



SALT & LIGHT

a hope church publication

SEASON OF RECONCILIATION 2021



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OUR FAITH

Hope Church is called by God and equipped by the Holy Spirit to be a witness to the unity, reconciliation and justice given in the saving grace of Jesus Christ. These touchstones drawn from the Belhar Confession give voice to the historic Christian faith in our time and place.

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EDITORIAL & DESIGN

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The Ministry of Reconciliation

By Pastor Jill Russell

Dear Hope Church Friends,

Greetings to you as we turn our attention to a new year and a new season of worship and reflection at Hope Church. I pray along with all of you that 2021 will be a very different year from the one we are completing. As we come into our celebration of Epiphany and the Season of Reconciliation in this ordinary time between Epiphany and Lent, I wanted to share some of what has been stirring in me. It is no secret that this theme of reconciliation has been a driving force in my life. From my sensibilities as a peacemaker and middle child, to my work before coming to Hope Church as an interim pastor often consulting in situations of conflict, to my interest and training in restorative circles, this call of the gospel in 2 Corinthians resonates deeply within me:

“So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us.” 2 Corinthians 5:17-19

I am continually reminded, though, that this work of reconciliation is much more nuanced than the word *reconciliation* often connotes

in our imaginations. I’m unclear whether this is because of midwestern values of niceness or our not so healthy aversion to conflict, by which I really mean aversion to discomfort. There is a strong current among some of us to grin and bear it or to smile in public and vent in private. When these very cultural but not-at-all-biblical sensibilities about “keeping the peace” get overlaid on top of this idea of reconciliation, there is little wonder that people have some serious questions about it. In the Lent issue of *Salt & Light*, I reflected with you why we talk increasingly about justice during this Season of Reconciliation. One quote from that article was from Martin Luther King Jr’s *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*:

“My citing the creation of tension as part of the work of the nonviolent resister may sound rather shocking. But I must confess that I am not afraid of the word ‘tension.’ I have earnestly opposed violent tension, but there is a type of *constructive, nonviolent tension* which is necessary for growth.” [emphasis mine]

To which I added: “Just as we need to probe what is broken in this world if we ever hope to be part of making things whole again, we need to be willing to risk examination if we want the joy of new life. We cannot have the one without the other. The revealing and addressing of injustice makes way for genuine peace and reconciliation.”



I know a number of Hope Church folks have been delving deeply into the investigation of anti-racism work. We will be offering an adult education series that will take us deeper into that investigation alongside a Bible study written by the Rev. Dr. Denise Kingdom Grier taking us more deeply into the 1 Corinthians 13 Project, which is all about learning to live into the more excellent way of love. When you take up this work of disrupting systems of privilege and examining your own formation around this question of racial identity, there is a tremendous amount of tension. It is visceral. It is uncomfortable. Inevitable questions come up but you don't dare voice them for fear of appearing bigoted or defensive. You shut down. You turn away. This same dynamic shows up over and over again when dealing with conflicted family relationships or frustrations with church structures or attempting to do something constructive to pave the way for something new. Intellectual questions that feel pressing to some are experienced as dismissive and off base by others. Angry feelings. Guilt feelings. Disconnection.

Shame. This is the swirl that can derail efforts at justice and reconciliation. Especially if reconciliation is understood as just smoothing it all over.

I have found a powerful resource that has supported me as I have been doing some reconciliation work in my own life. I have been working at reframing how I hold all the competing needs in my life to which I am passionately committed but cannot tend as thoroughly as I would like. It has been a season of discernment and letting go and reevaluating how I approach so many different things: pastoring, parenting, daughtering, how I give myself to the work of justice and reconciliation, how I show up in my marriage and friendships. That is to say nothing of how COVID required so much pivoting and reassessment from all of us. How do we stay whole and sane and engaged, especially when so much of the engagement brings us into those arenas of tension and discomfort and challenge?

The resource of support I found will be at the center of a small group offering I am going to lead in the Season of Reconciliation. The book, by Lorilyn Wiering, is called *Reclaiming Connection: A 40-Day Journey into Deeper Connection with Yourself, Others, and the Divine*. Before you panic and say to yourself—"Oh, I can't possibly commit to something every day for 40 days": have no fear. I started this last Lent and only got to day four by the time I took my medical leave (which means I set it aside for a *long time*). When I did pick it back up, I found it to be incredibly life giving and I'm still only on day eighteen at this writing. I take my time. I read a bit and reflect on it. Let it percolate for a few days, come back to the second part.

Witness to Reconciliation

Each Sunday during the 11 a.m. liturgical worship service throughout the Season of Reconciliation, a member of our congregation will speak about an experience of reconciliation in their own life. They will share their stories of reconciliation, passion, sacrifice, and new understanding so that we may all gain empathic insight into the body of Christ that we share. These stories have proven over the years to be some of the most memorable and powerfully moving events of the Season of Reconciliation.

You're Invited: Congregational Meeting on January 24

A Hope Church Congregational Meeting will happen via Zoom on Sunday, January 24, at 12:30 p.m. To join, go to tinyurl.com/janhopemeeting.



Pray on it and journal about it. And set it aside again. This is not about rushing, accomplishment, or instantaneous anything. This is the soul work that can help us show up with much more resilience for the discomfort and visceral reactions to justice work and relationship work and the stuff of making change... slowly... quickly... whatever the Spirit is making possible in that moment. Watch for more details about how to connect to this small group if you desire.

However you enter into this season, may it be a rich time of growing into the ministry of reconciliation in ways that are life-giving, challenging, and in service of love.

Peace to you,
Pastor Jill

Endorsement for Reclaiming Connection

Below you can read the endorsement I wrote for Lorilyn as she puts out the second printing of her book.

In recent years, I have returned to the spiritual wisdom that Lorilyn Wiering has offered over and over again. If you were to comb through my sermons you would find a number of different quotes and images that come from her Soul Sanctuaries emails. Especially when 2020 hit and I was meeting with more and more people wrestling with their spiritual anxiety and wanting to stay connected to the hard and challenging work of learning to be an anti-racist in their spheres of influence, I found myself pointing to Lorilyn as an important companion for the journey. What I did not anticipate was that when

I needed to do some deep soulful reflection of my own that Lorilyn's book *Reclaiming Connection* would be at the center of the Spirit's work of healing and restoration for me. Designed as a 40-day journey, this resource takes you deep into the transformative energy of the wilderness. You are gently encouraged day by day to reclaim the central truth of who you are and learn to probe the sacred wisdom, love, and instinct that guide us in our life with God who calls us to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly. I am excited to be using *Reclaiming Connection* as a small group resource through our Season of Reconciliation in our church's life in the start of the new year.

~ Rev. Jill R. Russell, pastor at Hope Church, RCA in Holland, MI

Resources for the Season of Reconciliation

Books Pastor Jill recommended in her 2015 Sabbatical Report, “Reconciliation as a Way of Life”

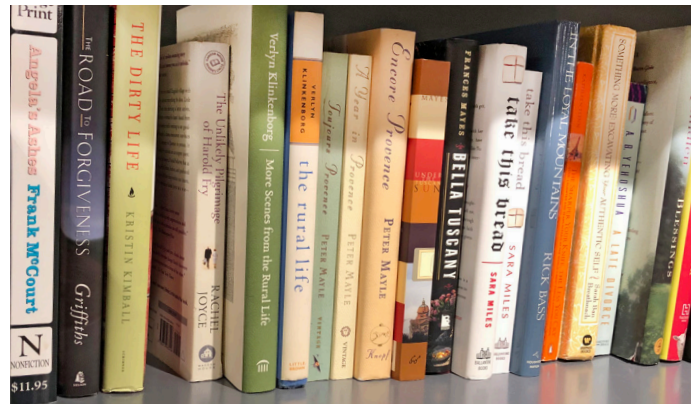
- *Transforming Church Conflict: Compassionate Leadership in Action*, by Deborah Van Deusen Hunsinger and Theresa F. Latini
- *NonViolent Communication: A Language of Life: Create Your Life, Your Relationships, and Your World in Harmony with Your Values*, by Marshall B. Rosenberg
- *Rene Girard and Creative Reconciliation*, edited by Vern Neufeld Redekop and Thomas Ryba
- *Ambassadors of Reconciliation, Volume 1: New Testament Reflections on Restorative Justice and Peacemaking*, by Ched Myers & Elaine Enns
- *Ambassadors of Reconciliation, Volume 2: Diverse Christian Practices of Restorative Justice and Peacemaking*, by Ched Myers & Elaine Enns
- *Forgiveness, Reconciliation, and Moral Courage: Motives and Designs for Ministry in a Troubled World*, by Robert L. Browning and Roy A. Read.
- *Radical Reconciliation: Beyond Political Pietism and Christian Pietism*, by Allen Aubrey Boesak and Curtiss Paul DeYoung. This was also the subject of a past Season of Reconciliation book study.
- *The Violence of Love*, by Oscar Romero. This was also the subject of a past Season of Reconciliation book study.
- *Working for Peace: A Handbook of Practical Psychology and Other Tools*, edited by Rachel M. MacNair and Psychologists for Social Responsibility. A recommendation endorsed by Jane Dickie

Previous Season of Reconciliation Book Studies

- *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of the Plants*, by Robin Wall Kimmerer
- *Healing the Heart of Democracy*, by Parker Palmer
- *Between the World and Me*, by Ta-Nehisi Coates
- *Hillbilly Elegy*, by J.D. Vance
- *Just Mercy*, by Bryan Stevenson
- *Learning to Walk in the Dark*, by Barbara Brown Taylor

Books recommended by Tom Arendshorst

- *The Moral Imagination*, by John Paul Lederach. From a great figure in the literature, praxis, and teaching of conflict transformation, his crowning thesis—a wise and inspiring sequence of essays.
- *The Little Book of Restorative Justice*, by Howard Zehr
- *The Lemon Tree: An Arab, A Jew, and the Heart of the Middle East*, by Sandy Tolan



Websites

- Restorative Circles: restorativecircles.org is the website of Dominic Barter, the founder of Restorative Circles
- Holland Restorative Circles: hrcircles.wordpress.com is the website of the local Restorative Circles efforts that Pastor Jill, Hope Church member, Ann McKnight, and community member, Lynn Stubbs lead.
- Corrymeela: corrymeela.org/about/who-we-are. Claire Rumpsa shares: “As most of you know, I am from Northern Ireland, and we have some hard-won experience in terms dealing with conflict, division and injustice. I have been so alarmed to see the increased division and polarization in American society since I emigrated here 12 years ago, and I believe that Northern Ireland has some lessons to share on everything from police reform to dealing with difference, to acknowledging and understanding the parts that so many of us play in perpetuating division. Corrymeela has been a beacon of welcome and a significant player in our peace process, doing the hard, on-the-ground work of reconciliation. Please ask me more about this if you are interested!”
- Beyond Intractability: beyondintractability.org. University of Colorado resource collection focused on education about and construction responses to conflict.

Other Resources

- *Evangelii Gaudium (The Joy of the Gospel)*, Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation, 2013, I: 52-60, “Some Challenges of Today’s World: No to an Economy of Exclusion, No to the New Idolatry of Money, No to a Financial System that Rules rather than Serves, No to the Inequality that Spawns Violence,” 2013.
- *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter, Chapter One, “What Is Happening To Our Common Home,” pp 5-15, 2015.

Adult Education

Sundays, 9:40-10:40 am

January 10 & 17: The ICor13 Project led by Rev. Dr. Denise Kingdom Grier, Pastor of Maple Avenue Ministries

The ICor13 Project, recently developed by Pastor Kingdom Grier, is described as “a collaborative resource to center the health, healing, and wholeness of Black people in particular. It intends to counteract the debilitating effects of the American church’s complicity in 400 years of failure to love black people. It is a healing space for Black people to locate sources, practices, and opportunities to heal the wounds of racial trauma. It offers materials, processes, and products that equip non-Black Allies and Freedom Fighters to actively practice repentance that leads to faithful participation in the flourishing of Black people.”

During these two sessions, Rev. Dr. Kingdom Grier will offer both

a Bible study on I Corinthians in the context of this project and discuss the implications of this project for Hope Church and our ministry with our community.

January 24 & 31: To Achieve Our Country: Pathways to an Anti-Racist Future led by Dr. Chuck Green, Hope College

This is the last sentence of [James Baldwin’s](#) *The Fire Next Time*: “If we do not falter in our duty now, we may be able, handful that we are, to end the racial nightmare, and achieve our country, and change the history of the world.”

Baldwin was, by any measure, a plain-spoken realist. *The Fire Next Time* is a righteous indictment of American racism. And yet, it ends with a call to radical hope that lies somewhere between the audacious and the absurd. That speaks to me. If Baldwin had hope, then an older-than-I-used-to-be White guy like

me has a moral obligation to hope, too. Even when it’s hard. To believe that if we do not falter in our duty, if we achieve our country, then, well, we can change the world.

But how? Well, that’s what we’re going to talk about: pathways to an antiracist future. Specific steps we can take in our spheres of influence at home, work, church, community—maybe even the world. On the first Sunday, we’ll remember where we are and why we care. On the second Sunday, we’ll roll up our sleeves and get to work.

Chuck Green is an award-winning professor of psychology at Hope College, specializing in social psychology and race in America. He has written articles on the subject, given numerous talks, and won awards for his outstanding teaching. He returns to teach a course for us during the Season of Reconciliation.

Recognizing the Children of God

By *Phil Tanis, Executive Secretary for Communications & Operations, World Communion of Reformed Churches*

Living abroad in what has shaped up to be quite a season of discontent not only in the United States but around the world, I often consider myself to be in a privileged position here in Hannover, Germany, working for the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC).

The WCRC, composed of over 230 denominations from more than 105 countries, is “called to communion and committed

to justice.” The focus of our work strengthens ties between our members while working for justice globally, regionally, nationally, and even locally.

We always insist that true peace cannot come without justice, and reconciliation is a critical component in achieving this. The paths toward and through reconciliation are many and varied. It does not mean compromising key faith values, nor accepting

the sinful actions of people—but it does mean recognizing that each and every one of us is a beloved child of God, no matter how far we may have strayed.

Sometimes (often?) practicing reconciliation means taking actions that run counter to accepted societal norms and expectations. For instance, the WCRC has long been dedicated to bringing a lasting peace (and even reunification) to the Korean

Peninsula. In these efforts we have acted as a bridge between our member churches in South Korea and the Korean Christian Federation, the government-sanctioned Protestant organization in the North. Despite sanctions, tensions, and militaristic actions by both the North and South (and their allies), we have endeavored to keep sisters and brothers on both sides of the DMZ talking. This was joyfully expressed at our 2017 General Council where the Koreans gathered around the Lord's Table.

Working toward reconciliation can also mean speaking out in life-threatening situations. The Ecumenical Forum on the Anglophone Crisis in Cameroon, which the WCRC

initiated, recently brought together religious leaders from several faith traditions to become “religious diplomats” to “objectively, faithfully, fearfully and lovingly assist, if not play a front role to bring about a just and peaceful end to the armed conflict ravaging Anglophone Cameroon,” as well as confront the Boko Haram insurgency in the north of the country.

These projects of professional reconciliation have provoked me to think about how I practice reconciliation personally. Especially this past year my Facebook feed has been awash in disagreements, conspiracies, anxieties, and the like. I mourn the apparent divisions opened up between myself and both friends and family.

Perhaps here my distance helps, as I have time and space to consider how to engage with those on the “other side” when next I am able to see them face to face. I anticipate buying several rounds and simply listening to them share their thoughts and convictions. One of the wonders of my job is to hear the stories of sisters and brothers from around the world, to be connected through our faith in Christ despite the linguistic, cultural, and contextual differences. I trust that this will also be the case when reconnecting to friends and family in exotic West Michigan.

God's love is sufficient to overcome human divisions and reconcile us. God's love compels me to be a part of that process.



photo credit to Anna Siggelkow/WCRC

Turning Over More than the Calendar

By Peter Boogaart, *Creation Care Coordinator*

There's a new year coming. That used to mean being swamped with calendars, as everyone with something to promote sent them out. Not so much anymore. Still, I'll bet there's one on your refrigerator, and I'll bet it has pictures. Think about those pictures. They're almost always outdoor scenes, right? Or maybe kittens.

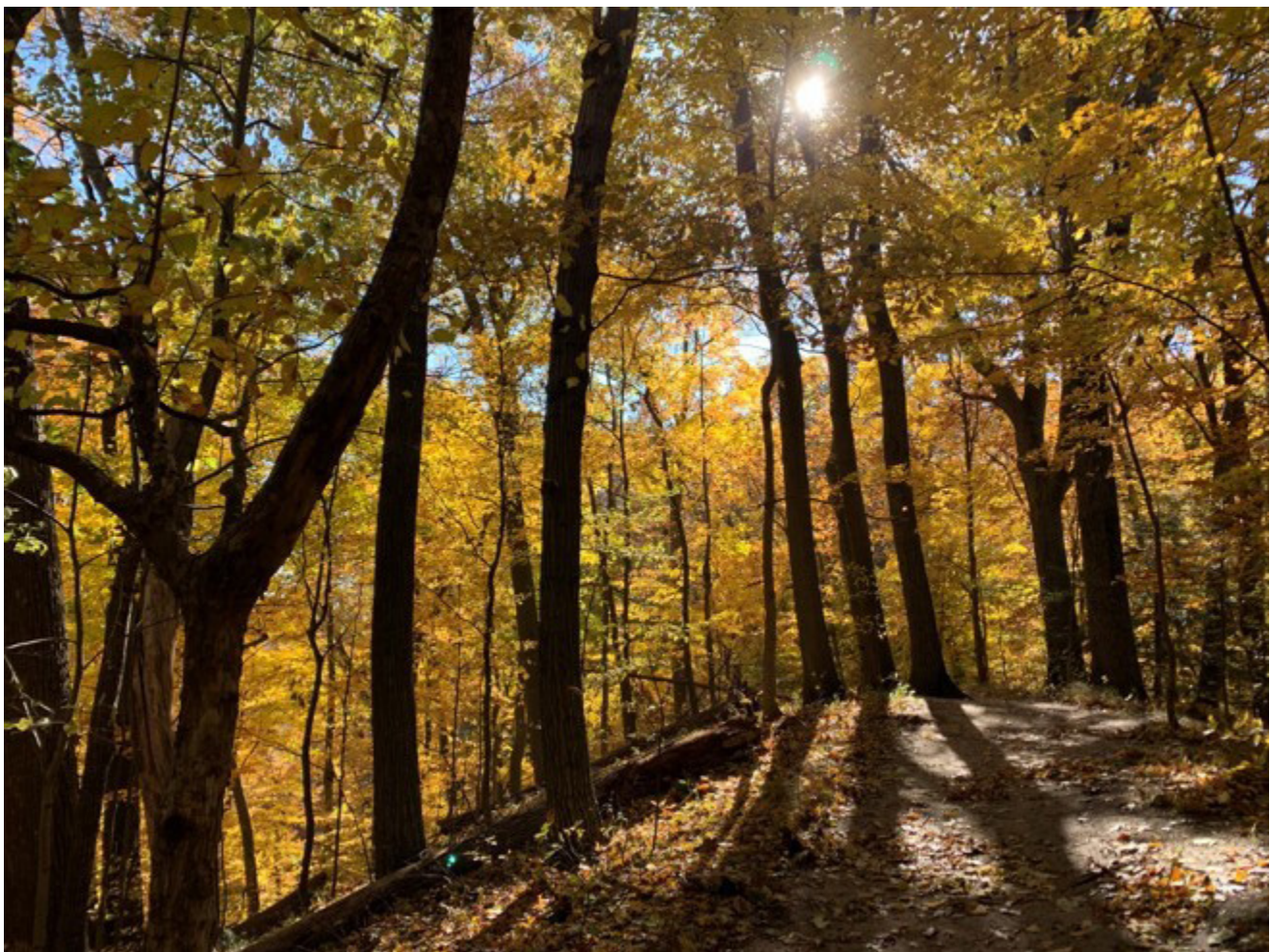
I've never seen a calendar featuring: The 12 Best Junkyards in America. Or 12 Months of Rush Hour Scenes. How about America's 12 Worst Disasters? Why all those silvan outdoor scenes?

Researchers say that we now spend 90 percent of our time indoors. We don't expose ourselves to the elements very often. Living without

air conditioning and suffering are sort of the same thing. Could it be that those pictures are a fragile link to what really matters?

Here's something to think about from the *Washington Post*: "[According to a study published this week in the journal Nature Scientific Reports](#), spending 120 minutes a week strolling a tree-lined street or sitting by a lake can greatly enhance a person's overall sense of well-being. Less time didn't yield any significant benefit, the research showed."

Our own Lisa Denison recently explored these questions. Here are some of her thoughts and recommendations.



Is Norway's *friluftsliv* the answer to surviving a second lockdown?

By Lisa Denison, Creation Care Member

As pandemic restrictions tighten, and the weather turns, Norway's *friluftsliv*—free-air life—is more relevant and appealing than ever. That's pronounced *free-luftz-leev*. The concept is wholly experiential, and free. It adheres to the premise that “there is no such thing as bad weather, only unsuitable clothes.” Just remember, you still need a mask around other people.

Here are some ideas to work with:

1. Walk in nature.

- Take time to notice things around you. Pause and take deep breaths. Hug a tree.
- Go star gazing at night. (Check out the free app Night Sky)
- Parks where you can hike as a family and “social distance” include: Outdoor Discovery Center, VanRaalte Farm, Saugatuck Dunes, Ottawa County Parks, Windmill Island, and Window on the Waterfront.
- Beaches! Wear gloves and take a trash bag. You get the benefit of fresh air and exercise while helping the environment.
- Make a point to go see the sunset.

2. Explore your town.

- Try some less-traveled routes during your walks. Just get outside and walk anywhere that looks interesting and doesn't have another person in the way.
- Visit the Kerstmarkt until December 12 or the Winter Market the first and third Saturdays January through April.

3. Take photos.

- Look for interesting shots at different times of day, and then for photo contests to enter.

4. Go “camping” in your backyard.

- Sit around a firepit with your family. Sing, tell stories, just relax.

5. Outdoor fitness

- Jump rope, run an obstacle course, play basketball.
- Learn to snow shoe or cross country ski.
- Go for a run.
- Shovel snow for a neighbor who can't.

6. Play outside, by yourself or with your kids and/or dog.

- Build snowmen or igloos and have snowball fights.
- Make snow angels.
- Play games like “What time is it Mr. Fox” in the snow.
- Have a scavenger hunt.
- Adapt games for snowy weather.
- Check out online resources like www.earlylearningactivities.com/PDF/og.pdf

Find your peace of mind outside this winter!

Poetry Corner

Hosted by Randy Smit and Rhonda Edgington

Laurie Baron and I have written together with women at the Allegan County Jail and Holland's Harbor House, and I'm so thankful she brings those experiences into her contribution to this month's Poetry Corner, perfect for this Season of Reconciliation. Laurie says, "Each of these poems represents an 'aha' moment. Mine came as a response to the startling words I kept hearing said to and about incarcerated women. Rita Dove's poem is an old favorite that resonates very differently as I 'wake up' to what whiteness means."

~Rhonda

Dawn Revisited

By [Rita Dove](#)

Imagine you wake up
with a second chance: The blue jay
hawks his pretty wares
and the oak still stands, spreading
glorious shade. If you don't look back,

the future never happens.
How good to rise in sunlight,
in the prodigal smell of biscuits -
eggs and sausage on the grill.
The whole sky is yours

to write on, blown open
to a blank page. Come on,
shake a leg! You'll never know
who's down there, frying those eggs,
if you don't get up and see.



To the Women of the Allegan County Correctional Facility Writing Circle

By Laurie Baron

*...belief is the only wind with breath enough
to take you past the deadly calms, the stopped motion
toward that place you have imagined,
the existence of which you cannot prove
except by going there.*

Pat Schneider, "Your Boat, Your Words"

They tell me you are difficult—not compliant and respectful like the men who file to the classroom, sit in their seats, shake the hand of the volunteer, thank her for coming, week after week.

They are surprised that you are moody; your disruptions annoy them, your faces masked with blank challenge. But why should you be easy? Why should you trust anyone, let alone me, let alone each other, let alone yourselves? They suspect "gals" is not the right thing to say anymore; now they call you "ladies"—why does saying "women" embarrass them?

Some of you, in truth, are still mostly girls; some are grandmothers. Psychologists say you are all arrested (no pun intended!) at the age you were when you began using whatever you were using to blur the pain of being beaten, raped, dismissed, discarded. You sit wary in your red scrubs and orange plastic clogs with the glare of fluorescents and the blare of invisible commands and I'm asking you to put words on paper.

To move a pen across a page can be hard.

You are too tired for a cloak of cleverness, and so what you set down is true, and that is hard too.

Why, when you're tired or sick, your abdomen cramping or your breasts sore with milk engorging for the baby who is somewhere far from your arms, why should you make the effort? Yet you do.

You follow a line of words. It's not much, set against all that drains your spirits. But it is something. It can lead you somewhere--

to yourselves, is what I think, and to what you can imagine. The place you cannot prove exists except by going there.

What Compels Me to Engage with Anti-Racism Work?

By Cindy Terlouw



For much of my life I could remain in my guilt, shame, fear, and stupidity. I could focus for a bit, but always found something else that would take my attention. I could say all the words and even convince myself that my love and compassion meant I was engaged assuming that was enough. I could support those who were doing the work and still remain, myself, on the sidelines. I could raise racially mixed children whom I love more than anything in the world and think that was sufficient. I could run a cultural diversity awareness program at the local high school, get all the facts to motivate the student body, and still, really (actually) *do* nothing.

And then suddenly my world changed. As the result of the deaths of people of color like George Floyd and Breonna Taylor and meaningful yet difficult confrontations by our own children of mixed background, I was convicted of my racism, my privilege and my white supremacy. It has been a painful process to really accept

“...I knowingly and unknowingly support and benefit from a culture of white supremacy...”

that simply by living as a white middle-class person, I knowingly and unknowingly support and benefit from a culture of white supremacy and all that it entails.

I keep hearing the words of Ibram Kendi, “If you are supporting a racist policy through your actions or inactions or expressing a racist idea, you are a racist.” Holy crap—not me. Please not me.

So I moved to respond to this present awareness through seminars, book studies, conversations, podcasts, and political involvement to become an active participant in the fight against racism and the advancement of antiracist policies that are equitable for all. This has been and continues to be a very difficult and personal experience. I identify and am embarrassed by my implicit and explicit bias. I examine my language, behaviors, and more.

I am not a leader at the state or national level, but I am committed to be impactful right here in Holland. I am examining where and how I spend my resources—shopping, dining, and more. I am seeking out companies run by women and women of color. I am striving to live out my desire to be a positive force for justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion. This work will continue for the rest of my life.

Dr. Cornel West states, “Never forget that justice is what LOVE looks like in public.” Micah 6:8 says, “What does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”

“For me, now is the time to step in, to move forward and stay uncomfortable.”

For me, *now* is the time to step in, to move forward and stay uncomfortable. I have lost a lot of time, yet maybe I have a lot of time left. With the time I have left and for the sake of my children, our family, and this community, I commit to the life-long struggle towards racial justice and equity.