

LET JUSTICE ROLL!

An Occasional Newsletter Produced & Distributed
by the "Social Justice & Action Group" (SJAG)
of St. John the Divine Anglican Church - Victoria, B.C.

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"LET JUSTICE ROLL!" is intended to educate, inform and challenge readers regarding important issues and ideas at the intersection where faith and justice meet. For the most part, the themes offered here are viewed through a Christian lens. The articles chosen focus on social justice concerns that many of our parishioners already share. The short articles selected for each issue cover a diversity of topics -- *FROM* poverty/economic inequality, peace and human/LGBTQ rights, First Nations reconciliation -- *TO* environmental stewardship, refugees, racism, food security and community/international development. The political is never far away from the topics we choose to present. As Cornel West reminds us: "*Justice is what love looks like in public!*"



"But let justice roll on like a river, and righteousness like a never failing stream." Amos 5:24 (NIV)

The ideas and opinions expressed, and/or positions articulated in this newsletter may not officially be those of the Parish or the Diocese. Your feedback is encouraged! Please address your comments to either Murray Luft (Editor) murrayrae@yahoo.com or John McLaren (SJAG Chair) jpsmamclaren@gmail.com. We also invite readers to submit provocative articles (already published or original) for inclusion in future issues of "Let Justice Roll!" SJAG's intention is to produce this newsletter on a quarterly basis. During Covid 19, LJR is only available in an on-line format (via the St. John's web-site - www.stjohnthedivine.org). M.L. Editor

LET JUSTICE ROLL #15

We live in interesting, though turbulent, times. A Covid resurgence, unmarked residential-school graves, the Taliban's return to Kabul, a wave of intolerance, growing inequality, a Haitian earthquake, and now, a controversial Federal election. The most alarming news came in the form of back-to-back reports from the IPCC and NOAA in August. From them, we learned that atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations haven't been this high in 800,000 years and global sea levels have surpassed all previously recorded heights! Add to this 2020 heat domes, wild-fires, drought and wild-weather conditions in Canada, and it comes as no surprise that we have opted to prioritize the **CLIMATE CRISIS** in LJR.

Other key issues examined through a Christian, social justice lens are: **Reconciliation with First Nations, the Israel-Palestine Conflict** and **LGBTQ Rights**. Two special articles are written by St. John's own parishoners -- **John Thatamanil** and **Sara Chu**. Also, we include a tribute to the "**Great Warrior**" **Mavis Gillie** (who passed away Mar. 28) and a Diocesan Post article about **Karen Coverett**.

As is our custom, we have chosen incisive theological reflections and provocative poems/stories that ask (and hopefully answer) important questions about the life of the spirit in uncertain times. Our hope is that you will find selections in this issue that are both thought-provoking and faith-challenging. I am indebted to **Karyn Lehmann, Carol-Ann Zenger, Sara Chu** and **Karen Coverett** for their diverse skills in the production, roll-out and dissemination of this our fall LJR#15 newsletter. M.L.-Editor

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We acknowledge with respect the Lək̓ʷəŋən speaking peoples on whose traditional territory we work, play and worship, represented today by the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations in their continuing relationship with this land we call our home.

A listening, learning church

BY JOHN J. THATAMANIL

Addressing racism has become an urgent matter in the wake of the murder of George Floyd (a year ago on May 25, 2020) and the rise of anti-Asian violence during the pandemic. Now, the latest heart-wrenching discovery of the remains of 215 Indigenous children at the Kamloops Indian Residential School reminds us of how much work we have yet to do here in B.C. A variety of secular voices have long laboured to ameliorate historical legacies of racism in North America. They would characterize racism as a blight on our common life. What can the Church add to their robust ethical conviction that “racism is wrong”?

Presumably, the Church wishes to add, “Racism is wrong, and it is contrary to God’s will!” Does adding God to the equation change anything? Or is the Church just jumping on a larger bandwagon? What does the church contribute to race matters that culture at large cannot? We might gather these queries together into one overarching question: is racism a theological matter or “just” a pressing social and ethical problem?

For good and for ill, Christian communities hold convictions shared by secular fellow travellers. In the U.S., the Episcopal Church is said to be the Democratic Party at prayer. White evangelical churches, by contrast, form the core base of the Republican Party. Such alliances raise critical questions: should the Church’s priorities set the Church apart even from the commitments of its secular allies? How so? Does the Church add only an intensifying exclamation mark?

In the United States, there has been theological panic among Southern Baptists. At the very end of 2020,

presidents of six Southern Baptist seminaries released a statement saying “affirmation of Critical Race Theory, Intersectionality and any version of Critical Theory is incompatible with the Baptist Faith & Message.” Critical race theorists hold that racism is structural and not merely personal; racism is baked into our institutions and common life and cannot be reduced to a matter of personal intentions.

Racism is an assault on the innate dignity and the intrinsic worth of every person created in love by a loving God.

Denominations that reject critical race theory believe that secular work on race must not be permitted to influence Christian theological discourse. The Bible alone provides all that Christians need to manage the Church’s approach to race. The Church has little to learn from the world.

That defensive posture is not a good look. After more than a century in which critical secular voices have held Western churches to account on race, gender, sexuality, residential schools and colonialism, any ecclesial posture other than one of repentance, humility and a willingness to learn will strike the world as ecclesial arrogance. It is indeed high time for churches to learn from the world and, on race, that means learning especially from critical race theory.

But does the Church then have anything of its own to offer? Certainly! The Church has a vast treasury of resources on the question of race. Every core doctrine of the Church, including creation, incarnation and eschatology, has implications for how we should think and act on race. For Christians who confess that every human being is a created expression of the *imago dei*, racism is not merely a moral evil but a

spiritual violation. Racism is an assault on the innate dignity and the intrinsic worth of every person created in love by a loving God.

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel puts the point forward with prophetic passion and precision. “Faith in God is not simply an *afterlife insurance policy*. *Racial or religious bigotry* must be recognized for what it is: *satanism, blasphemy*.” This profound reverence for the sacredness of human life, affirmed by many of the world’s religious traditions, ought to drive the Church forward in its quest to advance Martin Luther King, Jr.’s beloved community.

The trouble is not a lack of resources; the trouble is that churches have seldom lived into the truth we are called to hallow and herald. That is why the Church needs critical race theory and a host of other secular and interreligious resources: to lead us to repair and renewal. Perhaps it will be the world that drags the Church kicking and screaming into what God has called the Church to be.

Christian communities have a lot to say both about human dignity and the ways that the structural sin of racism demeans that dignity. Analyzing the specific forms that such sin takes will require the theoretical and practical resources of critical race theory, other secular theorists and activists from communities we have violated.

Today the healing winds of the Holy Spirit seem to be at work more powerfully among critical race theorists, BLM activists and Indigenous resisters than within the staid walls of our stately churches. The time has come for us to listen and learn. “The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes.” ■

John J. Thatamanil is associate professor of theology and world religions at Union Theological Seminary in New York. He is also intern at St. John the Divine, Victoria.

DESPITE HATE FROM EVANGELICALS, KATHARINE HAYHOE SEES CLIMATE HOPE

BY GINA CILIBERTO - SOJO.NET – APR. 20, 2021 *

Meet Dr. Hayhoe: Climate Scientist, Evangelical Christian, Mother ... And She's a Canadian!

For Katharine Hayhoe, climate change isn't just a topic of study or her area of expertise; it's what she calls "an everything issue." Hayhoe, who is a leading climate science expert, told Sojourners that everybody everywhere "already has everything they need to care about climate change" and its impact on people, animals, and Earth. Hayhoe's passion for climate science is based in her Christian faith. Hayhoe is an evangelical, which she defines as "someone who takes the Bible seriously." For her, faith and science go hand in hand: The more that she learns about science, the more her awe and faith in God increases. "I care about climate change because I'm a Christian," she said. "I believe that we have responsibility to everyone on the planet, and that we are to care about the least of these."

Moreover, Hayhoe's life outside of her work and her faith spurs her to care about the climate. She enjoys skiing. She lives in Texas. And she's a mom! "It affects my child's future," said Hayhoe, who helped launch [Science Moms](#), a nonpartisan group striving to demystify climate change for children and families. All the elements of her life, she said, lead her to care about climate change: "I care about climate change because of what is already at the top of my personal priority list today."

In Hayhoe's experience, people have thought of climate change as a niche environmental issue — and that's how she initially thought of it herself. That changed when she took an undergraduate climate science course at the University of Toronto. "That was where I, for the first time, was exposed to the information that climate change is not only an environmental issue, it's an everything issue," Hayhoe said. "Climate change affects our health. It affects the food that we eat. It affects the security and safety of our homes. It affects national security. It affects the economy. It affects jobs. It affects the future as we know it. It affects every aspect of life on this planet."

Hayhoe is a professor of political science and co-director of the Climate Center at Texas Tech University, where she has worked since 2005. In June, she'll join [The Nature Conservancy](#), a global environmental nonprofit, as their chief scientist. Additionally, Hayhoe founded the ATMOS Research and Consulting; which analyzes publicly available climate data; she is the author of more than 120 peer-reviewed publications. She has co-authored reports for the U.S. Global Change Research Program as well as the National Academy of Sciences.

Hayhoe served as an expert reviewer for the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Fourth Assessment Report. She also hosted and produced a bi-weekly web series with PBS called *Global Weirding: Climate, Politics, and Religion*. In 2019, Hayhoe was named one of the United Nations [Champions of the Earth](#) in the science and innovation category. Yet, while Hayhoe has seen a growing recognition over the past decade of climate change as an everything issue, she feels that increasing polarization is leading to an alarming politicization of climate science.

According to PRRI's [2017 American Values Survey](#), 84 percent of Democrats agree that the severity of recent natural disasters points to global climate change, while 71 percent of Republicans believe that the severity of natural disasters is not evidence of climate change. This sharp disagreement on climate science, drawn on partisan lines, is especially troubling for Hayhoe given increasing party polarization in the U.S. Hayhoe finds this trend disturbing and incongruent with her understanding of Christianity.

"Many people today who would call themselves Christians have a statement of faith that has been written first by their political ideology, rather than what the Bible says. We've been led astray. We have become so enmeshed in the world that we don't even recognize what we're doing and how much it contradicts what we as Christians truly believe and who we as Christians truly are."

* [Sojo.net](#) article by Gina Ciliberto, a writer who lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

The U.N.'s Ominous Climate Report Confirms - "We Are Out of Time!"

If we continue down the road of half-measures and denial that we've been stuck on since scientists first raised the alarm, the hellscape we leave to our grandchildren will be unrecognizable.

* EUGENE ROBINSON – August 10, 2021 - in Common Dreams

We're out of time. It's as simple as that. If the world immediately takes bold, coordinated action to curb climate change, we face a future of punishing heat waves, deadly wildfires and devastating floods—and that's the optimistic scenario, according to an alarming new U.N. **report**. If, on the other hand, we continue down the road of half-measures and denial that we've been stuck on since scientists first raised the alarm, the hellscape we leave to our grandchildren will be unrecognizable.

Almost 30 years ago, I covered the first "[Earth Summit](#)" of world leaders in Rio de Janeiro, at which the U.N.-sponsored [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) issued its initial assessment of what our spewing of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases into the atmosphere was doing to the planet. That [1992 document](#) is modest about what researchers, at the time, could not be sure of. They admitted there was a chance they might be seeing "natural climate variability." They thought "episodes of high temperatures" would become more frequent, but they couldn't be sure. The "unequivocal detection of the enhanced greenhouse effect" was still in the future.

The [IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report](#), released Monday, makes clear there is no longer any reason to use such guarded language—and no longer any fig leaf of scientific uncertainty to shield governments or individuals who would continue to temporize. "It is unequivocal that human influence has warmed the atmosphere, ocean and land," the report says in its summary for policymakers. "Widespread and rapid changes in the atmosphere, ocean, cryosphere and biosphere have occurred... Human-induced climate change is already affecting many weather and climate extremes in every region across the globe." There is now strong evidence of "observed changes in extremes such as heat waves, heavy precipitation, droughts, and tropical cyclones, and, in particular, their attribution to human influence."

As if you didn't already know that. -- The [second-biggest wildfire](#) in California's recorded history is now burning out of control, having destroyed the Gold Rush town of Greenville, the latest in a string of fires in the state. An apocalyptic fire season is plaguing not just western North America but southern Europe as well, including blazes that are devastating Greece's **second-largest island**. Earlier this summer, an unprecedented "**heat dome**" set astonishing new temperature records in the Pacific Northwest and **western Canada**, including an all-time high for anywhere in Canada: 121 degrees in Lytton, British Columbia, a town that was [mostly destroyed](#) the following day by wildfire.

Last month, an almost biblical deluge caused flooding in Germany and Belgium that [swept away picturesque towns](#) and killed more than 200 people. Coastal megacities such as Lagos, Nigeria, are struggling to cope with **frequent and widespread flooding**—caused by an average rise in sea levels, according to the new IPCC report, of nearly 8 inches since the beginning of the 20th century. Oceans are [rising](#) because glaciers and ice sheets are melting and because warmer water occupies more volume than cooler water.

All of this is the result of about 2 degrees Fahrenheit of global warming—caused by human activity that has [boosted](#) the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere by 47 percent and vastly

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increased the concentration of methane, an even more powerful greenhouse gas. And we are stuck with the consequences of our irresponsibility: "Global surface temperature will continue to increase until at least the mid-century under all emissions scenarios considered," the IPCC says.

So we have no choice but to adapt to the warmer world we have created and now must live in. We don't know what caused the shocking and deadly **Surfside, Fla., condominium collapse**, for example, but we would be foolish not to reexamine oceanside building codes to account for rising seas. We would be foolish not to revise our methods of forest management to cope with extreme heat, drought and fire.

An even bigger challenge is finding ways for billions of people in the developing world to attain middle-class living standards via sustainable energy sources rather than the burning of fossil fuels. China is by far the world's [biggest emitter](#) of carbon dioxide; [India's emissions](#) are rising fast. People in the Philippines, Indonesia, Pakistan, Nigeria and Ethiopia want lives of comfort and plenty, just like ours.

That is why massive investment in new technologies, such as solar power and **energy storage**, has to be such an urgent priority. At the rate we're going, the world could warm by nearly 8 degrees Fahrenheit—by the end of this century, according to the IPCC. Relatively few of us who are alive today would still be around to witness what we have wrought. But we know we need to change our ways. Our descendants will curse our memory if we fail to act.

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Christ of action and revolutionary love, help us to knock some bricks out of the towers that hold up the powerful. Grant us your peace and resolve. Amen.

OUR CLIMATE EMERGENCY & WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE
AN ASSESSMENT OF CANADA'S READINESS TO DELIVER A SAFE CLIMATE

Pembina Institute Report (Executive Summary) - July 2021 *

Unlocking a prosperous future for all will require bold, ambitious action on climate from governments across Canada. To measure readiness to act on climate, this report assesses the performance of provinces, territories, and the federal government on 24 policy indicators across 11 categories. The indicators represent foundational climate policies and measures to reduce emissions in key sectors of the economy. A full summary of the results is presented in the table below (with a full description of each indicator and how jurisdictions are assessed in the appendix). The analysis shows that there have been important examples of climate leadership and success across the country.

Yet, progress made — for example with economy-wide carbon pricing and the phase-out of coal-fired electricity — has been offset by emissions increases elsewhere. In particular, emissions from transportation and oil and gas production have been on a steady upward trajectory since 2005. As a result, Canada's overall greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions have dropped by only 1% between 2005 and 2019. Modelling for the 2021 budget that includes the federal climate policy published in December 2020 forecasts a national emissions reduction of 36% below 2005 levels by 2030 — still short of the federal government's commitment to reduce emissions by 40–45% by 2030. Success requires all hands on deck. Although the federal government has set 2030 and 2050 targets, an assessment of climate policy across jurisdictions reveals that over 50% of national emissions, including emissions from Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, are not covered by a provincial or territorial 2030 target.

Almost three-quarters (74%) of national emissions, including emissions from Alberta, Ontario, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, are not covered by a provincial or territorial 2050 target. The approach to climate action in Canada is piecemeal. It also lacks accountability for governments who promise climate action but don't have time lines or policies to match the urgency of the situation. Despite the fast-approaching 2030 target, 95% of emissions generated in Canada are not covered by either a provincial or territorial 2030 target or climate plans independently verified to deliver on the 2030 target. No jurisdiction has developed pathways to describe how net-zero can be achieved.

Unfortunately, the increased incidence of record-breaking heat waves and wildfires — with their devastating impact on human health and community stability — are the inevitable result. Our findings show that Canada's governments are unprepared to help deliver a safe climate. Given their jurisdiction over energy resources, provinces and territories hold much of the power to change this situation. It's time for every Canadian province and territory to step up action to ensure a safe and sustainable future for all. Climate success does not require a uniform approach for every province and territory.

In this report, based on evaluation of the indicators, we have identified specific priorities for action for each province, territory, and the federal government. In addition, we have identified six areas of action and 16 recommendations that all governments can implement, if they have not already done so. These include putting in place a climate policy framework to deliver fair and ambitious climate action and ensure that emissions are decreasing in all sectors, especially the largest emitters. Our findings show that across Canada, provinces and territories are unprepared to deliver the emissions reductions needed for a safe climate. The Report analyzes the state of climate action by province and territory, as well as at the federal level, based on 24 criteria: Summary Recommendations are provided below:

Major Recommendations from Pembina's Climate Emergency Report

- I. Set higher emissions reduction targets and shrinking carbon budgets. Governments prepared to deliver on climate promises will:**
- Commit to net-zero emissions by 2050 and model a pathway to achieve that goal
 - Commit to a 2030 target aligned with Canada's historic contribution and ability to mitigate climate change
 - Translate targets into carbon budgets. Make governments accountable. Accountability requires that federal, provincial and territorial governments:
 - Create an independent accountability body, and mandate independent evaluation and advice to the legislature, not the government of the day
 - Legislate targets and carbon budgets for regular, short-term milestones between 2021 and 2050
 - Mandate a requirement that climate mitigation plans, including actions to achieve legislated milestones, adaptation plans, and evaluations are tabled in their respective legislatures.
- II. Prioritize reconciliation and equity. To begin the process of building reconciliation and equity into climate policy, governments need to:**
- Pass legislation committing to full implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
 - Commit to monitoring, publicly reporting on, and mitigating the impacts of climate change and climate change policy on Indigenous Peoples and their rights
 - Commit to monitoring, publicly reporting on, and mitigating the gendered, socio-economic and racial impacts of climate change and climate change policy.
 - Set economy-wide sectoral budgets and map net-zero pathways. In nearly every province and territory, either oil and gas or transportation (or both) are the largest source of emissions. As such, governments need to:
 - Set economy-wide sectoral budgets and strategies at national, provincial, and territorial levels
 - Prioritize emissions reductions in the highest emitting sectors
 - Decarbonize electricity by 2035. Plan for decline in oil and gas. The federal government, and governments in fossil fuel-producing provinces and territories, need to:
 - Create transition plans for the oil and gas sector that are based on net-zero pathways and include comprehensive strategies to ensure a just and inclusive transition. Accelerate the push to decarbonize transportation. Governments need to:
 - Mandate 100% zero-emission vehicle (ZEV) sales by 2035 and provide incentives for purchase and infrastructure
 - Develop decarbonization strategies for medium- and heavy-duty vehicles and goods movement
 - Develop and fund public transit and active transportation strategies.

* The Alberta-based Pembina Institute issued this Report in July 2021. The full Executive Summary and Report can be accessed at| www.pembina.org

Vote. Raise your voice. Wear a mask. Wash your hands. Stay home if you can. Support people who can't stay home. Call someone you love and tell them that you love them. Feed those who are hungry and love each other. Rest, for the fight for justice is a marathon. Truly: love, love, love.

Rev. Dr. Donna Schaper, The Resistance Prays

WE HAVE 9 YEARS LEFT - 450 SUNDAY SERMONS - TO SAVE THE PLANET

CLIMATE MATH TURNS TO MORAL ISSUES

BY BILL MCKIBBEN – MARCH 2021 -- SOJOURNERS MAGAZINE *

TRUMP IS BEHIND us now—four years of constant provocation and useless cruelty are over, which means ... we have about nine years left for the most important task any civilization has ever taken on. I want to lay out the basic math of our situation, because if we are at all serious about taking care of the earth God gave us (and we should be, since that was literally our first instruction), that math rules the day.

1) We are currently on a path to raise the temperature of the planet 3 degrees Celsius or more by century's end. If we do that, we can't have civilizations like the ones we're used to—already, at barely more than 1 degree, wildfires and hurricanes have begun to strain our ability to respond.

2) In 2015, the world's governments pledged in Paris to try and hold the rise in temperature to 1.5 degrees Celsius. The United States, shamefully, exited that agreement for a time, but now we're back in.

3) To meet that target, scientists say we need to cut emissions in half by 2030 and then go on cutting until, by 2050, we've stopped burning fossil fuel altogether. But the crucial year is not 2050. It's 2030—if we haven't made huge cuts by then, we'll miss the chance to stop short of utter catastrophe.

4) Those cuts are entirely possible. Using the brains God gave them, engineers have made incredible progress: Solar power and wind power are now the cheapest ways to generate electricity on this planet. You can buy, for a reasonable price, an electric car if you must have a car. We could actually do this.

5) But—and here the math turns more directly toward moral issues—it means we'd have to NOT do some things. For instance, we'd have to stop letting our banks and investment managers try to make money off global warming—currently they're lending and investing huge sums in the fossil fuel industry.

6) And we'd have to face up to the underlying math: While it's true that humans are heating the planet, not all humans. The top 10 percent of us, those who make more than \$38,000 a year, are responsible for more than half the world's carbon emissions. We need to change our lives, but more importantly we need to change the systems we've set up: Instead of trying to maximize our own wealth, we need desperately to try sharing it, so that people in the poorest parts of the world can have solar panels too—so they don't have to choose between development and a disaster that will hit them hardest.

That's it. Climate change is a math problem. A hard one, and one that requires that we examine our societies and our souls. But no matter what we do, the math won't change, and the most important of all the numbers is that part about nine years ... about 450 weeks—450 Sunday sermons. Really, that's it.

* Bill McKibben, founder of 350.org, is the author most recently of *Falter: Has the Human Game Begun to Play Itself Out?* Although his article was written prior to the release of the Aug.9/21 IPCC report, it is still profoundly relevant to us as Christians concerned about the spectre of a global climate catastrophe.

Reasons for Hope on Climate Change

Despite the onslaught of climate disasters in 2020 and 2021, there is momentum for political action ... now more than ever before!

BY MATTHEW HOFFMAN - JAN 12, 2021 – YES! MAGAZINE *

Climate disasters started early in 2020—and kept on coming. The catastrophic [fires in Australia](#) in early 2020 were a holdover from 2019, but they were soon followed by [flooding in Indonesia](#), a [super cyclone hitting the coast of India and Bangladesh](#), and then more flooding, this time [in Kenya](#) and wide swaths of [Central and West Africa](#). Next came the record-breaking fires in the [Brazilian Amazon](#), South America's [Pantanal wetlands](#), [California](#) and [Colorado](#), followed by a historic [hurricane season in the Atlantic](#), including two apocalyptic hurricanes in [Nicaragua and Honduras](#). With terrible symmetry, 2020 ended with [bushfires consuming more than half of K'gari](#), a World Heritage site and island off the [coast of Queensland, Australia](#). A popular refrain on social media notes that while 2020 was among the hottest on record and one of the worst years for climate disasters, it is also likely to be among the coolest and calmest for years to come. During a speech at Columbia University in December, U.N. Secretary General **António Guterres** put it bluntly: "[The state of the planet is broken](#)." But now is not the time for despair.

Hope Is Found in Uncertainty

All this bad climate news has the potential to generate climate despair, numbing those watching the next tragedy unfold. Climate despair is a growing phenomena, noted in the [popular media](#) and in academic research in [public health](#), [education](#), [ethics](#), and [philosophy](#). Psychologists even coined the term "[solastalgia](#)" to denote distress caused by environmental damage and loss. Climate despair is feeling with certainty that "we're screwed," that the worst impacts of climate change are inevitable and can no longer be stopped. Despair feels reasonable given what we're learning about climate change and seeing in the news. But it is a temptation that should be resisted. Rebecca Solnit argues that [hope is found in uncertainty](#)—that the future is not set. Even given torrents of bad news, there are a number of reasons for hope. And 2020 could indeed be the turning point. It has to be.

Science, Politics, and Hope

To be clear, climate despair does not square with current scientific understandings. We are in trouble, not screwed. Actions taken now and in the next decade, individually and collectively, [can make a difference](#). The news on climate impacts and climate science may feel like a march of doom, but climate scientists argue that it's [not too late to act](#) and there is uncertainty in the [extent of climate impacts](#) we have guaranteed ourselves. We have not reached the [point of no return](#). In some ways, climate despair is the [new climate denial](#), dulling the sense of urgency and blunting the momentum for action. The discourse [paralyzes](#) when paralysis is what we can least afford. The discourse of despair strengthens the grip of the status quo and can be a self-fulfilling prophecy. So hope is good science, and that's good for politics. Opportunities to expand the space of uncertainty at the root of hope are right in front of us. While the climate impacts have been terrible in 2020, there has never been as much momentum for political action on climate change as there is now:

- ◆ The first truly global social movement dedicated to climate action and climate justice has gained in size and strength, beginning with Greta Thunberg's [Fridays for the Future](#) and

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spreading to the Sunrise Movement in the U.S. and climate justice movements around the world.

- ◆ Large-scale capital continues to flee from fossil fuel investments, which are rapidly losing value. According to a recent study by political scientists Jeff Colgan, Jessica Green, and Thomas Hale, this shifting financial ground promises to upend the politics of climate change in important ways, as vested interests lose political power.
- ◆ The initial pandemic response demonstrated how societies and economies can pivot quickly in response to an emergency. The longer-term plans for post-pandemic recovery provide an enormous window of opportunity to “build back better,” although this idea does not have universal uptake.
- ◆ The Paris Agreement survived the withdrawal of the U.S., which is poised to rejoin after Joe Biden is sworn in as president. Momentum around the agreement was clear at the Climate Ambition Summit where 75 countries announced new national commitments.
- ◆ The ranks of countries that have made net-zero commitments is swelling, and new report suggests that the cumulative effect of countries’ recent pledges (if fully achieved) could keep warming to 2.1 C by 2100, putting a key Paris Agreement goal within reach.

These trends don’t guarantee that we have turned the political corner! The forces arrayed against the kind of changes we need are vast and powerful. It will take an enormous amount of energy, resources, and action for these promising trends to fulfil their potential and turn the tide of climate change. But they can disrupt the status quo. They can create space for catalytic action. They can enhance the uncertainty that keeps despair at bay. They provide hope.

This motivating hope, or what Canadian political scientist **Thomas Homer-Dixon** calls commanding hope, is not just scientifically valid and politically astute, it is the only viable moral choice. The iron law of climate change is that those least responsible for causing the problem face the worst consequences. The opposite is true as well—those most responsible for causing climate change tend to be the safest from it. According to Oxfam, the richest 1% of the population globally “are responsible for more than twice as much carbon pollution as the 3.1 billion people who made up the poorest half of humanity.”

Too many people and communities do not have the luxury of saying “*isn’t that a shame, too bad we can’t do anything*” about climate change. They aren’t safe, and it’s not their fault. Rejecting despair, embracing the uncertainty of hope, is the least that individuals, communities, and societies that are relatively safe from climate change owe vulnerable communities. With 2020 left behind, there is hope in facing the climate crisis, for movement toward a just transition to an equitable low-carbon world. Seeing that hope fulfilled in 2021 and beyond means summoning courage, joy, and sometimes even rage, fiercely clinging to and expanding the uncertainty of the future.

* Mathew Hoffman's story originally appeared in The Conversation and was republished in YES! by permission. It was written before the dramatic climatic disasters (flooding, heat domes, fires, and droughts) which have overwhelmed B.C., Canada and the world so far in 2021. In spite of Hoffman's optimism, it is imperative that immediate, urgent action be taken, on both an individual and collective scale, to meet the challenges of run-away climate disaster on earth, our planet home.

The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate action of its members.
~ Coretta Scott King

WHEN FIRES BURN THROUGH A COMMUNITY, WHAT REMAINS?**REV. ANN SULLIVAN ON THE WILDFIRES THAT DESTROYED PARADISE, CALIFORNIA ***

THE THING MOVED so fast, it was just like a matchbox. It just moved so fast. Nobody in my parish passed away because of the fire. There are about 60 or 70 families that identify with our parish, and most of those people lost their homes. I didn't know my own house was burned until about 48 hours in—that's when I got that confirmation.

If you walked through Paradise today, you'd see debris, burnt-out cars, and a huge amount of devastation. Burnt trees. Homes are gone. I mean it's pretty much like a war zone. There's a pastors meeting up there once a month, which I haven't gone to every time because I find it incredibly hard to go up there.

People's lives have been changed—pretty much changed forever. I talk to a woman probably four times a week and she's still living in her car. And I get her a hotel room about once a week to try to take away some of the struggle. I wish I could do it five times a week but I only have so many resources.

I think the hardest part is the grief from all the displacement because of the devastation. Biblically, you know, it's the whole diaspora thing. It was so profound right away just identifying with that story of the exiles who were living away from their homeland for 70 years. And then when they went back, everything was different. And not everybody went back, kind of like us. Most people are not going back.

*** Rev. Ann Sullivan is pastor of St. Nicholas' Episcopal Church in Paradise, Calif. This article first appeared in the 2019 issue of Sojourners.**



Revitalizing Indigenous Living Languages

By Sara Chu *

Imagine for a moment that you are suddenly not allowed to speak or write in English. Then try to imagine doing that for a whole day. What about a week?

Such an experiment might give you some small insight into the experience of Indigenous children in residential schools. Add the loss of family and home, the strangeness of everything, your lack of personal power, and you might begin to understand their suffering.

This article is not a definitive or comprehensive description of the history and current situation regarding attempts to reclaim and revitalize Indigenous languages. I only hope to describe the role of our Anglican Diocese of BC in supporting language revival. Then maybe we at St John's will see ways to contribute to that effort.

Let's start with some history. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was established in 2008 as part of a legal settlement agreement (the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement of 2007). The Agreement was between survivors and the Government of Canada, the Assembly of First Nations, Inuit representatives, and church bodies that had run residential schools. The TRC, now called the NCTR (National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation), made a final report in 2015 in which were listed 94 Calls to Action. Action #61 called for church parties to the Settlement Agreement, in collaboration with survivors and representatives of Aboriginal organizations, to establish permanent funding to revitalize Indigenous languages.

RILL/AN is our Diocesan response to the TRC's Call to Action #61. RILL stands for Revitalization of Indigenous Living Languages. AN stands for Aboriginal Neighbours.¹ AN includes members of our Anglican Diocese, the Victoria Presbytery of the United Church and a group from the Quakers. RILL/AN applies for grants from the Diocesan Vision Fund, the Anglican Foundation, the Anglican Healing Fund, the Victoria Foundation, and the Vancouver Foundation. Funds raised go to the First Peoples' Cultural Council (FPCC)'s mentor/apprentice language programme.

St John's November blue envelope goes to RILL/AN, and is forwarded to FPCC. The FPCC receives most of its funding from the Federal and Provincial Governments. Our contribution is relatively small, but significant. FPCC staff and programme participants particularly appreciate RILL/AN's ongoing commitment to reconciliation through support for language revitalization.

FPCC runs many programmes. One of the most interesting is the mentor/apprentice programme, in which a young Indigenous person is paired with an Elder who is fluent in the local Indigenous language. Most such fluent speakers are in their 70s or older. (Some BC Indigenous languages have no surviving fluent speakers, and revival has to rely on notes written by interested early white settlers.) The mentor and apprentice spend at least 300 hours per year speaking only the Indigenous language. To qualify as an apprentice, the young person

¹ <https://aboriginalneighbours.org/>

must be working toward a degree in areas such as teaching, technology, art, or child and youth care. They must also be open to public speaking, working with technology, working with Elders, and creating curriculum. The apprentices are expected to be the mentors of the future.

In 2009, the mentor/apprentice programme started with two apprentices. (In 2020-21, FPCC funded 30 mentor/apprentice teams. A further 22 teams applied, but could not be funded.) One of the original apprentices was Renee Sampson of the W̱SÁNEĆ people, out on what we call the Saanich Peninsula. Her master's thesis is a fascinating read.² She describes her journey, beginning with immersion preschool at age 4 at the Raven School, followed by her loss of language in conventional elementary and high school. She describes how events came to give her a sense of a "knock on the door" and the stoking of the flames inside her as she came to recognize how the loss of her language had affected her. Renee now has a Master's in Education. She is the Language Revitalization Coordinator at Brentwood Bay Tribal School (ŁÁU,WELŃEW) which is under the W̱SÁNEĆ School Board. The school has immersion preschool to grade 3 in the SENĆOŦEN language and a bilingual program for grades 4-6.

The W̱SÁNEĆ School Board runs many kinds of programmes. There is a high school (grade 7-12) and the Saanich Adult Education Centre. Programmes are needed in schools, but also in communities, especially for adults and families. Future programming is complex as First Nations sort out an evolving future.

Language is inextricably tied to culture. We at St John's must do what we can to help restore what our dominant culture destroyed and suppressed. Please donate generously to the November blue envelope!

* Sara Chu is a member of St. John the Divine and a frequent contributor to LJR. Sara wishes to thank Sarah Kell (also a member of St John's) for her help with this article. Sarah Kell works for U. Vic. and is a specialist in indigenous language recovery.

² Sampson, Renee: <https://dspace.library.uvic.ca/handle/1828/9814>



A Mural in Tucson, AZ -- "The World We Hold in Common"

Colonizer and Colonized

Who Will Represent the Perpetrators, If Not Us?

Andrea Glen -- Geez Magazine

As a Canadian of mixed ancestry, my thinking on residential schools has undergone a significant shift in recent years. Healing the rift between First Peoples and settlers is more personal than I used to think.

My Cree grandmother was a residential school survivor. I did not learn this until I was in my 20s, so deep was the shame and secrecy in my family. My father was raised in poverty in an isolated northern community, where he was abused physically and verbally by broken family members and white settlers. The wounds inflicted by residential schools still bleed.

Because of my family background, I had a tendency to approach Indigenous issues from a victim's standpoint. I felt a kind of nobility of the wronged in the equation of reconciliation. Then I met a minister who works closely with the Indigenous community on the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver. She is a white settler. American. Baptist. She told me how she was challenged by a Native elder in a meeting about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. She volunteered for the committee, but had come to the table without thinking she bore responsibility for residential schools. The elder said to her, "You are sitting at this table in the name of Jesus. I need you to know that people came to us in the name of Jesus and did these terrible things." For her work on the TRC to have any meaning, she had to allow herself to be a representative of church leaders who had perpetrated abuse. She had to take on the role of the perpetrator.

She followed the elder's advice. The way of the cross, she told me, is to seek reconciliation even at significant personal cost. The Church played an ugly role in the residential school saga, and when people of faith can own that history, we take a step toward reconciliation. Hearing her story made me rethink my own posture as victim. I realized that I also occupy the space of a privileged Euro-Canadian: one who has roots in the theological and political traditions that gave rise to the residential schools in the first place. I am both the colonized and the colonizer. Accepting this truth was and is difficult. It has led me to a more honest examination of the colonial baggage that comes with my faith. I now believe that Christian communities bear a special responsibility to pursue reconciliation due to the Church's role in creating and perpetuating racist institutions of oppression. We are called to participate in reconciliation. Because we are part of a system that created oppression, it is our responsibility to engage in the healing of our nation through repentance. We must acknowledge that we, the Church, created orphans and widows rather than following the Bible's call to care for them. We carried out a terrible plan of assimilation and cultural genocide that clearly contradicts our call to love our neighbours.

For reconciliation to happen, there must be at least two parties at the table – the wrongdoer and the wronged. Those who were directly responsible are no longer alive, or in hiding. Who will represent the perpetrators, if not us? Taking on the role of a perpetrator is not easy. It is painful and humbling. But doing so enables us to engage in the reconciliation process in a meaningful way. It took over a century to inflict the deep wounds of the residential school system. Similarly, it will take a commitment over generations to bring healing. I believe that if we acknowledge our forebears' wrongs and take responsibility for our own ongoing complicity in colonialism, we can work towards meaningful reconciliation in this country.

* Andrea Glen graduated from law school, where she had the opportunity to learn about Canada's history of using the law as a tool of colonial oppression. She lives on unceded Musqueam territory with her partner, James. (Originally Published in Geez, #39. Nov. 2015)

CHURCHES WALKING THE TALK!

Mennonites Launch Challenge on Indigenous-Settler Relations *Mennonite Church of Canada announces nationwide initiative to spur new commitments & resolutions to Indigenous justice in their denomination.*



This June, Indigenous-Settler Relations is launching the “*Be It Resolved Challenge*”, a nationwide initiative encouraging Mennonite Church Canada members and congregations to create and commit to new resolutions for Indigenous justice.

Challenge participants receive a free copy of the anthology - *Be it Resolved: Anabaptists and Partner Coalitions Advocate for Indigenous Justice, 1966 – 2020* and commit to reading and reflecting on portions of the book, along with other suggested readings in July - August 2021.

“*Last week's devastating news of 215 lost children found at the former Kamloops Indian Residential School reminds us that the need for action is imperative,*” says Steve Heinrichs, director of Indigenous-Settler Relations. “*We invite members of our Mennonite Church Canada family to reflection the profound commitments that our*

community of faith has made to Indigenous justice over the last 50 years and to respond, in turn, with our very own resolutions.” Participants will attend two virtual meetings in fall 2021 to share what they have learned from the readings and the commitments and resolutions they want to make. Some examples of resolutions might be:

- ◆ To take a first step in one’s learning journey by centring Indigenous authors in one’s reading;
- ◆ To follow up a church resolution on treaties, the Doctrine of Discovery or on racism and help it along;
- ◆ To craft a song of justice and prayer of lament that helps the church worship in these lands;
- ◆ To link arms with Indigenous groups in members’ communities seeking to address long-standing inequities.

Participants will gather for a final time on **June 21, 2022** (on National Indigenous Peoples' Day), to share updates on their resolutions. Indigenous Settler-Relations will also present the resolutions at “*Gathering 2022*” in Edmonton, AB. on **July 29 – Aug. 2, 2022**.

“*Through a prayerful reading of these largely forgotten church covenants, spurred on by the bold witness of the past, may we be moved, beyond our fears, to make our own promises ‘to do right!’*” says Heinrichs. “*In so doing, we will not only grow in what some call ‘political holiness,’ but we will also help the larger Body put flesh on many good words that long to become deeds.*”

Reckoning with Genocide: The State-Planned Part of Genocide

SOJOURNERS MAGAZINE – SEPT./OCT. 2021 - BY GEORGE TINKER *

Unmarked Graves and Christian Complicity.

“TWO-HUNDRED-FIFTEEN children were buried in unmarked graves at Kamloops Residential School in British Columbia—that was just the first. We’re going to see this repeated across the continent from the Arctic North down to the Rio Grande. It’s not over. It’s just starting.

The boarding schools—what they call residential schools in Canada—were a state-planned part of the genocide of the American Indians. They were a way of removing an obstacle to getting the land and the resources. The boarding schools were part of the intentional destruction of the American Indian worldview [to give rise to] the Euro-Christian worldview of radical individualism, of private ownership, of hierarchy.

Private ownership of land is considered a fundamental human right to Euro-Christians. What good does that do for Indians, who want to honor the Earth as a close relative—as a mother, a grandmother? It was always, first of all, about the land, and still is today as we see pipeline after pipeline in Canada and the U.S.

When I read Facebook and the responses of liberal, white, Euro-Christian people to these revelations, I see a proliferation of teary-eyed emojis: sadness. Screw sadness! Euro-Christian people should be mad as hell that your privilege, power, and ownership of land on this continent is rooted in those children dying that way and being buried by the missionaries or by government officials in government schools without even notifying the parents, because [those children] were not yet considered human until converted to Christianity.

The churches were part of the political system from the very beginning and the churches need to change the political system now. A variety of denominations in the past 20 years took action to disavow the Doctrine of Discovery. How much land did Indians get back? What did it accomplish? That’s only a tiny first step. It’s time to roll up your sleeves and go to work.”

* George “Tink” Tinker is professor emeritus at Iliff School of Theology in Denver and a citizen of the Osage Nation. He spoke with Sojourners’ Jenna Barnett.

MAVIS GILLIE “A Force of Nature”

In **Issue #13** of LJR, we ran Sara Chu's special article on the life of long-time St. John the Divine member, the remarkable social justice advocate and activist, Ms. Mavis Gillie. Mavis passed away on Mar. 28, 2021 in Victoria at the age of 94. She was held in high esteem by the ecumenical-activist and social-change communities in Victoria. The following excerpt is taken from the latest issue of *The Island Catholic News* (Summer 2021, Vol. 35 / #4, 5, 6). RIP, Mavis.

M.L. - Editor, LJR

Mavis Gillie – The Passing of a Great Warrior

Dear Editor:

Long time friend and devoted advocate of our First Nation’s neighbours, Mavis Gillie, passed away on March 28, 2021.

Mavis was a founding member of Project North (an ecumenical social action group) and Aboriginal Neighbours. She worked with the Dene and Inuit peoples in their struggles against the Mackenzie Valley pipeline in the 1970s and helped to organize support for the Nisga’a Treaty. Mavis was instrumental in stopping a proposed Marina being built in Saanichton Bay (an important fisheries for the Tsawout people) in 1987. This was as important a battle as the ones for

South Moresby, Meares Island and the Stein Valley.

She was an originating member of the Anglican Church’s Public and Social Responsibility Unit and in 1991 was awarded the Anglican Award of Merit for her years of dedicated service to the church. She received an Honorary Doctor of Laws at the University of Victoria in 2016. Aboriginal Neighbours will always remember Mavis Gillie’s dedication to the First Nation’s people over many years.

Maureen Applewhaite;
Aboriginal Neighbours

(Mavis Gillie Obit will appear in the Autumn issue of ICN)

KAIROS Statement on the Passing of The Hon. Thomas Berger *

News of the death of former B.C. Supreme Court Justice Thomas Berger on April 28, 2021 at the age of 88 resonated deeply throughout the KAIROS network. A ground-breaking lawyer and activist, Justice Berger will be remembered for his willingness to listen to and advocate for Indigenous peoples and for transforming Canadian law and Indigenous title and rights.

Early in his career in the late 1960s, Justice Berger represented the Nisga'a Nation in the landmark *Calder vs. British Columbia* case which led to the Supreme Court of Canada acknowledging in 1973, and for the first time, the existence of Aboriginal title to land. When the case began, Canada's position was that Indigenous title to land had been extinguished and that Indigenous people had to prove their rights existed.

In 1974, three years after his appointment to the Supreme Court of British Columbia, the federal government appointed Justice Berger royal commissioner of the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry. The Berger Inquiry, as it became known, was tasked with investigating the social, environmental, and economic impacts of the planned \$10 billion, 4,000-kilometre pipeline through the Mackenzie Valley, which at the time was the world's biggest engineering project.

Justice Berger took the inquiry to 30 Dene and Inuvialuit villages along the Mackenzie River and across the Northwest Territories and Yukon to hear from and learn about these Indigenous peoples and their lands. Originally scheduled to take 12 months, the inquiry lasted two and a half years.

The inquiry coincided with the creation of the ecumenical Inter-Church Project on Northern Development, or Project North. A precursor to the Aboriginal Rights Coalition, which later became part of KAIROS, Project North was launched in 1975 because the churches realized their relationship with Indigenous peoples in Canada was in need of drastic change. Project North was also a response to Indigenous leaders who had been urging the churches to do more to enhance awareness and understanding of how resource development was threatening Indigenous life, rights, and culture. The churches were challenged to work toward a new and just relationship based on solidarity, and this included political action directed at governments and corporations on social, economic, environmental, and cultural issues affecting Indigenous peoples.

The proposed Mackenzie Valley Pipeline was only one of several resource mega-projects in northern Canada in the 1970s and this gave direction and a sense of urgency to the churches. In its 1976 submission before the Berger Inquiry in Ottawa, Project North called for a "moratorium on all Northern resource development projects, including the Mackenzie Valley pipeline."

In 1977, the 240-page Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry report, which included testimony from 1,000 northerners, recommended a 10-year moratorium on pipeline construction while Indigenous land claims were settled.

Justice Berger was a consummate advocate who knew how to listen, and who created spaces so that Indigenous voices could be heard. In this way he continues to contribute in an invaluable way to a more just and equitable society.

*** From: Kairos E-News, May 3/2021**

May 27, 2021 – By Julia Conley, Common Dreams Staff Writer

**This Is the Price of War: Israeli Newspaper Publishes Photos of 67
Palestinian Children Killed in Gaza Onslaught**

"Conversations around Israel/Palestine are changing in Jewish communities across the globe," said rabbi and author Abby Stein. "It's about time."



The Israeli newspaper Haaretz published the photos of 67 children who were killed in Gaza in the 11-day bombardment campaign by the Israel Defense Forces. (Photo: Haaretz)

Human rights advocates and journalists applauded the Israeli newspaper Haaretz for its "unprecedented" cover story Thursday—one featuring the photos and stories of 67 Palestinian children killed in the latest bombardment campaign by the Israel Defense Forces. *"This is the price of war,"* the headline read.

The article came a day after the New York Times published its own extensive account of the youngest victims of Israel's most recent 11-day offensive, in which the IDF frequently targeted residential areas of Gaza, known as the world's largest open-air prison.

Haaretz's focus on the children killed in Gaza was especially noteworthy, said author and Brooklyn College professor Louis Fishman, considering the newspaper's *"readers also send their children to fight in Israel's wars. This is unprecedented."* Fishman tweeted.

While Haaretz leans to the center-left editorially, Israeli's mainstream media has traditionally not covered the Palestinian casualties of the IDF's military campaigns and the Israeli government's violent policies, said journalist Khaled Diab. As Diab tweeted, previous attempts by organizations in Israel to publicize the human cost of the IDF's assaults have been repressed.

"Conversations around Israel/Palestine are changing in Jewish communities across the globe," tweeted rabbi and author Abby Stein. "It's about time." As Jewish Currents editor-in-chief Arielle Angell wrote last week in The Guardian, since Israel's 2014 50-day assault on Gaza, which killed more than 2,100 Palestinians, rights advocates have "seen the growth of a small but committed Jewish anti-occupation movement [and] the last week and a half have brought an even larger circle of the community to a place of reckoning."

We've seen Jewish politicians, celebrities, rabbinical students and others speak up loudly for Palestine. We've seen a powerful display of solidarity from Jewish Google employees, asking their company to sever ties with the IDF. At Jewish Currents, the left-wing magazine where I am now editor-in-chief, we asked for questions from readers struggling to understand the recent violence. We've been deluged. These questions taken in aggregate paint a striking portrait of a community at a turning point.

In Israel, the Haaretz front page appeared to touch a nerve, garnering at least one outraged response from Oded Revivi, head of the Efrat Regional Council in an Israeli settlement in the West Bank, who said Haaretz's article was evidence that "*people pity the wrong mothers.*" On social media, Mairav Zonszein of the International Crisis Group said rather than the "*price of war,*" the Haaretz front page specifically shows the price of "*Israel's "continued military rule, dispossession, discrimination, and violence."*

DAYENU *

Had God taken us out of Europe alive,
it would have been enough.

Had He taken us out of Europe alive
and brought us into the land of Israel,
it would have been enough.

Had we entered the land of Israel
and revived the Hebrew language,
carving its letters on ruins and gravestones,
renaming cities and villages,
it would have been enough.

Had we renamed cities and villages
while Arabic was covered in dust,
enough.

Had we built settlements
but not checkpoints

Had we claimed Jerusalem
but not evicted its residents

Had we evicted them
but not dragged them from their homes

Had we controlled the Old City
but not raided al-Aqsa

not disrupted Ramadan prayers
Iftar meals, Eid celebrations

Had we occupied Gaza
but not shut off the borders—

Had we shut off the borders
but not bombed homes—

Had we bombed homes for one day
but not for days on end—
it would have been enough.

I swear it would have been enough.

* By Yvette Neisser - a poet, translator, and international development professional living in Washington, DC.

OPEN LETTER TO U.S. CHRISTIANS FROM A PALESTINIAN PASTOR

MAY 19/21 - BY REV. MUNTHUR ISAAC - SOJO.NET *

“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem!” Palestine and Israel are back in the news. So again, we Palestinians hear this common refrain. But such calls for prayer are no longer enough. I say this as a Palestinian pastor who believes in prayer, leads prayer services for peace, and genuinely values your good intentions. But good intentions are not enough. In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus didn’t say, “Blessed are the peace prayers.” He said, “Blessed are the peacemakers.” (Matthew 5:9, emphasis added). Peacemakers of every faith pray — and they discern what’s really happening, call things by their names, then speak truth to power. Here’s how this works.

Call Things By Their Names

Peacemaking begins by refusing to repeat the common descriptor of what is happening in Palestine and Israel: a conflict. Palestinians are not experiencing a conflict between two parties. We Palestinians are experiencing an occupation: one nation controlling another; the laws, policies, practices, and military of one state oppressing the people of another, controlling nearly every aspect of our lives. Palestinians in Jerusalem are not facing evictions from their homes. They are experiencing ethnic cleansing, which the U.N. has described as “a purposeful policy designed by one ethnic or religious group to remove by violent and terror-inspiring means the civilian population of another ethnic or religious group from certain geographic areas.”

Non-Jewish citizens of Israel are not just enduring discrimination. They are experiencing apartheid. Israel’s infamous 2018 nation state law — which, among other things, stated that Israel’s right to “*exercise national self-determination*” is “unique to the Jewish people” — along with other policies and practices, has transformed de facto discrimination into racism de jure. The more than 2 million people living in Gaza are not choosing to experience hardship, food deprivation, a lack of clean water, and consistent energy. They are confined to the world’s largest open-air prison where — unable to come and go, import and export, or even fish in the open waters off their shore without Israeli permission — Israeli snipers pick off their children and Israel’s air force bombs their city indiscriminately.

For over 70 years, Palestinians have not been arguing over who owns what land. No, we have experienced the terror and loss that comes from settler colonialism, the systematic removal and erasure of native inhabitants from their land, most recently in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of East Jerusalem. Calling things by their names is a necessary step toward resolving any conflict. Using the words racism and apartheid may cause pause — but these are the descriptors that define our daily lives. Do not take our word alone for it. Read the January report issued by the respected Israeli human rights organization B’tselem, “*A regime of Jewish supremacy from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea: This is apartheid.*” Read the April report from Human Rights Watch, “*A Threshold Crossed: Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution.*” Read Nathan Thrall’s analysis in the London Review of Books. Until peacemakers use terms that accurately describe our realities, the opportunities for peace remain distant.

Don't Misuse Christian-Jewish Dialogue

For years, Christian-Jewish dialogue was misused as a tool to silence criticism of Israel. In the 1990s, Jewish theologian Marc H. Ellis wrote about a significant, unspoken “agreement” between Christians and Jews. He observed that the “ecumenical dialogue” between liberal Christians and Jews had turned into what he described as an “*ecumenical deal*”: repentance on the part of Christians for having aided in or having failed to speak out against the atrocities committed by Germany, and the prospect of an ongoing conversation devoid of any substantive criticism of Israel. While the “deal” has broken down in many Christian denominations in the U.S. and in many quarters of the Jewish community, it is still used to silence Palestinian

Christians, labelling us antisemitic when we criticize the state of Israel or speak out against the secular project of Zionism.

It is time Christians begin engaging new Jewish partners. Listen to groups like Jewish Voice for Peace, If Not Now, B'tselem, Yesh Din, Rabbis for Human Rights, Breaking the Silence, and others who challenge the occupation. Listen to and dialogue with people like Marc H. Ellis, Mark Braverman, Rabbis Brant Rosen and Alissa Wise, and others who defend Palestinian rights out of their Jewish beliefs and convictions. Take the word of Bernie Sanders, who recently challenged the racist policies of the state of Israel.

Reexamine The Church's Theology

For years, Western Christian theology has been part of the matrix that empowers the Israeli occupation. It's a theology that describes God's unique faithfulness to Israel, the fulfilment of prophecy, and the "return" of Jews to "their" land. Adherents embrace the myth that the land was devoid of people when the state of Israel was created, or worse, that it was occupied by the enemies of God. It is time for Christians in some communions to confess and repent from their total disregard for the existence of Palestinians. It is time to change the theological narrative that renders the state of Israel invincible to errors and beyond any judgement. Theology matters. And if any theology trumps the ethical-biblical teachings of Jesus on love, equality, and justice, then we must rethink that theology. If any theology produces apathy to injustice, it must be re-examined.

Don't describe Palestinian Christians' efforts at creative resistance as criminal: We believe the call for sanctions, economic measures, and our nonviolent demonstrations are justified resistance. To insist on our dignity and God-given rights in our own land is not antisemitic; even the recent **Jerusalem Declaration Antisemitism**, a statement produced by more than 200 scholars of antisemitism and related fields, acknowledges this. Some have accused Palestinian Christians of hating Jews and of rejecting the right to nationhood for Israel. Though they have gone unacknowledged or been rejected as disingenuous, our statements have clearly rejected antisemitism and racism of any form. Our hope, our desire, is to live side by side with our Jewish neighbours in a reality of a just peace.

My Plea to Fellow Christians

I call upon you to share — both in word and action — our vision of a reality in which we both end the occupation and live together in peace with our Israeli neighbours. We do not hate Jews. We do not seek to destroy Israel. We want our freedom. We want to live in dignity in our homeland. We want to live in a reality where all the people of the land, Palestinians and Israelis, Jews, Muslims, and Christians, have the same rights and live under the same laws, regardless of their faith, nationality or ethnicity. Many years from today, when our descendants look back on the long misery of the Palestinians, they will not judge kindly the wilful neglect of the global church. We Palestinian Christians will not let you pretend that you did not know. You will either take a stand to end the oppression of the Palestinian people or continue to be part of the matrix that allows it.

The words of Elie Wiesel in his 1986 Nobel Prize acceptance [speech](#) cannot be more true today:

We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented. Sometimes we must interfere. When human lives are endangered, when human dignity is in jeopardy, national borders and sensitivities become irrelevant. Wherever men or women are persecuted because of their race, religion, or political views, that place must – at that moment – become the center of the universe.

* Rev. Dr. Munther Isaac is the pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church in Bethlehem. His latest book is *The Other Side of the Wall: A Palestinian Christian's Narrative of Lament and Hope*.

Pride in the church

BY NAOMI RACZ

Karen Coverett is assistant warden at St. John the Divine, Victoria, and first attended worship at the church during Pride Week 2016. I spoke to Karen about Pride, inclusivity in the Church and Zoom tech support.

In 2016, Karen Coverett and her friend decided to go on a “church quest.” Karen’s friend was facing pressure from her church to keep her sexual orientation secret. Karen had grown up in the Baptist church tradition and worked as a youth pastor, but she had left the Baptist church and her job a decade earlier. It was after leaving the church that Karen realised she was queer, and not, as the church had led her to feel, “broken.” Going back to a church didn’t seem like an option, but when Karen heard her friend deliberating about coming out, Karen decided to help her friend find a more accepting church. “Church quest” was born.

Shortly after this conversation, Karen was searching for Pride events in Victoria when she came across a Pride Church event at St. John the Divine with Patrick Sibley. Karen attended the event and heard Patrick, a married gay man, talking about why he decided to remain a part of the church and be ordained as a deacon. Karen had heard of St. John the Divine before, particularly in connection with its work on social justice, but the Pride Church event made her realize that St. John might be doing more than simply “talking the talk.”

Karen and her friend decided to check out St. John the Divine as part of their church quest and attended Pride Evensong. Karen was “blown away.” She thought, “Wow, they really mean it.” Despite the deep sense of connection that Karen felt at the Evensong service, she still talked about their church quest as though it was purely for her friend’s benefit. But a few months later, on Christmas Eve, Karen found herself longing to go to a Christmas Eve service. It was 9 p.m. so she didn’t think there was much chance of finding



The altar in the chapel at St. John the Divine. Image by Karen Coverett.

a service to go to, but as it happened, St. John the Divine had a service that night at 11 p.m.

Karen attended the Christmas Eve service, where Patrick preached, and she knew then that she had found her home. Karen still felt unsure about the whole “church thing,” but she just kept going back. In 2018, she was confirmed in the Anglican Church, which felt like an important step in affirming that this was her home. She’s now in her third year as associate warden at St. John the Divine and, since the pandemic, she’s also taken on the role of tech person.

When I spoke with Karen, I remarked that it seemed as though realizing she was queer had deepened her faith. She agreed. “Evangelical churches tend to emphasize the spirit over the flesh, ‘the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak,’ but it was only by listening to my body, listening to my whole self, that I was able to understand myself.”

“St. John’s is living out its commitment to celebrate all sexualities and gender identities, to truly celebrate and not just pay lip service.” For Karen, this inclusiveness begins with being honest about who you are welcoming in, not

just tolerating someone’s “choice.” Karen admits that church buildings can seem intimidating, and St. John the Divine, with its gothic architecture and forbidding wooden doors, is no exception. On the other hand, she thinks churches don’t necessarily need to be contemporary to be inclusive or welcoming. For Karen, the pipe organs and traditional hymns at St. John the Divine are an important part of the worship service.

Early on in the pandemic, Karen volunteered to help set up virtual worship services. These Zoom gatherings have seen new people joining the church, while those who could no longer physically attend a church were able to worship with others again. As churches start in-person services again, Karen hopes the virtual aspect of worship will continue. “St. John’s is meeting people wherever they are at. We need to meet people not only for who they are, but also where they are in their journey.” That may mean being open to people’s questions, or it may mean offering worship online. Either way, Karen is excited to see new faces, and any lingering doubts about the purpose of “church quest” seem to have long since vanished. ■

WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN SACRED VOWS DEFY CHURCH DOCTRINE?

A FATHER & DAUGHTER REFLECT ON A FORBIDDEN WEDDING ACROSS A DENOMINATIONAL DIVIDE

BY LYDIA WYLIE-KELLERMANN & BILL WYLIE-KELLERMAN - SOJOURNERS / APR. 2021 *

In August, leaders of the United Methodist Church from around the world are scheduled to meet, in Minneapolis and/or online. The denomination's future will be on the table as delegates address the decades-old debate about full inclusion of LGBTQI members, including in same-sex marriage and ordination. Meanwhile, congregations around the U.S. and elsewhere have taken various approaches to the pastoral realities of their members. Lydia Wylie-Kellermann and her father, retired Methodist pastor Bill Wylie-Kellermann, explain what it meant to support each other through Lydia's wedding and the ecclesial reverberations that followed.

Lydia Wylie-Kellermann: This is a story about risk and fear. It is a story about love. And it's about the moments when standing beside the ones you love becomes an act of justice. It is the kind of story that begs us to ask what it means to be church. It is an ordinary story turned holy by the common occurrence of the very personal moments of our lives interacting with structural injustice and the way resistance and love unfold.

Ten years ago, I married Erinn. It was in a political moment when gay marriage was illegal and most denominations were still forbidding it. Yet we were clear that we were not merely roommates or partners, but that marriage was a vocation we were summoned to together. We had no doubt that our relationship was blessed by community and by God. We wanted to promise our lives to one another and publicly offer our marriage as a gift back upon community.

It was a moment of total clarity for me, yet it was also really scary. We had to climb the steps of the church fearing we would pass through a line of protesters. We entered the sanctuary feeling the loved ones missing in the pews because they couldn't support our marriage. We walked hand in hand down the aisle, combatting our own internalized homophobia, showing our love publicly with hands, promises, and kisses.

We could not have done it without the love of community. The dearly beloveds who filled that church held our hearts and knees steady. One of those people that stood beside us and laid his hands upon us was my dad. He loved us, celebrated us, and summoned God to move in and through the day and into the rest of our lives. He co-officiated our service. As an ordained Methodist pastor serving a spunky, activist Episcopal church, he was risking losing his orders and losing his job.

Bill Wylie-Kellermann: Those were real fears. For as long as I can remember, I had said to myself that if a member of my congregation asked me to preside at a same-sex wedding, one discerned in pastoral care, that I would certainly do it. I was navigating a contradiction in the United Methodist Book of Discipline that enjoined me to offer pastoral ministry to all members in my care but a couple of paragraphs later forbade me to offer sacramental care to particular parishioners. This marriage was essentially pastoral work, but one that functioned as a public action of civil and ecclesial disobedience. I took comfort in Jesus' ministry, where a personal act of healing would publicly violate Levitical laws of purity, say, putting him in trouble. Consequences were unknown. Pastors in other conferences had been defrocked or suspended, but this was a first in Michigan, so untested.

Let me add something learned in discerning nonviolent direct actions: Fears can actually be in the service of the Holy Spirit. Often as not, the thing you are afraid of is the very thing you are being called to do. Acknowledged or confessed, fears may point the way. Suppressed or denied, they become inflated and, in the service of the powers, hold you back. So, I put the church on notice, sending my bishop a letter in advance. Charges were filed against me immediately by his cabinet, and I was summoned to appear on a date certain, to begin an administrative process, or eventually trial.

Lydia: The summoning letter from the bishop arrived and indicated that my dad was to bring a support person. Usually, when your orders are at risk, you might wisely choose to bring a prominent pastor or even a church lawyer. But he walked over to my house with worried, furrowed brow, stood in my living room, and said, “Will you come with me?” My dad stood beside me when I got married in what he declared a gospel act, and now it was time for me to stand beside him for an ordinary and sacred action that I believe was also a gospel act. Yes! It was a no-brainer. This time, I would love him, celebrate him, and summon God to linger in the corners of that conference building.

I showed up that day with knees quivering, holding the full intention of being an emotional, spiritual, and physical support to my dad. But it was immediately clear that I was not supposed to be there. I had to be navigated around. My presence changed the conversation. Simply by sitting awkwardly at the long, wooden table, we managed to humanize the conversation. It was not as easy to talk about “homosexuals” harming the church when they had to look into my eyes and speak of my love and my life.

My dad was being accused of “harming the Discipline.” Simply with our presence and clarity, we rearranged the question of who was being harmed. For generations, LGBTQ people have been hurt, excluded, and abused in our churches. We have been told that we can’t be who we are and that to God our existence is criminal and sinful. The mere fact that my marriage was listed in the Discipline—sandwiched between the crimes of racism, pedophilia, and adultery—speaks volumes to how we have been seen in the church.

Bill: That day, they set before me a document that I could sign and walk—acknowledging that I had violated the Discipline and promising not to do so again. They expected I would take the deal, but I pushed it away. I didn’t want to rest on the sort of “family exceptionalism” it seemed to offer. Plus, my conviction was such that I would do it again (and have).

My surprise came when the bishop turned things around and asked that we return in a week with our own proposal for a “just resolution.” Both of us were aware of how denial of marriage had been employed, with complicity from the church, in a history of various oppressions. Enslaved people were denied marriage, as it might stand in the way of quick and easy sale—which is to say, the only legal relationship was with the master. (Hence, enslaved people developed underground and alternative rituals, such as jumping the broom). Denying interracial marriage in Jim Crow and years beyond functioned similarly, to justify and regulate segregation.

So, on the day appointed, we brought a document that included reflection on Martin Luther King Jr.’s Birmingham jail letter, detailing civil (and by analogy, in this case, ecclesial) disobedience, how breaking unjust laws or disciplinary paragraphs is justified, where the harm was caused by the law itself rather than by its violation. It set forth a proposal for a restorative justice process, inviting LGBTQI folks, representatives both from congregations actively opposing same-sex marriage and “reconciling congregations,” members of the bishop’s cabinet and the conference Board of Ordained Ministry, plus ourselves. It also included a “signable confession,” to which I’d gladly put my hand:

On Oct. 8, 2011, I celebrated and participated fully in a covenant service of worship wherein Lydia and Erinn married one another before friends and community in Detroit. I did this wholeheartedly with great joy, and praying in it to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ and God’s great love, to offer a witness of restorative justice, to be faithful to my calling as pastor and elder, to honor the sacred covenant of ordination under which I share, even to support and maintain the Discipline of the United Methodist Church, and to be accountable to the bishop, the order, and the Discipline—though in doing so I was fully mindful that I violated a provision of par. 2702.1b. In all these intentions I trust the grace of God in Jesus Christ and ask the grace of my sisters and brothers in church and covenant. The bishop accepted it all. To be honest, the restorative process, well enough designed, was poorly implemented by the conference—powerful testimony rendered almost perfunctory. It did, however, provide a foundation for more recent cases in our church and contributed to a gathering denominational storm.

Lydia: The wedding now feels like a long time ago. It is hard to remember the fear I felt that day because the political moment changed so quickly. Within a couple of years, gay marriage was made legal across the country. I've often looked back and thought how far we've come in such a short time.

And then the world shifted under our feet again. These last four years have been agonizing as we moved into a time when hate crimes were sanctioned and even summoned by our then-president. Two summers ago, in Detroit, neo-Nazis marched down Woodward Avenue to the Pride Festival carrying shields and guns and shouting "F*** the faggots!" The next day, I held my fears as Erinn prepared to take our 3- and 6-year-olds to the Pride Parade. Yes, it would be good for our kids to go. Yes, it was important political work just to show up. But I cannot deny that when we went through metal detectors to get into Hart Plaza, I was disturbed by my own gratitude for the enhanced security.

Over the last year, the violent threats have loomed in the light. White men carry guns and nooses protesting stay-at-home orders. Black Lives Matter participants experience the real possibility of guns being fired at them. Black folks and particularly trans folks are being lynched. White supremacy, coupled with homophobia and transphobia, has been given permission to publicly arm itself and commit murder in the streets. Stories of fear, risk, and courage are still crucial and urgent—they summon us to ask the questions: Where are we showing up? Who is at our table? What places of fear am I called to walk into with courage? For what am I willing to risk my job, my home, my reputation, my life? In this time of hate and violence, what does it mean to be church?

Bill: In United Methodism, the storm finally broke. Preparations have been made for a formal split in our denomination. The unity of the church, indeed of all humanity and even creation, is central to the gospel. Sacramental marriage may even be an emblem of it. Ironically, commitment to that unity can involve drawing clear lines.

I think of Dietrich Bonhoeffer in this regard. From the moment that the Aryan clause was imposed on the German church, which forbade ordination to those who would marry spouses of Jewish descent, and those who were themselves of Jewish descent, Bonhoeffer thought the gospel so assaulted by it that a status confessionis existed—cause for declaring separation. Others, such as Karl Barth, argued for going slow, and eventually when the separation occurred, it did more fully address the theological idols of Nazism. But the impetus was there from the beginning.

I am among those who hold that foreseeable separation in Methodism is an opportunity to gather a new church, committed not just to LGBTQI inclusion but to gospel nonviolence in ways that mark resistance to everything from white male supremacy to militarism and nuclear weapons and to the economic structures of poverty. The queer community is leading us into that. A new generation of young Methodists is laying the groundwork for this work of transformation. They seek an inter-sectional church that is the beloved community—one committed to the nonviolence of Jesus; a sanctuary and safe space for those targeted and vulnerable to assault; one that takes liturgy and witness to the streets and embraces shalom—truly a justice and peace church. That is the opportunity of our moment as United Methodists. And it's all right on time for this cultural and historical moment.

Lydia: Indeed, we are right on time, in that it is always the moment to reimagine church in the shape of the gospels. May we summon the ancestors and ancient stories that prod our dreaming and remind us who we are and where we come from. May we listen to folks on the margins who are so often on the edges of institutional church and yet seem to understand within their bones what it means to be church. May we listen for the Creator who dwells in our fears and reminds us of our courage. And may my life and your life and all our lives be gathered up with all creation and force justice to roll down like a mighty stream!

* Lydia Wylie-Kellerman is editor of *Geez Magazine*. She recently edited *The Sandbox Revolution: Raising Kids for a Just World* (Broadleaf, 2021). She lives in Detroit. Bill Wylie-Kellermann is a retired Methodist pastor, non-violent community activist, teacher, and author. His next book is forthcoming this summer. *Celebrant's Flame: Daniel Berrigan in Memory and Reflection* (Cascade, 2021)

Rejoice! – A Poem by Butch Gerbrandt (Jan. 2021) ***Christian School Expels 8-Year-Old Girl Over 'Crush'**

Chloe Shelton was expelled from Rejoice Christian Schools in Oklahoma after telling another girl she had a crush on her, according to her mother DELANIE SHELTON. An Oklahoma mother, said she felt "betrayed" by her children's Christian school when her second-grade daughter was expelled for having a "crush" on another girl. Delanie Shelton said she was called to Rejoice Christian School in Owasso — a northern suburb of Tulsa — Jan. 21, to pick up her daughter over a playground "incident." It wasn't bullying or teasing, but rather a "crush" that got 8-year-old Chloe in trouble, according to her mother, who said the girl simply told another girl on the playground she has a crush on her. From Article By Mike Stunson, Jan. 29/2021 mstunson@mcclatchy.com

Psalms 118:24

"This is the day that the Lord hath made; Let us rejoice and be glad therein."

Not second-grader Cloe,
nor her five-year-old brother.

I remember it clearly.
My cousin Thomas
couldn't stop gushing
about dorm-mate David D.,
his hunky physique,
his clever coolness.
Both high schoolers rubbing
shoulders
at the Sacred Bible Academy,
Cornpone, Oklahoma 1958.

I was far too young
to comprehend the implication.
But as we matured,
I gathered testimony to Thomas'
harvest of guilt and remorse
as he married
and sired three children,
fiercely fighting his desires,
convinced they were sinful
and repugnant.

Now come Rejoice Christian
Schools Owasso, Oklahoma, USA.
Same old sick song.
The Vice-Principal sits down
mother Delanie:

*"Cloe told a female classmate
she had a crush on her".*

Intones the VP:

*"The Bible says
you can only marry a man
and have children with a man."*

Cloe cried,
"Does God still love me?"

Rejoice School expels Cloe
along with her baby brother,
couching fear and ignorance in
the phrase: *"ending the
partnership with the family"*.

Rejoice's web-page boasts
their scholars will be equipped
to *"... impact their community
and the world for Christ"*.

So let's go to the source.
Jesus of Nazareth doesn't
mention eight-year-olds
infatuated with *any* gender.
But those tricky Pharisees,
equivalents of today's tele-
evangelists, brought him a
prostitute and demanded
the Mosaic law of stoning.
Jesus doodled in the dirt
and murmured,

***"He that is without sin
among you,***

***let him first cast a stone
at her."***

After the crowd had slunk
away,

Jesus asked the woman,
***"Hath no man condemned
thee?"***

***"No man, Lord", she replied.
"Neither do I condemn thee.
Go and sin no more."***

So, you're right.
Neither should I be
condemning those insufferable
self-righteous Admin at Rejoice
"Christian" School
or their bigoted, red-necked,
prejudiced
Great State of Oklahoma.
But I hurt for Cloe and her baby
brother
just as I still hurt
for Cousin Thomas
and all those closeted innocents
agonizing over their biological
urges and loving inclinations.

Was it for his pain
or for the uncaring world
or for Cloe?
I don't know.
But on that old rugged cross,
Jesus wept.

(Some names and relations in the poem have been changed)

**** Butch Gerbrandt is a carpenter, musician and poet living in Butte, Montana, USA.
His poems have appeared in previous LJR issues.***

A Message of Hope and Inspiration

The following story was posted on Facebook. We are sharing it in the hopes that it can remind you that sometimes our anger can be directed in powerful ways that inspire others to act. It's also a reminder that we are surrounded by many good people with good hearts who can in fact be reached and activated to build the caring society for which we all yearn. (We are not sharing the name of the person involved in this story.) ***Rabbi Harold Lerner, Tikkun****

I may have inadvertently started a revolution in the convenience store today. I stopped to grab a water, and on the way in I saw a homeless man I know sitting in the shade with his bike beside him. He was red-faced and shaky looking. I asked if he was ok, and he told me that he was just resting. This guy's got the mind of a child, and I'm afraid he doesn't know he needs to stay extra hydrated when it's super hot outside.

There were a bunch of people in line in front of me and only one cashier, so I grabbed two waters and yelled to the cashier that I was taking one to the guy outside and I'd be right back (I'm a regular there). When I came back in, the lady in front of me turned around, hands on hips, and told me that I was just enabling that 'homeless person' (said with a sneer) and that I shouldn't be wasting my money on him.

It's hot as hell in Florida right now. Mid nineties with humidity around 80%. It's a good day for heat stroke, and I told her so. I said I'd rather give him a water than call an ambulance. I was gonna shrug it off. Let it go. Chalk it up to ignorance and the heat making everybody cranky.

And then she told me I should be ashamed of myself. That someone should call the police on him, and that it should be illegal to beg for money. That people who give the homeless money just encourage them to stay homeless and that should be illegal, too. Ashamed. I should be ashamed for giving some poor old guy a water - it cost a whole dollar, BTW - and I should get in trouble for making sure he didn't stroke out in this heat.

I guess I look nice. Approachable. Like I wouldn't rip your head off. I am nice, most of the time. But not always. And I lost my temper. I told her to call a cop and report me for buying shit at a convenience store. I told her that I wasn't in the damn mood for crazy right now. That it's a hundred fucking degrees outside, and I'm hot and tired and sick to death of stupid people. That if she had an ounce of compassion in her whole body, she'd buy him a cold drink, too. That maybe she should figure out why she needs to accost complete strangers. And how's about ~~after that, she back the fuck up outta my face and outta my business and turn back around and not say one more damn word to me?~~

I'm just about deaf in one ear. I try to modulate my voice. Unless I get angry. It got pretty loud there at the end. There was dead silence in the store and then someone said loudly "For real!" And the guy at the front of the line told the cashier to add a sandwich to his purchases for the guy outside. The guy behind him bought an extra ice cream. The girl behind HIM got change for a twenty 'cause that guy could probably use some cash.' Every single person in line got him something. Every one, except the now very embarrassed lady in front of me, who slunk out without saying another word.

When I got to the cashier, she didn't charge me for either of the waters, because she was going to take him one anyway. And mine was free because of the entertainment. When I went outside, he was eating his ice cream and drinking his water with a pile of stuff all around him, a big old grin on his face. He didn't look shaky anymore. And there, people, is the story of why I hate people. And why I love people. All in the same damned minute. I sat in the car and drank my water and laughed with tears in my eyes, same as I'm doing now.

**** Tikkun is a progressive Jewish social justice journal published in California. Tikkun means: "Repair the World." Rabbi Lerner is Tikkun's editor.***

* * * * *

"God of Justice, give us wisdom as we move forward. Show us how to use our unique giftedness to work to create equity for all of Your people. Give us the words and courage to speak truth, and the perseverance to never stop. We pray protection for those in the streets. May they be safe from harm and sickness. Show us what is ours to do, Lord. Amen."

From: Missy Smith - The Resistance Prays e-Newsletter

LJR POEMS & PRAYERS

THE MOMENT

BY MARGARET ATWOOD

The moment when, after many years
of hard work and a long voyage
you stand in the centre of your room,
house, half-acre, square mile,
island, country,
knowing at last how you got there,
and say, I own this,

Is the same moment when the trees
unloose their soft arms from around you,
the birds take back their language,
the cliffs fissure and collapse,
the air moves back from you,
like a wave and you can't breathe.

No, they whisper. You own nothing.
You were a visitor, time after time
climbing the hill, planting the flag,
proclaiming. We never belonged to you.
You never found us.
It was always the other way round.

Baptist Peace Fellowship

Grant us, Lord God, a vision of your world
as your love would have it:
a world where the weak are protected,
and none go hungry or poor;
a world where the riches of creation are shared,
and everyone can enjoy them;
a world where different races and cultures
live in harmony and mutual respect;
a world where peace is built with justice,
and justice is guided by love.
Give us the inspiration and courage to build it,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals (2012)

Lord,
help us make our lives an offering
of quiet commitment
to thread love through the torn
garments of society.
Amen.

Post-Election Day

You creator God
who has ordered us
in families and communities,
in clans and tribes,
in states and nations.

You creator God
who enacts your governance
in ways overt and
in ways hidden.

You exercise your will for
peace and for justice
and for freedom.

We give you thanks for the
peaceable order of our nation
and for the chance of choosing—
all the manipulative money
notwithstanding.

We pray now for new governance that
your will and purpose may prevail,
that our leaders may have a
sense of justice and goodness,
that we as citizens may care about
the public face of your purpose.

We pray in the name of Jesus
who was executed
by the authorities.

By Walter Brueggeman, Prayers for a Privileged People, 2008

A Prayer for Meegan

*By Ruth Spooner **

What makes a house a home? Let's make a list of probable guesses that all sum up to the privilege of liberal property owners: Privacy, a lock on the front door. Heat and hot water, fresh air and natural light. A garden. Blankets, curtains and dishes. Which is your favourite room in the house? Lots of people love the kitchen; cooking for family and eating together at the dining room table, sharing food, warmth and high spirits. I like my study the best.

What makes this space my home is not the property itself but the fact that I am able to practice my art without being judged. I can be myself at home. I feel safe here. I reserve a special corner in my home for spiritual re-armament. No one prohibits me from lighting a candle during my prayers. I can burn a little incense of cedar and rose. I have a few sacred objects: a book of poems, some small stones, two feathers. In my own home, I can practice whatever moves me in my own way.

It's high time the housed demand that the rights and freedoms we enjoy be protected for everyone. Housing advocates report that Single Room Occupancies remind them of jail cells and the homeless say that they are being warehoused, their property lost or destroyed. The promises of the government fall through yet again. Members of the public can and should intervene when the demand is for a home and not for an institutional sentence without end. Housing providers are not above the law just because they have a helping mandate. They answer to the public for permission, both spiritual and material. This is a call for true homes—a place to refresh the soul. True homes are made of love, tolerance and respect, not surveillance cameras and iron gates.

*Even the sparrow finds a home
and the swallow a nest for herself
where she may lay her young
at your altars, O Lord of Hosts,
my King and my God.*

- Psalm 84:3 -

* Ruth Spooner is a member of the Board of Directors of the Together Against Poverty Society (TAPS) in Victoria, BC. Her article appeared in the June 2021 issue of the monthly newsletter TAPROOT. Over the years, several members of St. John the Divine have worked as volunteers with TAPS in a variety of programs.

To pray is to take notice of the wonder, to regain the sense of mystery that animates all beings . . . Prayer is our humble answer to the inconceivable surprise of living. ... Prayer is meaningless unless it is subversive, unless it seeks to overthrow and ruin the pyramids of callousness, hatred, opportunism, falsehoods. A liturgical movement must become a revolutionary movement seeking to overthrow the forces that destroy the promise, the hope, the vision.

- Abraham Joshua Heschel

29. Why Politics Needs Lament – By Emmanuel Katongole *

Over the past year, the COVID-19 pandemic crippled the strongest economies around the world and caused countries to flounder. Yet, for many countries, hope is around the corner, and governments are vaccinating their populations at historic rates. Dates for opening cities and ending mask mandates have moved up swiftly. Once most are vaccinated, surely we can go back to normal and forget this past year.

But the story of Christ proclaims, “*Wait! There’s no moving on too quickly. What about all the vulnerabilities that COVID-19 revealed? What about the inequality shown between those who have and those who have not?*” Normal government politics and partisanship do not take time to stop and ask questions of lament. Yet throughout the Gospels, though offering ultimate hope, we see a Jesus who laments. Jesus laments over Jerusalem (Matthew 23:37), over the death of Lazarus (John 11:32-38), in Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-38), and from the cross (Matthew 27:46). Lament is an invitation to see reality through the eyes of the most vulnerable, and to name and admit what is broken.

In this historical moment, only through the practice of lament can we imagine a new and better future. More than a personal spiritual practice, lament has potent political implications in three ways: connecting us to the oppressed, telling the truth to governments, and transcending partisan political borders.

First, lament leads us into solidarity with the oppressed. Through my work in East Africa, I learned this from Maggy Barankitse in Burundi. One day in 1993, ethnic violence struck the community where Maggy worked as a church secretary. Maggy managed to rescue many children from death that day. Later, she buried almost one hundred people who were massacred. She sheltered, fed and kept alive the children whom she rescued. This was the birth of Maison Shalom (House of Peace), an organization Maggy founded that created schools, health care and justice programs for the children and community. But these programs are not what Maggy first shows the many visitors from around the world. Instead, she takes them to the gravesite where she buried so many in 1993. Maggy’s work for hope is never disconnected from the story of pain and suffering.

Second, far from moving us away from activism, the practice of lament leads us into deeper political engagement. In 2015, political unrest, violence and an attempted coup displaced hundreds of thousands of Burundians. Maggy, rooted in the cries of the victims, spoke out against the government. As a result of her protests and criticisms, the Burundian government exiled Maggy, shut down her organization and targeted her children. As a result of her lament, the government deemed Maggy’s message as potent and dangerous. While the politics of the government has led to the exploitation of the poor and military might is used to secure its legitimacy, Maggy shows us a politics of truth grounded in lament.

Thirdly, lament transcends political borders. In the months after the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon in the U.S., a small group of family members of those killed in the attacks connected with each other after reading each other’s pleas for peaceful responses to the attacks. Soon after, still deep in grief, a group of them travelled to Afghanistan to hear stories about the high numbers of civilian casualties in the wake of U.S. military action. There they acknowledged their common experience with all people affected by violence. This visit of lament, of standing with others in shared pain, eventually led to the founding of *Peaceful Tomorrows*. Twenty years later, these families of September 11 victims continue to transform grief into actions for peace, campaigning to end war and its tragic legacies at all stages of political engagement. Their practice of lament led them to transcend the cycles of violence and cross borders in the name of peace.

* *Father Katongole is professor of Peace Studies at Notre Dame U. and a R.C. priest in Kampala, Uganda. His book is entitled: The Sacrifice of Africa: A Political Theology for Africa. From: Chris Rice (MCC UN Office) – May 2021 Newsletter.*