



Remember the Children

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“There is no amount of grit that can fight off the intersections of living in poverty, being pushed out of school, facing a world full of patriarchy and racism, and suffering toxic stress. It is not that dark children do not have grit and zest, but they need educators and their communities to protect it, not measure it.” Dr. Bettina Love, award-winning author and university professor, challenges the way we measure student success in her newest book, *We Want to Do More than Survive: Abolitionist Teaching and the Pursuit of Freedom*. In turn, she will challenge us as Presbyterians – a denomination that loves education and touts the excellent schools and universities it has founded – at our September 25 Presbytery Gathering. [Registration](#) is now open.

As we continue our theme of reconciliation this year, we have an overlap in September of racism (picking up from where we left off in May) and generational divides. For us generations in power, our instinct is to preserve our control of resources, our decision-making authority, and our way of doing things. So, I have been delighted by how many of you include youth on your Session or Pastor Nominating Committee. In Long Beach, California, I visited a congregation with a huge endowment, restricted to three types of uses. The benefactor made the bequest on the condition that the youth of the church would oversee the distribution of the funds by receiving and evaluating the grant requests. “And they’re tough!” the pastor told me. “They take their job very seriously.”

Involvement of youth or young adults, however, is often the exception rather than the rule. We see it in our churches when session members have not rotated off in years and roughly all the leaders are the same age. Suggestions from older or younger church members might be dismissed with either, “They had their time.” or “They’ll have their time.” Baby Boomers question the commitment of Millennials, and Millennials wonder about the Silent Generation’s preference for stasis at a time when the world is moving us faster than ever. An excellent resource for understanding these generational gaps in the church is [*Vagabonding: In Defense and Praise of Millennial Faith*](#), written by our own Rev. Laurie Lyter Bright. In our pursuit of reconciliation across generational gaps, she guides us with good insight and humor, drawing on her own experiences as a Millennial church pastor.

In September, we will learn the devastating combination for our youth of being dark-skinned, poor, and powerless, trapped in systems that worked well for a segment of our population, but not everyone. Rev. Lydia Neshangwe, International Peacemaker from Zimbabwe, will share with us about her ministry of orphan care, what works and what doesn’t. Her Pre-Gathering talk begins at 3 pm. Dr. Love’s keynote address will start at 6:30 pm.

In a denomination of Presbyterian educators, we have a vested interest in the well-being of all children. Sometimes we need to sit as students to learn what we’ve neglected to see on our own. Our September Gathering will offer multiple ways for us to do that. Please join us, whether you are a commissioner or a visitor for the evening.