

**FIRST AND CENTER**  
**Pastor's Blog**  
**November 15, 2017**

Is anyone reading these posts? Just curious and would love to hear from you. Especially about today's. Especially if you are part of Center Church.



I learn something new here almost every day. Sometimes several somethings! Today I learned from a colleague at another church about some history I had not yet heard here. I learned that Faith UCC, a predominantly African American congregation, was formed by black members of Center Church who were forced to sit in the balcony because of their race. They wanted to go somewhere to be fully part of a congregation, in worship and in leadership. So, they formed a new congregation. I also learned that many of the wealthiest citizens in Hartford in the 19<sup>th</sup> century were, of course, in the insurance business. Many of them, to be specific, in the business of insuring slave ships, plantations, and *enslaved Africans*, insured as property. An amount of the wealth which began our endowment came from gifts of those involved in this insurance business, including the esteemed Wadsworths.

I'm not sure just yet what to do with this newfound knowledge. I'm not sure how widely folk in the congregation understand this. I have not heard anyone speak of it as the story of our church has been told to me thus far. But for starters, I think we need to speak of it. To acknowledge the challenging, painful, and yes, sinful, parts of our history as well as the glorious, faithful parts. I think in order to address current issues of racism in our city and country, we need to have frank and honest conversations about issues like this, if they have not already happened. Even if they have, because it takes more than one conversation to transform a people. I hope we will enter into some serious conversations in the year to come about race, white privilege, and Center Church, past, present, and future. Let's talk.

~ Rev. Shelly Stackhouse,  
Pastor