

Presbyterian Promise Annual Report to the Presbytery of Southern New England

2020-2021

Presbyterian Promise's twentieth year as an organization advocating for LGBTQ+ equality and welcome in this Presbytery was unexpectedly challenging. It was also in some ways unexpectedly rewarding.

As 2020 got underway, Presbyterian Promise was prepared for its usual outreach at the LGBTQ+ True Colors Conference and the Pride festivals across PSNE territory. We had a beautiful and meaningful new logo. We were ready with interactive coloring posters that a board member had discovered at the Next Church Conference. We planned to invite folks from our supporting churches to join Presbyterian Promise board members and engage with LGBTQ+ people, their parents, and allies. We had an inventory of rainbow and trans scarves, reminders that God loves all the beautiful, exuberant children. But Covid happened and everything stayed packed in boxes.

Instead of the usual we struggled to find ways to go virtual. We joined churches and organizations in learning the arduous art of improvisation, struggling to work creatively and effectively in this new environment. We created several short videos that were broadcast as part of the virtual True Colors Conference and several of 2020's virtual pride festivals.

Further, we learned about some of the emerging survival needs among LGBTQ+ people and we began to explore how to partner with organizations that are addressing those needs. During 2020 we worked with The Triangle Community Center in Norwalk to support its food pantry and Gay Santa programs.

This connection with community service providers reminded us profoundly that 2020 has been a bitter year for many. Covid has been devastating in so many ways, as has the ongoing effects of racism. We remember our siblings at Martin Luther King Jr. Community Presbyterian Church in Springfield and the loss of their building to arson.

Presbyterian Promise ended this strange year on a high note. At our annual meeting in April, Rev. Jane Adams Spahr helped us celebrate our history, and we welcomed Rev. Ashley DeTar Birt to host a workshop, "Replacing Tables with Rainbows." Rev. DeTar Birt is Program Coordinator of Beloved Arise, Co-Moderator of the Board of Directors for More Light Presbyterians, and blogger for the NEXT Church blog, Believe Out Loud. Her visionary and

practical workshop in April is available on the PSNE You Tube site at [\(263\) Presbyterian Promise Annual Meeting - April 2021 \(Replacing Tables with Rainbows - Rev. DeTar Birt\) - YouTube](#)

We said farewell at the meeting to our retiring Ralph Jones, one of our founders, our long time treasurer, and our all-around go-to person.

We start 2021 full of hope and energy. We are all packed and ready, among other things, to go out once again to table and be a welcoming voice of Christian love and faith. Please accompany us.

Dick Hasbany and Keith Rhoden Co-Moderators