

Who laid the earth's cornerstone
when the morning stars sang together
and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy? *Job 38:6b-7*

Everything All at Once

I am writing this column from Jeonju, Korea (more specifically, the Jeonju Best Western—yeah, really; welcome to the global economy). Yesterday I was able to preach to Jungbu (Central) Presbyterian Church, was hosted to a bibimbap lunch (Jeonju is known for its culinary arts, including its fame as the birthplace of bibimbap), and attended a special afternoon worship service for Korean Thanksgiving, with the baptism of 13 people (3 babies, 5 young people, and 5 adults). So far the visit has been a blessing, and the people have been way more than gracious. However, we have been praying for Synod Executive/Stated Clerk Mark Hong, who has been experiencing severe back pain even as he tries to fulfill his commitments for this trip, including preaching twice yesterday morning. Since I'm at the start of the trip, I don't have much more to say about my journey, except that I'm thankful for being able to be here, and I'm tired from jet lag, so this column is a brief grab bag of items.

Back in the USA, today is Indigenous Peoples' Day, and we celebrate in two ways:

- The national church released a short article to promote a short video documenting the [Siban'gna landback](#). The article includes a link to the video; click [HERE](#) to go straight to the video. This is a great gift, as it helps us remember the joy and gratitude we felt that day, it encourages us to keep the connection alive, and we hope to be an inspiration to other presbyteries and churches to recognize the ways God opens to them, to contribute to reparative justice in our world.
- Let us pray fervently that the Gaza ceasefire take effect with the release of all remaining Israeli hostages and the ability for aid trucks to enter Gaza. It is not mentioned often, but the Palestinian people are the Indigenous people of the land now called Israel, but regardless how this conflict is described, the suffering in Gaza is horrendous and an end to the violence and blocking of humanitarian aid is needed beyond measure.

Late last week we heard the sad news of Father Chris Ponnet's unexpected death. Father Chris was the long-time director of spiritual care at Los Angeles General Medical Center and director of the St. Camillus Center for Spiritual Care. He was a staunch advocate for LGBTQ rights, immigrant rights, and the abolition of the death penalty, and through LA General and St. Camillus he oversaw an innovative CPE (Clinical Pastoral Education) program, supported Angel Interfaith Network, and was the on-site supervisor of the chaplain staff that includes our Protestant chaplain, a position now filled by Stephanie Kang. Father Chris was having chest pains which led to surgery, and he died while in surgery. A light for compassion and justice has gone dim, and we all pray for the people Father Chris cared for, including his family and the many patients who sought medical aid at LA General. LA General's CEO, Jorge Orozco, informs the hospital staff at <https://www.youtube.com/live/TKPL3ZPX48U>—fast forward to 4:33 to hear the heartfelt announcement.

Finally, with the leadership of Juan Sarmiento and San Fernando Presbytery, we can commemorate 170 years of Presbyterian mission in Los Angeles. As Juan writes,

In a year marked by devastating fires and distressing immigration raids, Presbyterians in Los Angeles are still celebrating a story of faith. This fall, discover the 170th Anniversary Podcast, sponsored by the Synod of Southern California and Hawaii of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)—six episodes tracing a story of courage, creativity, disruption, and grace.

Learn more at <https://lapresbyterians.net/> #PCUSA #losangeles #podcast

The life of faith in Southern California is indeed full and dynamic. May we live fully into our calling as God's people, even as we also take the time to rest and stay open enough to discern and respond to God's call to us, in the myriad ways we may serve.

Blessings,

Wendy