



Landmark

MARCH 2021

**First Congregational Church
An Open and Affirming Congregation
Vol. 67, Number 3**

Dear Church Family,

Ah at first, I thought Peppermint our Penguin was adorable. In staff meeting we were so excited to have a fun moment in the midst of COVID. As Frosty the  came to life, we brought Peppermint the  to be.

Our line, “If the penguin is out, you stay in,” delighted us. We were grateful that our large sanctuary - “pavilion-like” giant opened windows, and masked, distanced, registered up to seventy people (small group) could meet in person. We received some criticism for meeting and yet felt confident in the protocol for this community and for our (inside- like-outside) space. No one has gotten ill either.

Unfortunately, our winter weather has not been cooperating and we have seen far too much of Peppermint! . We can’t gather in the Sanctuary if the temperature is below freezing. Why one might ask? It is too cold for the congregation to be still and sit in designated places. Our musicians and worship leaders can’t turn pages or lead the service well. The bitter cold is not good for our instruments either. We watched the weather apps as they gave both the temperature and, given other conditions, what that temperature will feel like outside.

So, on those Sundays when it is too cold to gather, and Peppermint the Penguin comes out, please join together-apart with those who regularly attend the online service at home. We clergy and staff miss being in our sacred space and imagine many of you do too. Prayers for the ache of separation, and may Persnickety, I mean Peppermint the Penguin stay in soon!

*Peace to all,
Ginger*

TOGETHER WITH HOPE WE LOOK AHEAD:

EASTER SUNDAY, APRIL 4, 2021

There will be three services:

(All attendees masked and physically-distanced)

Sunrise Service at the Beach

9:00am Easter Service with Celebration of Baptism and Covenanting with New Members

11:00am Easter Festival Service

Registration for these services will begin on March 17th.

If you are interested in becoming a member of First Church on Easter Sunday at 9:00am please contact the Church Office by March 14th (office@firstchurchguilford.org or 203-453-5249.)

MARCH 2021 WORSHIP SCHEDULE:

In-person worship- only if 35 degrees** or above at 10:00am on Sunday...limited to 70 – reserve a seat online at www.firstchurch Guilford.org – click on “Get Connected” then “Worship RSVP (date)”

Worship by email: an email with worship will be mailed on Sunday morning.

Worship by mail: hard copies of the worship bulletin and a transcript of the sermon will be mailed.

Sunday, March 7 at 10:00am

Sunday, March 14 at 10:00am

Sunday, March 21 at 10:00am

Sunday, March 28 at 10:00am (Palm Sunday)

****Peppermint the Penguin** will appear in front of the church and on Facebook and the Church’s webpage if it is colder than 35 degrees.

Remember, if the Penguin is out – you stay in!

**PARISH CARE TEAM MEMBER
(formerly Deaconess) OF THE MONTH**

Please notify Joanna Murphy (860-514-4447) of births, adoptions, or anyone who may need a note of sympathy or encouragement.

DEACON OF THE MONTH

Deacon for January is Jean Gresham (203-738-9501). If you have feedback or questions about church matters. Please speak with Jean.

FOOD COLLECTION

“I was hungry & you gave me food.” Matt 25:35



Food insecurity continues. We invite you to continue to support the Guilford Food Bank. Check the Guilford Food bank website for their recent needs. Food can be dropped off at Big Y and Palumbo’s

Automotive during their regular working hours. The Guilford Food bank receives donations on Friday mornings.

WOMEN’S FELLOWSHIP AND OUTREACH

(formerly Alpha Club)

Meeting Tuesday, April 27th at 2:00pm

We will meet outdoors in the Memorial Garden. All women are welcome to come. We will have a short business meeting, followed by a time of fellowship. Please bring your own chair, but there are benches available. At our last meeting in October, we voted on a time change to accommodate members who don’t feel comfortable driving at night. Looking forward to seeing everyone!

Kathy Abbatello, President



IN MEMORIAM:

Michael Tolokan, Jr.

January 5, 1942 – November 30, 2020

Grace Barbour

April 9, 1934 – January 25, 2021

Ruth Alexander Nettleton

August 23, 1927 – January 27, 2021

**INTRODUCING OUR
SABBATICAL INTERIM LEAD MINISTER:**

The Rev. Suzanne E. Wagner

We will welcome the Reverend Suzanne E. Wagner who will minister here from April 7th -- July 7th on a part-time basis, 25 hours per week, while Ginger is on sabbatical.

Rev. Wagner was ordained into Christian Ministry in the United Church of Christ in 2002 after earning her Master of Divinity degree from Andover Newton Theological School in Newton Center, MA and earlier, her Bachelor of Fine Arts from William Woods University in Fulton, MO. Her major was in watercolor.

Rev. Wagner ended a six-year ministry at Orange Congregational Church in Orange, CT as Senior Redevelopment Pastor after serving three other area UCC churches (Olivet Congregational Church, Wilton Congregational Church and First Church Congregational, Fairfield). She was a part time chaplain at Veteran’s Affairs Hospital in West Haven for four years and earned her fourth unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) at Yale New Haven Hospital, St. Raphael’s campus in preparation for Board Certification. In addition, Rev. Wagner lived in Jerusalem for a year in 2007-08. She currently is on the Conference Ministerial Aid Committee, the New Haven Association Committee on Ministry, and has become an Annuitant Visitor in the UCC Pension Board Annuitant Visitor Program. She has also served sabbatical interim positions for churches, and most recently as a conference regional minister.

Rev. Wagner resides in Milford and she has three children, John, Daniel and Christine, all married, one grandson, and two granddaughters! In her free time, she likes to watercolor natural science and botanical subjects.

MANAGE ONLINE GIVING

Online giving is better than ever now! The site is quick and easy to use. Automated giving offers expedited posting to your giving account and reduced fees incurred by First Church. The most cost-effective option is to select the ACH option. If you already give via Vanco, please email Annemarie at financeoffice@firstchurchquilford.org and she will end your Vanco online giving and confirm via email response. The next step is for givers to set up online giving on the [First Church Giving](#) tab. It's easy to use and results in reduced processing costs for the church.

2020 STATEMENTS OF GIVING

Did you know that your 2020 Statement of Giving for tax purposes is available online? Sign into your account, select the Giving tab, select Statement, be sure the filter is set to Last calendar year and Tax Deductible, select Next. Choose download PDF or email. Questions? Contact Annemarie Alexa at financeoffice@firstchurchquilford.org.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ON LENT

Reflections will appear in the weekly Steeple email, and available in hard copy – please request from the Church Office.

March 3 - Charlotte White

March 10 - Bob Raines

March 17 - Bob Howard

March 24 - Gini King

As you read these reflections, may they offer a window and pathway to your own Lenten reflections on the Spirit of Jesus active and present in your life and in the world today.

GROCERY CARD UPDATE

Some titles are simply Awesome. Universal Studios is to open a new theme park in May with a feature “Kung Fu Panda Land of Awesomeness.” Nobody can beat that title! What wordsmith of one’s acquaintance can top that? It exercises all the positions of graphemic knowledge as it rolls off one’s tongue.

The title ‘Grocery Card’ is dull, uninspired, even tedious. Yet the Grocery Card brings useful satisfactions of its own greater than its title implies. Grocery cards for Bishop’s, Big Y and Stop & Shop earn \$5 for First Church when they are purchased, and they are an important ministry to those with food insecurity. Some have nice pictures and designs. Wednesdays from 10am-Noon these fine cards are on offer from the window the of Finance office in Spencer House. Buy some, take them home, buy extras for our ministers to share. Grocery Cards can be an awesome tool!

Bob Howard

CHILDREN & YOUTH MINISTRIES

March brings the season of Lent and the journey toward Easter. Join me for our weekly “**LIVE with Judi**” **Sunday School** on First Church’s Facebook page. We will continue to look at **The Lord’s Prayer** from Matthew 6:9b-13 and how praying can be a part of our daily routine, especially during Lent. Learn about some alternate spiritual practices that other families love.

As we journey through the season of Lent, families will have an opportunity to participate in an ALLELUIA! mural by coloring parts of it. Information and coloring pages will be coming by email! Check out the weekly CE Newsletter that is emailed every Thursday for all the things happening here and in the local UCC. If you don’t receive it and would like to, please let Judi know. judi@firstchurchquilford.org We will also have another baking event at church for 5-8th Grade students. Keep an eye out for a sign-up link. Numbers have to be limited. We will bake cookies for the Community Dining Room in Branford. These past months and a vaccine have brought hope for the pandemic to subside, we will keep you posted on plans for classes and nursery care. At this point, classrooms will remain closed on Sunday mornings. Read the CE newsletter for events and small group activities being planned for 2021!

Pilgrim Fellowship is engaging small groups of high school students in volunteering and virtual gatherings. We hold great hope for summer in-person activities!! PF continues to meet on zoom most Sunday evenings at 7 pm, with small group campfire connections on Sundays as well! Zoom links are emailed to participants. If you would like PF information, Let me know and I will add you to the PF email list. judi@firstchurchquilford.org

Our annual **PF Service Trip Sponsorship Drive** is happening. If you would like to donate towards materials, supplies and scholarships for our PF service work trip (hopefully this summer!), please contact me. We’ll send a brochure with information about where the money goes and the impact it has! Announcements are listed in the weekly Children, Teen & Family Ministries newsletter, PF Facebook page and PF’s Instagram.

Praying for you and your loved ones a month filled with hope, peace and joy!

Judi Wallace, Director, judi@firstchurchquilford.org



DEACON DIGEST

Art as a Faith Expression

As we begin Lent and our season of reflection, I find myself thinking back to just last month when Jake asked me to lead the February “Art as a Faith Expression” Zoom confirmation class. It was a daunting thought. But, before I knew it, I had a plan that would hopefully engage the confirmands in meaningful discussion. And I am now happy to report that I was thoroughly impressed with the class, their insightful questions and answers, and their overall interest.

I began the class with a tour of my glass studio and explanation about the fused glass process. As a glass artist, I design jewelry and items such as bowls, plates, seasonal items, and pieces of artwork. I cut glass and put it together into patterns and designs while continuously playing with color and light. We then talked more specifically about how my faith and artwork are intertwined.

My art is strongly influenced by my spiritual beliefs. I shared that I believe that God is love; God is grace; and God is all around us- and when we spread love, kindness, and beauty, we are both sharing our gifts and sharing God’s love. One of my customers shared that some of my glass pieces remind her of the cosmos, “The glittery, shimmering parts invite me to consider the stars ...each creation is unique. When noticing this during my visits, I can sense God is inviting me to connect with God’s creation.”

I feel closest to God when I am outside in nature, when something amazing happens, and when I am engrossed, such as when I am creating my artwork or sitting peacefully in church. Mrs. Catino had shared in an earlier Confirmation class that she feels like she is praising God when she sings. I believe creating music and art can be spiritual experiences.

Beauty, colors, and people speak differently to each of us. I am inspired by them in a myriad of ways. What is your definition of beauty? How do different colors and people make you feel? For me, beauty is often found outside, especially near the Shoreline or on the water, and I can become mesmerized by the variety of different colors all around us. People also inspire me, such as my mentors, friends, and family. These people push me, making me better. They see my potential and love me for who I am, mistakes and all. I believe God does too.

Glass is something we all use every day and often take for granted. Made out of sand under extremely hot conditions, working with glass is all about breaking it apart, changing it, and making it new again. It can be perfectly smooth and yet has

stresses and can be scratched. Sounds like a metaphor for life, doesn’t it?

Glass entrances, it inspires. Whether transparent, reflective, or iridescent, light hits it and passes through it or bounces off of it. It brings to mind the theme of light in the bible. In John 8:12, Jesus says, “I am the light of the world. He who follows me shall not walk in darkness but have the light of life.” Remember, we all walk in God’s light.

What you see and feel when looking at artwork will be different from what others think about it. Everyone interprets art in their own way. Its meaning, impact, and relevance to you will always be unique to you. Embracing this, and all our differences is key. I closed by sharing my hope for each of the confirmands, that they find the beauty around them, recognize it, create art, and relax knowing that God is with them all the way. Love always wins.

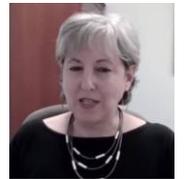
Jean Gresham, Deacon for March

ADULT EDUCATION: **Overcoming Racism**

Sponsored by the Adult Education Committee of First Church and CT Shoreline Indivisible

Sat., March 6, 10:00am - Cynthia Martin, “With Our Best Intentions,” will talk about

next steps for allies in the fight for social justice and equity.” Cynthia is the CEO of NCCJ – Nat’l Conf. for Community and Justice, providing anti-racism training and workshops, and celebrates the diversity of races, religions, cultures, genders, abilities & sexual orientations. Zoom: To Preregister: https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJMpd-qprjvE9eVf_ogvZ50L9tHx6Togk97



Sat., March 20, 10:00am - Katie Campbell Morrison (KCM), “Anti-Racism and the Role of White Women” will talk on the role of

white women in the existence of violent systems of oppression and ways to overcome racism. KCM served as our Yale Divinity School intern last year with the Prison and Re-entry Ministries. She worked in New Haven with SWAN- Sex Workers and Allies Network and with other community outreach programs. Zoom: To Preregister:

<https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJYoduuhrT8qGdR0tRbHFxidmr1hw0UIPPN2>



ECO Echo Living With Others

When my husband Ray was alive, he took care of the back yard, tending the bird feeder, building huge veggie gardens wherever we settled, and planting fruit trees and bushes. We had a huge asparagus bed that gave us asparagus every night for over a month. I was in the kitchen: canning, freezing, and preserving what we could not eat immediately from his productive garden. But when he died, I gave up the bird feeder until this fall when my children gave me a smaller, more manageable one. To my amazement, a whole village of little birds emerged from the huge hedge at the edge of our property, eagerly sharing the seeds I put out there every day. I see squirrels, and in the summer, rabbits, voles, moles and all sorts of other creatures who share my land with me. I had an old group of diseased hemlocks trees cut down, and then wondered whose homes had been disturbed. Next spring, we will plant some native shrubs and plants to fill in that space and give us a nice border to the yard.

Sometimes, I step into the garden path and I can feel a tunnel under my foot, and I know a mole or vole is aiming at my tomato plants. There are flying things, too small to identify, but some pollinate, and some eat, and the birds stop them in their tracks at lunchtime. I realize there is a whole army of little creatures out there that share my space with me and I wonder and marvel at the intricacies of Nature. The Creation, God's world, interconnects and maintains a balance that gives us wonderful forests and wetlands and dependable weather year after year. But in our so-called wisdom, we spray and trap and soon the whole system of balance is upset, and we get floods and fires and yes – global warming.

I remember reading about new landowners who planned to build a house on their property. First, they checked out the paths that the animals used and soon found a suitable place for their house that did not disturb the habits of those who had been living there for a long time. We can live in harmony with Nature, using composting and manure to feed our plants, ground cover to keep the carbon in the soil, collecting rainwater for the dry times, and mulching, as needed.

The British use a word I have not heard before -- "rewilding" – planting native trees and shrubs into parts of the landscape to encourage a space for "wildness" to proliferate, instead of creating a "dump" or too much lawn to fertilize and mow. Check out the church garden that Milton and Tom and others are farming to see some possibilities.

Sue Jones, Environmental Ministry Team

A CREATION JUSTICE CHURCH

For two years, the Environmental Ministry Team and other interested church members have studied what it means to become a UCC-designated Creation Justice Church, a faith-forward program launched by the UCC in 2016. We've shared with the congregation through educational material about Creation Justice through programs and all First Church's communication channels.

What do Creation Justice (CJ) churches do? address climate change and try to integrate care for Creation into the life of the church through worship, education and through building/land use policies; install solar panels to generate electricity and save money; reduce solid waste and the use of plastics, Styrofoam, and other non-compostable materials; recycle, reuse and repurpose; become UCC-designated Green Houses of Worship; create organic gardens to reduce grassy areas and conserve water for gardens that provide food for food banks and needy families; invest the church financial resources in Socially Responsible Investments; join a larger network of congregations and a larger movement to promote Creation Justice; engage in critical thinking about the socioeconomic dimensions of environmental justice, such as race, class, and global inequality; study the social justice impacts of environmental degradation on poor and indigenous communities and communities of color, regarding environmental consciousness and social justice as intimately intertwined; participate in marches and advocacy; write to/visit state and national legislators to share faith-driven beliefs about Creation justice and Creation care.

First Church has done all of the above, thanks to so many helping hands and caring hearts in our church family! We have accomplished this goal standing on the shoulders of Ray Jones, Bob Leete, Letty Russell, Clyde and Betsy Work, Bob Raines and Cynthia Hirni, and other past and present justice advocates. First Church groups have also provided input and involvement: Peace, Affirmation & Justice; Finance; Immigration; Business; Trustees; Christian Education; Community & Global Justice; Church Council; as have Ginger, Jake, Mark, Judi, and Penelope and all of the church staff. EMT is grateful for their inspiration, participation and support and for yours on Sunday at the Annual Meeting as we voted on and passed our Creation Justice Church Covenant. We will continue to look for new ways to care for God's Creation and to seek justice for the oppressed and those who have suffered from environmental racism.

continues

The Creation Justice Covenant is a sacred act and articulates our church's core values, beliefs and obligations to our Creator God and to all God's Creation. It amplifies our church's historic Salem covenant, and is a sign that Creation care and Creation Justice will be an integral strand in our church's DNA going forward. We stand in the truth of our **interconnectedness** and the movement toward a right relationship with all of God's Creation. We commit to heal, restore, and tend God's Creation and protect it from exploitation and injustice. As a CJ church we invite and foster a deeper sense of the awe of Creation and connection – to God, each other, our siblings beyond our church, to all creatures of Earth, and the generations to come. We welcome anyone in our church family to join us in the important "mission work".

Thank you to all who were present to take part in this historic vote! Ginger and I will complete the application to become a CJ church and send it with our signed covenant to the National Office. If approved, we'll be the first UCC church in CT to receive this designation. We pray to be a "light" to other houses of worship pursuing path. May God continue to bless us and all of Creation.

*Rev. Nancy Leckerling, Co-Chair
Environmental Ministry Team*

ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING "Let Love Flow" Palm Sunday, March 28



Our generosity lets love flow and ensures that the transforming power of love will continue to change the lives of those who are most vulnerable. When we give to OGHS, we provide clean water for drinking and sanitation to children like Hanh and her schoolmates (see next column.) God's compassion flows through our gifts to bring the promise of better health to children. The Board of Community & Global Justice encourages you to please give generously to support this important work. You can mail in a check to the church office (marked OGHS) or donate via a special link on First Church's website.

MISSION MOMENT – VIETNAM Letting Love Flow Through Springs of Clean Water

The COVID-19 pandemic has taught us many things about what it means to be a global community. One of the most basic reminders has been the importance of washing our hands in the battle to prevent infections and disease.

Hanh and her mom live in a poor rural village about 135 miles northwest of Hanoi, Vietnam. In Hanh's village there were no toilets - people still use fields, bushes, and streams as bathrooms. This situation is common in many places in rural Vietnam and across southeast Asia. In September 2018, latrine and water supply improvements were brought to Hanh's school. Since then, Hanh and her friends have had an exciting time experiencing modern latrines and clean water taps and how these conveniences lead to better hygiene and, ultimately, better health.

The United Church of Christ stands in solidarity and mutuality with communities suffering and in need. Through Wider Church Ministries, the UCC offers hope and fulfills its commitment to respond to a variety of global and local concerns by providing advocacy, sustainable development resources and long-term disaster recovery support.

"Nobody hungry, nobody thirsty, shade from the sun, shelter from the wind, For the Compassionate One guides them, takes them to the best springs." (Isaiah 49:10 MSG)

CIVIL RIGHTS HISTORY TRIP - Virtual Style

Once again almost thirty from First Church joined for this year's "trip." We didn't take planes, trains, or automobiles as we have on the past four trips to Alabama, Virginia, North Carolina, and Tennessee. This year we traveled through Zoom with book discussions, video clips, conversations, and a call with the Director and Assistant Director of the Franklinton Center at Bricks in NC. The time was meaningful, inspiring, and profound.

Next February over Presidents' Day weekend, we hope to travel again. Please mark your calendars and come along.

For now, in the reflection on the next pages, may you get a sense of the trip as our Resident Poet, Julie Fitzpatrick, offers her take on the three day experience.

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CIVIL RIGHTS HISTORY TRIP - Virtual Style

A Reflection by Julie Fitzpatrick

One: Absorbing

We hugged Fitz goodbye for the weekend with his dad on the corner of 11th & 53rd in the Big Apple. We pop back in the truck sorry he'll not be with us for this -trip-in-quotations but he'd feel funny on a separate zoom from us he'd said and it won't be as fun without the other kids. Couldn't argue with that, we knew. So we buckle up and join the zoom - comforted by the faces in the squares we see of those in our community.

Imagine we were on a trip trip, Ginger begins ...
And we do.

Milton talks of a meal we'd most likely be sharing
Something fried perhaps:
Catfish, Grits, Braised greens, Sweet potatoes,
An app of fried pickles
All topped off with sweet tea and a cobbler.
We'd try this and try that, back when we could do
this and that.

We're quiet as he reads a prayer by Maya Angelou
About Father Mother God, about love, about peace.

We talk of movies, books, shows to watch
To learn, to grow, to wake up:
Sandra Bland. Burden, Henrietta Lacks,
Complicity, Caste, Pauli Murray, Finding your
Roots, The 1619 Project.

Via video we go first to New Orleans
The Whitney Plantation there run by John
Cummings, a white man determined to look at
What we did, What was done right there.
The whole place resurrects history to confront its
painful past.

A Senegalese historian, Dr. Seck, culled diaries
from auctions and estate sales to find Names of
slaves now etched into walls, which contain
Pieces of their stories from France, Spain, Africa.
We see heads on skinny sticks standing in a pond -
strange stems - a haunting artistic representation of
those beheaded there - garish lollipops poised
above the lily pads. Statues of children greet us
next in a bare room - eyes hollow - their grotesque
Innocence grabs me - born into slavery - their
posture asks why why why.

A descendent of slaves is interviewed.
She was not told for decades that her ancestors
were slaves – Were they ashamed, she thinks out
loud Or just trying to protect us?

How we dance from the truth
How we avoid calling the shots as they are
How we lie to ourselves and each other
This happened. We did this.

Unless we see it and tell it, we can't heal it.

Next we go to the ICA Museum in Boston.
Nina Chanel Abney's murals are vivid, dynamic
The scale of her work breathtaking
I'm happy as long as people engage and talk, she
says
She wants to start the conversation
And just like that we are quiet Taking it all in I think
Absorbing Stirring Stewing
Which is exactly why we came.
We start to open up again about art and expression
Black Lives Matter,
Kara Walker,
Henry Louis Gates.

And then it's good night to song.
A gospel choir claps us out,
Sways us out, Sings us out. Oh happy day
Oh happy day Jesus washed my sins away

Pete and I approach Guilford as we soak up their
spirit, their smiles. We click to leave the meeting
and drive in the dark past the Bishop's Apple
glowing red for Valentine's. Virtual or no, already
it's been quite a trip.

Two: Listening

We say good morning on the screen.
Baby cinnamon rolls were served in Milton's kitchen
today

And he talks of waffles years ago in Montgomery
with the gregarious Bud.
He leads us in prayer again this time by W E B Du
Bois.

We listen to Stevie Wonder and wonder at the
magical dancers performing before us flinging their
bodies, flying past one another.

Their limbs loose, surging with raw, honest,
invigorating rhythm.

We hear quotes from the voices of Maya Angelou,
Martin Luther King Jr, Malcolm X, Beyoncé,
Obama, Oprah - the courage, gravitas and
awesomeness of their words lingers.

John Lewis and Bryan Stevenson sit for a Ted talk.
Lewis talks of witnessing something that is not right
and feeling a fire burn up his bones unless he says
something, does something, gets into good trouble.
Bryan Stevenson leans towards him saying yeah
yeah yeah

His listening is in his eyes, in his mouth, in his
whole being.

I am captivated watching him listen
It is a master class in listening, really.
His ears, his heart, his chin, his eyes melded
melted mixed into one concentrated act of
connection.

What a gift it is to truly listen and to watch it in action.

Something uncoils from inside me,
Hearing them hearing each other.
They talk of repentance & redemption & being a force for good.

Then Kehinde Wiley shares his passion for classical artists from whom he takes his inspiration juxtaposing their wigs and pomp with people he meets on the street - they find the poses, the power, the powder they want to evoke and wear and suddenly his canvases pop to life the old, the new, the floral, the fine shining a light on people who were in the shadows now on pedestals in museums on horses in fields.

We listen to John Legend and Common and get a visit from grace as we hear the song Glory.
We glimpse the Franklinton center at Bricks where we'll go on Monday a plantation that peels back layers to reveal the savagery of slavery and the flickers of beauty, which emerge when we don't hide what came before us.

We are full as lunchtime approaches - full with the beauty of humanity and the heartbreak of history.
And gratitude again for our community as we sojourn on a second day beyond our white skin.
To listen.

Three: Sankofa

Ginger prays for us and all those who have lost loved ones of late.

We head to The Franklinton Center at Bricks in North Carolina by way of our guest hosts Rev. Elly Mendez Angulo and Vivian Lucas.

Welcome home, they say.

At Franklinton they live the journey of Civil Rights, Vivian begins on 245 acres.

A property that is in part the remains of a plantation,

A place rooted in slavery and racism,

A place haunted and driven by the current needs and struggles of their surrounding counties
Counting on them.

The needs are great:

For education, For housing, For health care,
For a car, For technology.

The digital divide is a gaping hole and Franklinton lays down a bridge.

It is

A prayer space, A reflection space,

A nourishment space,

An education, liberation, restoration space.

A teaching space.

Sankofa is their logo.

Sankofa is a mythical bird with feet pointing forward and neck tilted back.

Its song says go back and fetch that which is good.
That which is sustaining, That which is whole –
And this center fetches that which is good.

Growing crops - not only cash crops not only those that bring in the dough but those that bring about food justice

Their vision focuses on ingesting justice

The Metaphor fascinates me.

We see baskets of yellow and orange peppers, squash, pumpkins, zucchini, beans - leafy greens
Weaving together a respect for the land with a respect for bellies and bodies.

A swimming pool in the distance beckons to a community

Learning to swim To stay afloat.

There are signs in the space

Marking welcome for all genders.

Signs saying Y'all means all

& Civil rights are inclusive

& LGBT rights are civil rights.

Being awake in one way means being awake in all ways.

Elly says Muslim drivers now stop at the center to pray. The whole space asks who are you and how can this also be your home?

What do you need as individuals, as groups?

How can we be noble enough nimble enough
humble enough to bend for what those needs are
and offer what we can in response?

(And while we're at it let's wash our hands and register to vote.)

Next we hear Trevor Noah and the struggle of Black women, Black suffragettes, Black Civil Rights leaders written out of the history books - out of the stories, Black sisters silenced:

Sojourner Truth, Ida B Wells, Ella Baker,

Diane Nash, Dorothy Height. Racism Sexism

The layers of isms Noah says if you don't know, now you know. And I think now I know, now what?

We watch clips from One Night in Miami Leslie Odom Jr. sings "A Change Gonna Come" while a house burns in the background But Change gonna come, he cries out.

We close out on compassion and crying too.

The youngest one among us Video off but ears on
Cries for the end to the divisions in this country.

His cry is a cry of caring, A cry from hearing all we have heard. We hold the tears and sign off from our virtual trip Holding onto Sankofa

Determined to look back, fetch that which is good, and share it.