God, we pray for shepherds who will lead us during these stressful times so that no one will have to live in fear. O Lord, in your mercy,

People: **Hear our prayer.**

Leader: We pray for shepherds who will spread love, show mercy, and practice hospitality. O Lord, in your mercy,

People: **Hear our prayer.**

Leader: We pray for shepherds who will pursue peace, justice, and reconciliation. O Lord, in your mercy,

People: **Hear our prayer.**

Leader: We pray for shepherds who will promote understanding, restoration, and healing. O Lord, in your mercy,

People: **Hear our prayer.**

Leader: We pray for shepherds who will govern with equity, fairness, and wisdom for the common good of all persons. O Lord, in your mercy,

People: **Hear our prayer.**

Leader: We pray through Jesus Christ, our Good Shepherd, One God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

We will be praying for all of you as you shepherd your congregations and communities through these trying times and whatever the future holds. We are here to support you and grateful to know that you are doing this good work!

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Nominate a youth to attend DISCOVER, Catawba's Youth Theology Institute, a weeklong summer program, free after a \$25 deposit. Contact samartin12@catawba.edu to nominate a student.



- will have completed 7th grade through 12th grade by the start of the program
- have big questions about their faith
- show leadership qualities
- show gifts for or interest in ministry
- interested in exploring their calling through theology and service, worship arts, or sports management
- Want to have fun and build community in an outdoor ministry setting



A FILM BY PERIPHERAL VISION PDX
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11AM

HOPE FOR AMERICA'S MOST SEGREGATED HOUR

Feb 11, 2021 • 6 PM •

ONLINE PANEL DISCUSSION BEGINNING AT 7PM
VISIT WWW.CATAWBA.EDU/CLERGY
FOR MORE INFORMATION & TO REGISTER!

**TREE OF LIFE:
BLACK FAITH MATTERS IN A
TIME OF DUAL PANDEMICS**



Find out more information and register for the webinars at <https://www.braxtoninstitute.org/ourevents>. Beginning January 26th at 6:30.

Virtual Mental Health First Aid Training with Atrium Health has been rescheduled to March 17th. Email clergynetwork@catawba.edu to register.

Re
CONNECT
for the Future

Celebrating 35 years of Emerging Issues Forums

A VIRTUAL EMERGING ISSUES FORUM | FEBRUARY 15-18, 2021

To celebrate 35 years of Emerging Issues Forums, we invite you to join us for ReCONNECT for the Future, four days of carefully curated virtual content sure to inspire and empower individuals and communities to come together, across lines of geography, race, income and politics, to address the biggest challenges we face as a state. The Forum concludes a six-event series focused on the "connections" our state struggles with. Over the four days, we will create a shared understanding of the many "whys" to reconnect, highlight select big ideas that have the greatest potential to help us reconnect, and build our capacity to better work together in order to move forward.

Faith Leaders can use the discount code RfTF-Faith21 for free registration.



CLERGY DAYS 2020

By Hannah Hutchens, '20, Lilly Fellow

Much like many events held in 2020, Catawba's Clergy Days 2020 looked a little different than usual. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Catawba Clergy Network gathered virtually. In this virtual event participants had the opportunity to gather as a community during the "Lunch & Learn Session" where Clergy Network staff and current members shared information, stories, and encouragement, while we all enjoyed lunch provided by the Clergy Network via GrubHub! Catawba's 24th President, Dr. David Nelson, who was also excited to hear more about the Clergy Network, joined in on this session as well! The event continued with a session entitled, "Digital Ministry: Highs, Lows, and the Future of Church" hosted by The Rev. Alex Shea Will, Catawba Alumnus and Associate Pastor of South Church, Andover. In this session participants were involved in an interactive conversation and presentation where participants were encouraged to think about practical technology solutions for this time of distancing, as well as to approach online spaces as legitimate spaces for ministry to occur. The event concluded with the final session entitled, "A Conversation on Self-Care: How Resilience and Trauma-Informed Care can Sustain us and Bring Hope to our Communities" led by The Rev. Jessica Stokes, Associate Director of Partners in Health and Wholeness and our very own Shannon Axtell Martin '08. During this conversation participants were encouraged to think about the question, "what do we need to do to take care of our deeper self?" Participants were encouraged not to think of self-care as one more thing to add to their to-do list, but instead to reframe self care to be "day-to-day behaviors and practices that become a part of our emotional muscle memory." This conversation and presentation was full of helpful, practical information, including information on the 4 step process for mindfulness and approaching "burn out".

Thank you to everyone who participated in our Virtual Catawba Clergy Days! We hope that you all enjoyed the time we had together. We cannot wait for the day we can meet together again in-person, until then we will cherish these times where creative events happen, encouragement is shared, and ideas emerge.

To view the recorded sessions contact clergynetwork@catawba.edu



As a part of the Conversation on Self-Care, participants were invited to create their own "touchstone." These "touchstones" are intended to be a tangible, physical reminder of the God who grounds you, loves you, and is present with you. Participants were asked to write a word or draw an image on their rock to remind them of their center.



THRIVING IN 2021 - IS IT POSSIBLE?

By The Rev. Betty Morton

Taking the right steps to succeed at your resolutions and thrive in 2021

Often, we start the new year making resolutions for how we will live better, be better and achieve new goals. It may be difficult to think about the new when so many are struggling just to survive; however, we must continue to move forward.

Research shows that over 90% of most New Year's resolutions are abandoned by February. And why? Primarily because the resolutions we make are: 1) not true priorities, 2) not realistic and specific enough, 3) not moving toward what you want, but away from a negative, and 4) not supported in ways that help you achieve them. The question I pose to myself and to all of you is, "What will you do and stick with to make 2021 any different than prior years?" I offer a few suggestions based on readings in human wellbeing and the most recent research on New Year's resolutions.

1. **Slow down**

Regularly slow down enough to clear your mind, calm yourself and ground yourself through prayer, reflection and mindfulness meditation. Make space for gaining clarity about what is most important for your health and wellbeing.

2. **Make your health and self-care a priority**

The body of Christ needs its leaders to be grounded, healthy and resilient. God calls you to love with heart, body, mind and soul, and to love neighbor as yourself. Staying healthy requires ongoing attention to all aspects of who you are, as well as ongoing attention to the needs of others, with whom you are inextricably connected.

3. **Declutter both your mind and your plate**

Be clear about your priorities and how you will achieve what you want. Name your priorities for yourself and your church or organization. Be specific about what you will do to achieve your goals. Research shows that you will likely have more success if you are very clear about how you will approach your goals. As well, success is more likely if you focus on the positive changes you will make, rather than focusing on what's wrong.

Do less Declutter your plate by focusing on the essentials and letting some things go. Not everything can be a priority. Doing less will allow you to do the important things well. For your own wellbeing and the wellbeing of the communities you serve, be realistic about what you can and cannot do. Take small, reasonable steps toward your future, rather than making huge changes you cannot sustain. And learn to say "no" at times, rather than concede to everyone's desires and expectations. Saying "no" can be hard, but it can also be lifesaving. Consult with others about what needs to be done or set aside for now. By getting their input on key decisions and their buy in, it's more likely that you will also have their cooperation.

4. **Communicate, communicate, communicate.** Manage expectations by continued communications. Frequently remind yourself and the body you serve of your and their priorities and key decisions. Also remind them of the importance of your self-care and let them know when you need time away and additional support. Remind folk and yourself that you cannot do everything. Regularly check in on your wellbeing through self-reflection and on the wellbeing of those you serve by seeking their feedback. Encourage positive and respectful communication rather than complaint.

5. **Get the support you need and involve others.** Having the ongoing support you need is another key to success at achieving resolutions and goals. Along with paying ongoing attention to self-care and continuing to seek feedback, regular support and encouragement build resilience for the long haul. If you need support, whether for your personal wellbeing or for the wellbeing of your church, be sure to reach out for it. Trust yourself. Put away self-criticism and shield yourself from others' diminishing judgments. Those we serve often have unreasonable expectations and may not see the big picture of your broad responsibilities and efforts. All of us feel inadequate to the task at times. Believe that no matter what you face, you are enough, and God equips you with enough for this day. Draw upon your wisdom within, the Spirit of the living God within, to guide your steps. Instead of doubt and complaint, encourage yourself and others toward faith and gratitude.

You can thrive in 2021 and move into this year with confidence in the good work you will continue to do. But it takes intention and attention. By doing these few things above, you will give yourself the best chance of staying grounded and healthy, as well as achieving your resolutions and goals for 2021.



Please follow us on Facebook: *Catawba Clergy Network*. (<https://www.facebook.com/catawbaclergynetwork/>)

We also have a private group on Facebook, which allows you to connect with other members of the network. To join this group, please visit the following link: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/835469520163571/>