

The Living Word

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Justice Today

- by Allison Mezzera

Let's face it, for most of us, the COVID crisis is an inconvenience. Yes, we are scared. Yes, we feel compassion for those lost and hurting by this virus. But, do most of us fully realize the impact this virus has on the lives of communities of color?

I found an enlightening opinion piece in the Washington Post, with the headline "The 'us and them' pandemic shows America is still impervious to black pain", by Contributor Michele L. Norris. Michele's words speak for herself, in this link <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/05/21/us-them-pandemic-shows-america-is-still-impervious-black-pain/>. However, I would like to share my thoughts below.

While speaking on the white American response to the impact of COVID on black and brown communities, she asks the questions:

"Would the disproportionate impact on black and brown communities lead to increased blame, stigmatization and a general willingness to move on because the threat was thought to be circulating in some distant orbit?

Or, would the disproportionate impact inspire a swell of empathy, resources, messaging and emergency measures targeted at black and brown areas in the path of the pandemic, with Americans at the same time embracing the notion of a shared threat?"

I would love to think that in a perfect world the later would be true, however the realist in me agrees with Political Scientist Evan Lieberman when he stated, *"It is not difficult to imagine that if covid-19 comes to be understood as a 'Black' epidemic, this will create false impressions for many white Americans — in the United States' racially polarized and effectively segregated society — that the virus is 'not our problem,' leading to decreased demand for and compliance with public health directives."*

We are unfortunately already seeing this happening. There were protests to reopen too quickly all over the country, and they began shortly after statistics found the racial disparities in the virus. Now emboldened, many white Americans, decided that this was the time to say, "Not My Problem", and push cities and states to become less safe for the less privileged.

As I write this, protests are happening in Minneapolis over the murder of George Floyd, a black man killed by police brutality. The police are throwing rubber bullets and tear gas at the majority black protestors. In a stark contrast, heavily armed majority white protestors stormed city halls *en masse* so they could get a haircut but received no push back. I presume those armed protestors are also saying today, "Not My Problem". The irony that George Floyd

died from not being able to breathe due to a knee in the neck, and thousands of other people of color unable to breathe due to COVID is not lost on me.

What can we do? We need to speak out to our friends and neighbors about these issues. We need to encourage everyone to MAKE IT THEIR PROBLEM! As a congregation who talks compassion, we need to find a way to teach this to more than just our own congregation. Let us make it our problem and do what we can to help. We can read, we can listen, we can donate, and we can grow our knowledge of what it means to truly be an anti-racist community of people.

Michele ends her piece with, *"We can use words such as "demographics" and "comorbidities" to dance around the subject of race. But we cannot skirt the fact that what is a nuisance for one person is another person's plague.*

"Not my problem" is not the right response."

Over the next year, I will be sharing stories and issues that I hope will help us all gain perspective on racial justice and injustice in our Country. Please follow the link for resources on things to read and watch, and organizations to follow. The link was put together by the organization, www.fightforbreonna.org
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1BRIF2_zhNe86SGgHa6-VlBO-QgirITwCTugSfKie5Fs/preview?pru=AAABcnuyi-0*ZHZQ2FGzNOZobhDkZfRc3g

AMERICAN CRISIS; POOR PEOPLE'S CAMPAIGN

MSNBC will host special on poverty in a pandemic; the special, titled "American Crisis: Poverty and the Pandemic," will air at 9 p.m. Eastern/6p.m. Pacific on Sunday, May 31. Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II, president of Repairers of the Breach and co-chair of the campaign, will co-host the special with MSNBC's Joy Reid of AM Joy.

The special airs less than three weeks before the campaign holds its digital Mass Poor People's Assembly and Moral March on Washington on June 20th. People can register at www.june2020.org.

Rev. Dr. Liz Theoharis, director of the Kairos Center for Religions, Rights and Social Justice and campaign co-chair, also will speak during the special. Other participants include country singer Willie Nelson; U.S. Rep. Joe Kennedy of Massachusetts and chef Andrew Zimmern, host of the MSNBC limited series "What's Eating America."

The Poor People Campaign, A National Call for A Moral Revival will hold a Digital Justice Gathering on June 20, 2020. You are invited to gather via social media with poor and low-wealth people, moral and religious leaders, advocates, and people of conscience. Please register at www.june2020.org.

We are living through a global pandemic that has devastated the working class with 39 million people unemployed and nearly 100,000 deaths. The pandemic has laid bare the massive inequality experienced by many people here in Northern California Nevada and throughout the nation. This is the time when each of us in the Christian

Church of Northern California Nevada to let our voices be heard so those who suffer might hear and be comforted. The Poor People’s Campaign has put out a documentary entitled “We Cried Power” that will be shared through the region’s ministry clusters. We Cried Power is a feature-length documentary film by Dara Kell, that examines the crisis of poverty through the perspective of the leaders and voices of a new social movement, the Poor People’s Campaign. Standby for more information on “We Cried Power.”

Poor People’s Campaign

A NATIONAL CALL for MORAL REVIVAL

MASS POOR PEOPLE’S ASSEMBLY & MORAL MARCH ON WASHINGTON IS GOING DIGITAL

On **June 20th**, we will hold the largest **digital and social media gathering** of poor and low wealth people, moral and religious leaders, advocates, and people of conscience in this nation’s history. A global pandemic is exposing even more the already existing crisis of systemic racism, poverty, ecological devastation, the war economy and militarism, and the distorted moral narrative of religious nationalism. **On June 20, the 140 million poor and low-wealth people across this nation will be heard!**

REPAIRERS OF THE BREACH

KAIROS
THE CENTER FOR RELIGIOUS, RIGHTS, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

IN THE MIDST OF CHANGING TIMES, OUR MOVEMENT CONTINUES...

- ...because we won't be silent anymore.*
- ...because everybody has a right to live.*
- ...because poor and low wealth people will suffer most in this crisis.*
- ...because our demands must remain front and center in this critical election year.*



Twitter: @UniteThePoor

Facebook: @anewppc

Website: poorpeoplescampaign.org



Living Stones

And the people stayed home. And read books, and listened, and rested, and exercised and made art, and played games, and learned new ways of being and were still. And listened more deeply. Some meditated, some prayed, some danced. Some met their shadows. And the people began to think differently. And the people healed. And in the absence of people living in ignorant, dangerous, mindless, and heartless ways, the earth began to heal.

And when the danger passed, and the people joined together again, they grieved their losses, and made new choices, and dreamed new images, and created new ways to live and heal the earth fully, as they had been healed.

—Kitty O'Meara, Iona Community in Scotland

It's a beautiful vision, isn't it? And I wish it were as easy as it sounds. But the reality for many of us is that this time brings with it confusion and cloudiness that complicates our best intentions. And while we may be thinking, "I should be using this time to xyz," there are no "shoulds" during a pandemic other than staying safe and taking good care of ourselves and those around us.

But even while we work to stay safe and take care, the persistent needs in our communities continue and intensify. Each one of us could name a litany of pressing social and economic needs that desperately require compassionate and just faith responses. So, the questions I want to leave with you are **how shall we light a candle of hope in the windows of our hearts? How can we clear our vision so that we are able to meet the challenges and opportunities that arise in the world we are moving toward?**

Our world is changing, and we are changing with it. There is pain—and there is joy—in acknowledging that. May we always find solace in God's presence—and always seek God's guidance—on the journey.

See you in (zoom) church,
Christy

ZOOM WORSHIP

As we continue to shelter-in-place, we will continue to worship together online using Zoom. Bible Study begins at 9:30. Worship begins at 10:30. Please join us for any or all of this time together by clicking the link below and joining us through video. Or alternatively, you can dial in by calling the number below according to your time zone. The instructions to connect are fairly easy, but if you need help, please reach out.

In preparation for worship, please have communion elements of some form with you so that we can all partake together. This can be bread and juice—or any other elements that evoke the Last Supper for you. You may also want to light a candle near you as we worship together.

SABBATICAL UPDATE

Due to the far-reaching effects of the Coronavirus Pandemic, Christy's sabbatical has been postponed. Hopefully she will be able to reschedule for the fall. Plans will be shared as they develop.

WELCOMING THE SPIRIT: DIGGING, PLANTING, WATERING, BLOOMING, SHARING

The liturgical season of Pentecost lasts about 6 months (from Pentecost Sunday—on May 31 this year—until the season of Advent begins—on November 29 this year). For this Pentecost season, our theme is *Welcoming the Spirit*, and we will focus on the varieties of ways the Spirit manifests in a garden—digging, planting, watering, blooming, sharing. Like in our garden at church, there is a time of preparing. A time of thought and intention. A time of nurture and hope. A time of expectation. A time of surprise and gratitude. A time of abundance and grace. And through it all, the Spirit moves and generates and creates. As we move through these next months together, you are invited to welcome the Spirit in all her manifestations—and to walk and work alongside her!

COMMON GROUND UPDATE

Common Ground is currently organizing an upcoming Civic Academy to discuss "Safe Reopening ==> Strong Recovery". We hope to have community leaders and health experts on the line to hear what is happening, and how Common Ground can help. You can read about the important steps to reopening here:

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/04/20/three-key-ideas-stake-post-coronavirus-future/>

The Civic Academy is on June 16th from 6:30 to 8 via Zoom, however before that can happen we need to do research and talk with the leaders and health experts. If anyone is interested in helping in research for this event, please let me know. Opportunities are there if you want to meet face to face (or box to box!) with the people who sit at the table and make the decisions!

Allison Mezzera

GARDEN WORK CONTINUES

Over the years the garden has changed. Do you remember the railing the kids always seemed to climb on? Remember the tail pine tree which I said we should cut down because it was leaning so much...well God helped us out and blew it over. Do you remember in 2009 we had over 100 people come to our church and help with many projects around the inside and outside of our church; the garden boxes was one of those projects. Maybe you remember helping put up the railing around the garden or maybe you remember helping put in the soil or replacing the soil or helping seed or helping water. If you don't remember these things, well, now is your time to be part of the history of this food giving, meditation giving, peace giving, beauty giving, and much more giving areas.

As of today, the garden side has new bark and soon new added soil. The gutters are done and they look really nice and the new downspouts will go directly into the swale and then to water the plants. Three new trees will be coming soon as well as plants and shrubs and vegetables. An updated irrigation system will also be done.

Stop by and take a look, the ever-changing gardens are still happening.
Hopefully when we can get out, we will celebrate all our efforts. Thanks to all over the years who have helped make this giving garden happen.
Carl

MISSION ACTION: WE LEND A



MAY GIFT: The Ministry Council approved our May outreach gift be sent to Paws for Love Foundation headquartered in Sonoma County, but serving the Western States. From their website [<http://pawsforlove.info/>] you can learn that they provide resources for animal shelters and rescue organizations. Specifically, they offer support for rescue efforts, spay & neuter clinics to help reduce the number of unwanted pets, adoption promotion, and a special "Silver Paws for Love" program to place older pets with older owners. In this last effort, they teach seniors how to use "Paws for Paint," and have pets actually produce art work with their paws. When we get back to church, look for a sample of such art work posted at FCC-V.

JUNE GIFT: The Ministry Council discussed the realization that the Cherokee Nation has been one of the hardest hit per-capita of any group in the country by the Covid-19 pandemic. Tribal groups have been left behind for any health and economic support needed during the crisis. The Native American Rights Fund was lifted up as a possible recipient for our June outreach donation from our Mission Action Fund - and it was, in fact, selected by the Ministry Council. Here's some info about the NARF as we send our monthly gift:

ADVOCATING FOR HUMAN RIGHTS DURING A TIME OF COVID-19

Lacking adequate health care and other resources, American Indian tribes are experiencing high rates of infection and death caused by COVID-19. A new website (<https://un-declaration.narf.org/>) developed by the Native American Rights Fund (NARF) and the University of Colorado Law School provides resources to help promote the rights of indigenous peoples.

As some states persist in attacking the ability of tribal governments to protect their members from this and other threats to self-determination, culture, land, health and welfare, it is more important than ever to protect indigenous peoples' rights.

The website gathers key resources for tribes and communities, including a [United Nations statement](#) regarding the protection of indigenous peoples during COVID-19 and [Colorado Law's 2019 Report](#) on Implementing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in the United States.

FOCUSED MISSION ACTION

As July 1st approaches when officers and coordinators begin a new term, the Ministry Council proposes that our monthly outreach gift recipient going forward is selected being mindful of organizations that aid underrepresented groups and the most vulnerable. FCC-V has a history of doing just this (as is evident with our June gift to the Native American Rights Fund), and we propose continuing to build this vision into our ongoing gifts. Our challenge will be to identify groups and organizations that promote racial justice along with social,

economic, and environmental justice as it relates to vulnerable and historically underrepresented brethren - and prioritize such groups for our monthly outreach gift. Stay tuned for more news as the year continues.

DON'T FORGET:

To help earn money for the church beyond your generous donations:

- ✓ Use www.goodsearch.com (instead of Google or Bing) for your internet searches.
- ✓ Start at www.goodshop.com when shopping online.
- ✓ Sign up at www.escrip.com for when you patronize local stores and restaurants.
- ✓ Take your recycling to Valcore (www.valcorerecycling.org) and ask that the money go to the church.
- ✓ Use www.smile.amazon.com. The first time you use it, you will be asked to select a charity to support. Pick our church, and don't forget to bookmark the page!

Mark Your Calendar

Sunday, May 31	Pentecost!
Sunday, June 7	Zoom Bible Study and Worship
Wednesday, June 10	Zoom Administrative Council, 5:30 p.m.
Sunday, June 14	Zoom Bible Study and Worship Zoom Elders' Meeting, following worship
Wednesday, June 17	Zoom Ministry Council, 5:30 p.m.
Sunday, June 21	Zoom Bible Study and Worship
Sunday, June 28	Zoom Bible Study and Worship

