

July 5, 2023 | Waynesboro, Virginia | *a newsletter supplement*

Curious conversation

America's at an impasse in the gun legislation debate.

What if churches led the way through honest curiosity?

By Eliza C. Jaremko

Presbyterian Outlook - I am a native of Western Pennsylvania and currently serve a congregation in Southern New Jersey, but 15 years ago, my first ministerial call took me to the great state of Texas. My great adventure to the Lone Star State didn't just include learning a new dialect, eating spicy food, and wearing cowboy boots (of which I enjoyed all three). I also discovered a culture around guns that was very different from any place I previously lived.



During my first year there, I had an encounter I still think about today. Single at the time, I was asked on a date by a person of faith I met at a book club. On our date, one of his opening questions was: "So what kind of guns do you own?" I was completely taken aback. I had never considered touching a gun, let alone owning one. When I expressed this, his response came back in shock: "So you don't own any weapons?"

The question on that first date made me uneasy – I am too nervous that I would accidentally hurt myself or others if I were to own a weapon, let alone be in the presence of one. Yet, the question also made me curious about the culture of this person of faith: Why would someone who trusts in God want to own a weapon?

Growing up in rural Pennsylvania, I many of my friends enjoyed hunting with their families for sport and game. Our schools even had a day off for the first day of deer hunting season. Yet in the new environment of my first call, I met folks who had a different relationship with guns. Some carried them for protection, some for sport, and some out of habit. I met those who open-carried and those who conceal-carried (including an elderly lady in the church choir). I frequented worship spaces, where worshipers were politely asked to remove all firearms before entering. Weapons were carried on belts and in purses beside wallets or keys — just part of what you took with you for the day. I got curious: what did one expect to encounter on a daily basis that would prompt you to carry a gun?

I wonder if we all need to get more curious with each other about our relationship to guns — both personally and culturally. Our national conversations about guns are at an impasse, and too often it seems like there's no hope of fixing our gun crisis or stopping mass shootings. *continued*

Curious conversation, *continued*

One side doesn't understand why anyone needs a gun and the other side doesn't understand why they wouldn't need one. One side wants stricter gun control laws and the other wants looser gun control laws. While I, admittedly, tend to fall on one side of this, I wonder if we will ever get anywhere if we don't get curious and ask questions. Can we ever understand the roots of this crisis if we cannot talk to one another?

The weekly Bible study I lead at my current church is attempting to get curious about gun culture. Feeling hopeless by the mass shootings and rising violence in our nearby city, our group has embarked on difficult conversations. We were intrigued by the Outlook's June issue on gun violence and chose it as our spring/summer study. While waiting for our copies to arrive, we found resources on gun violence from the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program. Written in 2016, the PPF study gave us a basis for discussion on the presence of guns in our culture, statistics, straw purchases, and the involvement of firearms in our rising suicide rates. Our June Presbyterian Outlook issues arrived last week, so this week we began our 6-week journey through the thought-provoking articles. Using the discussion questions in the back of the issue, we're hoping to find guidance to faithfully respond to the epidemic as Christian believers.

While I cannot offer the answer, I do invite you to ask questions — to engage in meaningful conversations within our own congregations. Perhaps our curious conversation might be small steps in moving past our fears of one another.



Eliza C. Jaremko is the pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Haddon Heights, NJ, and currently serves as the Moderator of the Presbytery for Southern New Jersey. Outside of church life, you can find her chasing after her young children, enjoying days down the shore, and exploring America's National Parks.

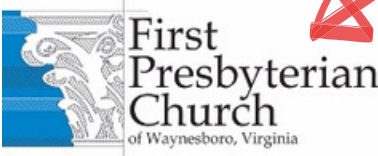
**WORSHIP THIS WEEK:
PSALM 13**

GENESIS 22: 1-14

SERMON: AN ONLY SON.

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Music Notes for July 9.

International Music Institute

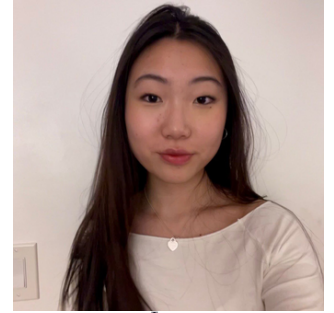
heifetz

at Mary Baldwin University

This week marks our annual visit from musicians with the Heifetz International Music Institute in Staunton. Founded in 1996 by violinist Daniel Heifetz (no relation to Jasha), the non-profit organization is “dedicated to the artistic growth and career development of the most talented and promising young musicians in the world.”



Garcia.



Lee.



Sung.



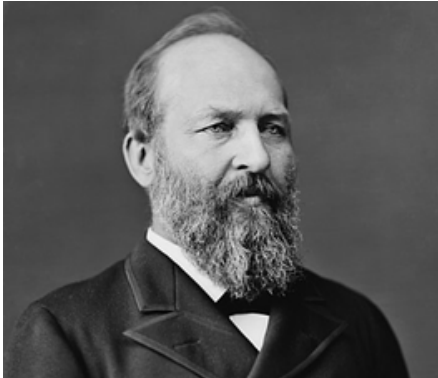
Kuo.

The Institute moved to Staunton in 2012, where every summer, for six weeks, faculty from renowned conservatories and music schools train talented young musicians from around the globe, ages 13-30. This year, FPC welcomes the **Merrimak Quartet**, with violinists **Samuel Garcia**, of Monroe, LA, and **Logan Lee** of New York, NY; violist **Rebekah Sung** of Fremont, CA and cellist **Joie Kuo** of Bridgewater, NJ.

calvin and Hobbes



This Week in History.



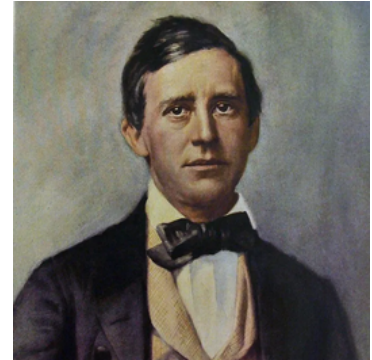
James Abram Garfield, the 20th president of the United States, is shot at the Baltimore and Potomac Railroad Station in Washington, D.C. by Charles Guiteau. He would die of sepsis 79 days later.

July 2, 1881



George Washington takes command of the Continental Army at Cambridge, MA.

July 3, 1775



Song writer Stephen Collins Foster is born in the Lawrenceville neighborhood of Pittsburgh, PA. He would die in poverty at Bellevue Hospital in New York in 1864.

July 4, 1826



Controversial industrialist and politician Cecil J. Rhodes is born in Hertfordshire, England. Sent to South Africa for his health at 17, he entered the diamond trade in 1871. At one point, he was said to have controlled 90 percent of the world's diamond production. His will established the Rhodes Scholarships at Oxford University for young scholars aged 18-25. Rhodesia was also named for him.

July 5, 1853



French chemist and microbiologist Louis Pasteur administers the first successful anti-rabies inoculation on a boy who had been bitten by an infected dog.

July 6, 1865



Baseball pitcher Leroy R. (Satchel) Paige is born in Mobile, AL. At the age of 42, following a long career in the Negro Leagues, he would become the first African American pitcher in the American League. He was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1971.

July 7, 1906

Dow Jones 1928-1932



The Dow Jones Industrial Average closed at 41.22, a fall of 89% from September 3, 1929 and the lowest point during the Great Depression.

July 8, 1932