



a MATTER of SPIRIT

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COVID-19

In March, the World Health Organization declared the coronavirus a global pandemic, turning the world on its head. “Out of an abundance of caution,” masking, and social distancing have shaped the “new normal,” or our current reality. Throughout it all, we have had to reimagine virtually (no pun intended) every facet of our lives from how we educate, to how we conduct business, to how we worship. For relatives, friends, and partners who have not quarantined together, expressions of love have been reimagined as positive touch diminishes due to the recommended safety precautions. On the surface, it seems like everything has darkened. However, perhaps this time is not a time of darkness, but rather of awakening.

In this issue of *A Matter of Spirit* (AMOS), we reflect on what has been exposed during this time of COVID. Travis Russell, SJ reminds us to care for those in our own backyard. Tricia Wittmann-Todd invites us to reimagine our church. Rev. Dr. Kelle Brown invites the faithful to uphold the dignity of Black lives. We revisit a compelling piece on white privilege (Spring 2019) by Jacqueline Battalora. Kelly Hickman shares her personal account of living through COVID. Vince Heberholt shares an example of how ordinary citizens can organize for incredible change. Finally, Gretchen Gundrum reminds us that God is ever-present in all of this.

May we be inspired to hold fast to hope and work to create a better future.

Future issues will address the call to make our systems equitable for all, including Earth: economic, education and public health and safety.



BEFORE WE RUSH TO SAVE THE WORLD,

Don't Step Over the People in Our Backyard

BY TRAVIS RUSSELL, SJ

I have an icon on my wall that I pray with. It is written by the iconographer Kelly Latimore¹ and titled “Don’t Call Me a Saint,” an obvious play on Dorothy Day’s famous quip, “Don’t call me a saint, I don’t want to be dismissed that easily.” The icon depicts Dorothy seated with a man who is homeless; a small wooden table is placed between them. On the tabletop sits a bowl of warm soup and a torn-off piece of crusty bread. Dorothy looks directly at the man as she rests her arm on his shoulder, bridging the small space between them. The man appears disheveled with a graying beard and a cup of coffee in his hand. A gold halo surrounding the man’s head, however, reveals it is Christ seated with Dorothy, although one wonders whether anyone besides her has

noticed. His eyes are tired, distant, and lost. When I pray, I like to imagine his story: perhaps the first day of recovery or just down on his luck. Whatever the story, I read a deeper meaning to their meal. I see the Eucharist—paten and chalice—in its most ordinary form.

This icon now hangs in my room in Washington, DC, where I both work and study. But it originates from the time I lived in San Francisco—the luxurious home of companies like Facebook, Twitter, Google, and Apple—where I purchased the icon so as not to forget the imbalance of wealth and, in particular, the people who are homeless in the streets around me. Now, living in what is arguably the most powerful city in the world, in times of pandemic and protests, prayer with Dorothy and Jesus presents a new challenge.

The numbers of COVID-19 and racial inequality do not lie. Nearly one million people have died from the virus globally, 20% of whom are from the United States. The projections are worse. It is expected that by December the numbers will hit an estimated 300,000 U.S. deaths.² We also know from the numbers that the distribution is skewed towards the vulnerable and that COVID-19 disproportionately affects people of color. For example, Black and Latino people are three times as likely to become infected as white people and twice as likely to die.³ For Native American people, there is so much missing data that the true number may never be known, although experts suspect it is high. Predictably, the most vulnerable are the incarcerated; they are three times more likely to die and five times more likely to become infected than the general population.⁴ Tragically, the economy is skewed too. The unemployment rate for Black and Latina women has been disproportionately affected, peaking at 16.1% and 18.7% respectively, compared to 13.3% for white women.⁵

Do the numbers reveal anything that we do not already know? I suspect not. A quick pop quiz:

Q. People are more likely to die from COVID-19 if they _____?

- a work essential jobs that cannot be performed remotely
- b live in crowded housing
- c have chronic health conditions, no insurance, and unequal access to health care
- d have few assets and no savings to cover the cost of an emergency
- e all of the above

A. The correct answer: e—all of the above—although any one of them could be lethal. No surprise, no trick question. The people who had these risk factors before the pandemic are the same people who became more likely to die from the coronavirus. Here is the inconvenient truth: although the pandemic exposed the fault lines in society, it did not create them. The numbers were there from the beginning; the trend had already been set. It was just easier to ignore.

In my former backyard of San Francisco, something similar is going on. There is a homelessness crisis year in the making. Today the crisis is worse than ever. After the pandemic, the trend will continue—that is, unless something is done to reverse it. But the odds of reversal are slim to none given the city's NIMBYism.⁶ No one wants the homeless there, and who can blame them, right? That is the problem.

As a Catholic priest, I do not pretend to absolve myself from this sin. In fact, I am quite conflicted about it. After the killing of George Floyd, two Jesuits and I decided to participate in a Black Lives Matter protest in downtown San Francisco. It was my first time at a public event in months. I was unsure of what I would see. Two miles from my house

tents lined the streets. Three miles: they were everywhere. Impromptu encampments set up in the now empty parking lots to accommodate unmet needs.

On the way to the protest, I waded through this forgotten sea of humanity, the smells being stronger than the ocean. Again, I was shocked but not surprised. San Francisco has long struggled to “contain” this problem, particularly in the area known as the Tenderloin. Before the pandemic, the city proposed to build more navigation centers, places where those experiencing homelessness could access services, including temporary housing. But those plans were stalled due to the outcry of residents who objected. It was yet another example of NIMBYism's strength.

The protest was powerful. It felt right to be there. But when I returned to my room, the icon of Dorothy and the homeless Christ was staring me in the face and my enthusiasm waned. I recognized a familiar story for that day. It was the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus. I was the rich man, and I just did a whole lot of stepping over Lazarus to get to the protest.

“We cannot love God unless we love each other, and to love we must know each other. We know Him in the breaking of bread, and we know each other in the breaking of bread, and we are not alone anymore. Heaven is a banquet and life is a banquet, too, even with a crust, where there is companionship.”

—DOROTHY DAY

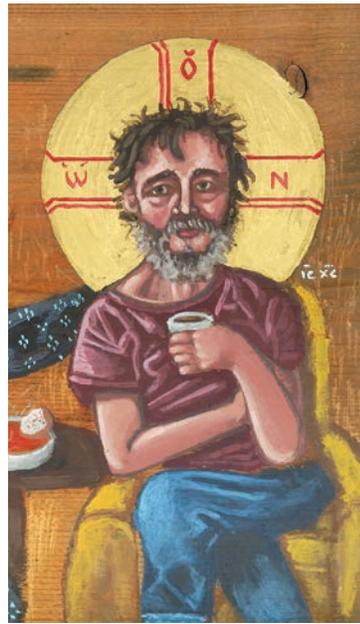
The fault lines of inequality exposed by the pandemic are exactly that: faults. They are the moral failings that each one of us must now confront.

The irony of COVID-19 is that in order to protect others we must practice social distancing; the same social practice has led us to the place we find ourselves today. Pandemics do not start as pandemics. They start as localized diseases that then spread at an exponential rate. Now there is a rush to develop a vaccine, which hopefully will end the pandemic by eradicating the COVID-19. But what about the social conditions exposed by the virus? Will they also be eradicated? Or will they be ignored?

What bothers me about that day in San Francisco is the juxtaposition between the protest and the encampments. There I was holding a Black Lives Matter sign, protesting the killing of George Floyd and others, while a block away was a population of homeless people who were 37% Black.⁷ How many times had I railed against “those” NIMBY people for failing to see that what they were protesting against was already in their backyard? Now the plank is in my eye.

Here I sit in Washington, DC, socially distanced from those who are suffering. I wonder about the profile of the vulnerable in my new backyard. I am sure I could get the numbers, but do I know them? Are they my friends? Do I allow them to enter my heart? I do not want to step over them as I did in San Francisco.

When I sit to pray, the icon of Dorothy stares me in the face. It challenges me to not only advocate for the vulnerable but to break bread with them as well. Dorothy knew this was the only way things would change. She called it a “revolution of the heart.” When asked how this revolution might begin, she reportedly griped, “Everyone wants a revolution, but no one wants to do the dishes,” then followed with, “it has to start with each one of us.”



Kelly Latimore, detail of Dorothy Day with Homeless Christ

Doing the dishes. In my own backyard. This is how the revolution for systemic changes begins.

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End Notes

- ¹ kellylatimoreicons.com/gallery/20151112190138_001-2/
- ² Nurith Aizenman, “300,000 Deaths by December? 9 Takeaways from The Newest COVID-19 Projections,” NPR, August 6, 2020, npr.org/sections/health-shots/2020/08/06/900000671/300-000-deaths-by-december-9-takeaways-of-the-newest-covid-19-projections.
- ³ Richard A. Oppel Jr. et al. “The Fullest Look Yet at the Racial Inequality of Coronavirus,” *The New York Times*, July 5, 2020, nytimes.com/interactive/2020/07/05/us/coronavirus-latinos-african-americans-cdc-data.html.
- ⁴ Justin Carissimo, “Inmates are 5 times more likely to get coronavirus than the general population, study says,” CBS News, July 11, 2020, cbsnews.com/news/coronavirus-prison-inmates-more-likely-to-get-infected-study-says/.
- ⁵ “Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey,” U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, United States Department of Labor, last modified July 2, 2020, bls.gov/web/empsit/cpsee_e16.htm.
- ⁶ NIMBY is an abbreviation for “Not In My Back Yard.” It refers to an attitude that opposes locating something considered undesirable (such as a reentry or recovery house) in one’s neighborhood.
- ⁷ Justin Philips, “37% of SF’s homeless population is black. This is a heartbreaking problem,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 29, 2019, sfchronicle.com/entertainment/article/37-of-SF-s-homeless-population-is-black-This-14399638.php.

ABCs of Accountability for Black Lives

- A**ccountability
- B**lack reverence
- C**ompassion
- D**ismantle white privilege/supremacy
- E**quality
- F**airness
- G**enerate healing
- H**old space and listen
- I**nsist on systemic reform
- J**ustice
- K**indness
- L**iberation
- M**obilize
- N**o one can be a bystander
- O**rganize
- P**eace and pluralism
- Q**ueer/LGBTQIA community protected & uplifted
- R**each out
- S**how solidarity
- T**hink consciously
- U**nlearn bias
- V**iolence ends
- W**hite humility
- X**enophobia ends
- Y**outh empowered
- Z**ealous commitment to end hate



Author with littlest parish member

Reimagined Church, life-giving and loving

BY TRICIA WITTMANN-TODD, MDiv, MSW

It began in April when St. Mary's community folks wanted to gather and pray the rosary for our friend, Sonny. He had died from COVID.

It continues with 70-80 people, each Saturday evening with lay preachers, presiders, song leaders, and lectors. "It" is Zoom church, birthed in the pandemic's quarantine, nurtured in the clarity of Black Lives Matter and grounded in the experience of our earth with Derechos, fires, and hurricanes. The grace of this moment is that we need only include in the reimagined church that which is life-giving and loving, what resonates with our best selves, what personifies the universal salvation of Christ.

When I asked people to reimagine the church, a multitude of responses emerged: an enveloping hug at her mom's funeral when she was seven; her brother calling other parishioners from his home in Lima; worshipping virtually with family in Omaha, Eritrea or Iowa. Core values are acceptance and inclusivity, flexibility, respect for the Spirit in each person, and service. St. Mary's Creed begins, "We believe in God who creates the universe and gives us life. We believe in a God of love and therefore we believe in the power of love."

Reimagine the church as a midwife, bringing to birth the Christ in every person. Whether at the annunciation, in the mysterious days of gestation, the risky moment of birth, or

time for this new family, the midwife is there. A midwife, like the Holy Spirit, assumes an abundance of grace, hope, and love. Scarcity in birthing and the church simply raises the fear that leads to violence against the pregnant ones, the children, the family, Earth, the "other."

The first concern of pregnancy is the bodily health of the mother and child. Theologian, Sallie McFague, calls Earth God's body (Models of God). The midwife understands that the body reveals clues about what is happening inside, clues that must not be ignored. The church must pay attention to God's body. It is on fire. For centuries the church has greedily built more and more edifices, amassed wealth in art and land. Consider how many buildings your parish owns. Imagine if every parish had only one building—the community's place for home birthing of Christ—one place for worship, education, service, and pastoral care? We would know that Christ is fully present in each of these elements of church life. Imagine pews filled with bags of Thanksgiving food, confirmation candidates peacefully sleeping in the church, and the community enjoying coffee hour. They are all part of the home birth. The reimagined church uses many fewer of Earth's resources. Biblical justice is "returning to others what belongs to them." Ecological justice is returning to Earth what belongs to her. We can have virtual worship services and fundraisers, and our staff can work from home. What if we returned to our neighbors in need some of the land we now control? Imagine ourselves content with one building?

The time of gestation is one of great mystery—who is this child growing inside in the dark? As in Galatians 3: 28, we know not if this one will be "Jew or Greek, male or female, slave or free." Such unknowing demands a radical acceptance of mystery. In obstetrics, reducing the mystery through prenatal testing has led to many wonderful treatments, but also to increased abortions due to gender or mental capacity or simply fear of a child that is not typical. The growth of each of our spirits is full of mystery—slow and bursting, intellectual and emotional, denying, and believing. The midwife church honors the mystery

of growing faith through acceptance, belief in the universal nature of salvation, and acknowledgment of kairos time (i.e., God's time). Because the needs of our spirits are unique, the doctrinal and liturgical power of the hierarchy lessens, making room for each one's spirit to speak.

Just as the heavens were rent at Jesus' baptism, at birth the waters of the womb break and the child bursts forward. There are only the mother, the child, and the midwife. My 98-year-old mother sees the church reimagined as, "We thought we needed a crowd. But it is 'where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I,' Matthew 18:20." During this time of pandemic and racial clarity it has been revealed that it is not only the institution but our personal relationships that are critical to birthing the Spirit in one another. The church as the midwife prepares everyone to be skilled in the ways of birthing—how to listen with open ears, accept each one as created, forgive, and appreciate the risks for this particular mother and baby. She prepares us to recognize that the greatest danger to Christ's birth is believing that God ever desires anyone to be less than loving of self and others. Each one of us and the church as a whole gives birth to Christ every moment. As Hars von Balthasar writes:

What good is it to me if this eternal birth of the divine Son takes place unceasingly, but does not take place within myself? And, what good is it to me if Mary is full of grace if I am not also full of grace? What good is it to me for the Creator to give birth to his Son if I do not also give birth to him in my time and my culture? This, then, is the fullness of time: When the Son of Man is begotten in us.¹

The birth of a child and the birth of the Spirit is always the fullness of time. At birth, everything is changed. The midwife church helps the family and community to receive this new manifestation of the Spirit. St. Francis of Assisi was asked by God to "repair my church." He came to understand that "repairing the church" was not about buildings but service to the poor, sharing of wealth, acceptance of people of different religions, respect for God's body the Earth, and all creatures. Service is the foundation of a healthy faith and church. It may be why St. Vincent de Paul Conferences are growing during this time. Because God is love, service is the Eucharist available to all. One might ask, what good is it for us to break and share bread within a church building if we are not also breaking bread and sharing with those who are hungry, homeless, addicted, alone, or in need? Imagine the church where baptism is understood as entry into the mission of Christ, a mission of joyful service.

¹ Hars von Balthasar, *Love Alone Is Credible*, trans. D. C. Schindler, 2004, p. 42

St. Mary's Parish Family Prayer

COMPOSED BY PASTOR FR. MIKE HOLLAND

We believe in God who creates the universe and gives us life.

We believe in a God of love and therefore we believe in the power of love.

We believe in Jesus Christ, who showed by his life, death and resurrection, God's love for us and each individual person.

We believe in Jesus who walked His journey with the poor,

We believe in Jesus who listened to the poor.

We believe in Jesus who, during his journey, walked and talked with Samaritans, with children, with women, with the powerless so that they might have life and live it to the full.

We believe that each human being is called to greatness in Christ.

We believe that we are called to build up this new kingdom of Christ—this kingdom of equality and love, of justice and mercy.

We believe that together, as members of Christ's body, we can form community.

We believe in the Spirit, the Spirit who recreates us every day.

We believe in the Spirit who binds us together with all who are suffering and with all who are yearning to hear the liberating message of Christ.

We believe in the Spirit who frees us from racism, from sexism, from the powerful whose actions speak against the kingdom.

We believe in the Spirit who indeed binds all of us together as brothers and sisters.

God gives life, God renews life, God is life.

We celebrate and proclaim the life within us.

We commit ourselves to share this life with others.

Amen.

At times tragically, the child does not live. Many new Spirits have been lost in the church due to sexual abuse as well as to policies of exclusion due to sexual orientation, marital status, birth control, and more. The laity must act as midwives to offer a truth and reconciliation process to begin to heal the pain.

Many of us long to return to the inspiring beauty of our home churches. Let us accept the grace of this time of pandemic as we become a church less encumbered by buildings and hierarchy, more focused on service to the poor, more accepting of one another and laity sharing power equally with the clergy. Then we can become the church that brings to birth the Christ in so many.

How does a reimagined church look to you?

▲ Tricia Wittmann-Todd, MDiv, MSW, has been a lay minister in the Archdiocese of Seattle for 25 years. She served as the Pastoral Coordinator for St Mary's Church in Seattle.

The Beatitude of Black Lives Matter



screen shot Dr. Kelle Brown

BY REV. DR. KELLE BROWN

Author stands with interfaith leaders for 8 minutes, 46 seconds symbolizing the public death of George Floyd in silent protest on the steps of St. James Cathedral in Seattle.

“When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.”

Matthew 5: 1-11 NRSV

There are difficult and challenging moments that seem too hard to bear, that crush us into a pit of despair. In the midst of the impact of the Coronavirus, we discovered that another sinister and deadly virus never died: anti-Blackness. Institutionalized and systemic racism, and more specifically anti-Blackness, has been a debilitating lived reality for our African American siblings in the United States for centuries. Though many believed the scourge was vanquished and that we were post-racial, the death of Black lives with impunity has proven otherwise.

Due to hyper-policing and murder of Black bodies along with the self-deputizing of citizens to perform in like manner, our current circumstance has become an inflection point that illustrates clearly our nation has not understood the cost and impact to human lives, the centuries of oppression that have led to economic, physical, spiritual and mental toll. We have not done the work of truth-telling, of being convicted, of listening and responding to the most impacted so that the necessary work of reconciliation and reparations is possible. Only after such an effort can a movement of healing and moral transformation begin.

In what is known as the Beatitudes, Jesus turned the concept of blessedness on its head. According to his pronouncements from the Sermon on the Mount, one isn't blessed based on power, control, resources, resume, or skill, but because God blessed that one despite their circumstances. Jesus declared with resounding clarity that the blessed are the people who are often not seen as such in the context of community. The circumstances of the moment on the Mount resonate with our own. Many were oppressed and disenfranchised, looking for freedom among much bondage.

And Jesus said words that perhaps no one expected, but certainly words many hoped for: Blessed are the overlooked, the invisible, the marginalized, those who are unheard but more rightly muted. Blessed are those who mourn, but are not consoled; who practice nonviolence and have yet to inherit. Blessed are those who long for the world to be righted, where bullying and gas lighting are not sanctioned and passed off as leadership. Blessed are those who offer mercy, especially when they

are not given mercy; those who long for purity to the point their eyes watch for God; those who make peace in the midst of death, pestilence, and chaos. Blessed are those who are treated like criminals before a trial, hated, and lied on without an ally. Blessed are those who were promised inclusion and are jostled about as some try to create more ways to interrupt the potential to thrive. These words of liberation still ring today.

Ultimately, Black Lives Matter is a necessary Beatitude for our time that meets the ears and hearts of so many walking through too many shadows of death. This movement is for those who have endured more than 400 years of enslavement, violence, loss, and constant abuse, losing hope in the face of willful ignorance and the surprise of those who thought things had improved. This Beatitude is the daring and courageous statement declaring emphatically and unapologetically in the face of racism that Black lives are blessed, though many believe them cursed; that Black lives will be comforted, while some consistently molest that comfort; will inherit the earth; will be filled; will see God; will have the kingdom of heaven.

In these last months, the cacophony of systemic racism and its cost in human lives has been on full display. While the global pandemic due to the coronavirus rages on, so too has the pandemic of anti-Blackness. We bear witness with our siblings in Christ who are Black, Indigenous, Immigrants, and People of Color to the suffering and death they experience at the hands of police, in prisons, in medical institutions, at our border, and disproportionately from coronavirus. These interconnected injustices are born from systemic racism and supremacist culture, and the lack of understanding as to how the convergence of systems has created sustained oppression.

Many have created versions of what they believe Black Lives Matter to be. Unsurprisingly, most of the characterizations come from racist imaginations fueled by centuries of mythical archetypes. Willful ignorance is not bliss, but a dangerous tool that allows not only for history to repeat itself but for a puny, stunted history not worthy of any of us to flourish unchecked. Ignorance can often be a pervasive and sinister tool of mass distraction.

Black Lives Matter is a righteous ideology focused on the empowerment and uplift of Black people and the community, and the organization is one manifestation and conduit in pursuit of those goals. Personally, I follow the advice of James Baldwin who offered, “We can disagree and still love each other unless your disagreement is rooted in my oppression and denial of my humanity and right to exist.” Additionally, because those impacted most by white supremacy, micro- and overt aggression, hyper-policing, biases implicit and otherwise, Black folk do not have the privileged luxury to keep entertaining life-zapping conversations and myths from people that are committed to misunderstanding.

Together, as the church, as people of faith, we must be the change we want to see in the world. As a moral people, we are called to resist silence in the face of God. Therefore, let us speak for justice and stand in solidarity with the African American community as those in covenant with our church and others withstand injustice after injustice. Let us honor the call to protest and rise up against institutions, policies, and systems that impact and harm as voices cry, “I can’t breathe.” Therefore, as people of faith, let us proclaim that together, we stand with those who are undoing anti-Black racism and white supremacy culture. Let us call on the elected officials to disavow violent retribution, to listen to community organizers and leaders’ demands, and to partner with Black voices to enact lasting and meaningful change.

Because over the past months we have witnessed police weaponize tear gas, pepper spray, rubber bullets, and other escalation responses against nonviolent protestors, including journalists, bystanders, and our clergy colleagues, we must call for a de-escalation of police response. And a commitment from policing groups to disavow acts of provocation and violence while engaging in community policing that re-prioritizes funding toward a more holistic and comprehensive expression. In the face of death and human impact, we have witnessed concern for property that diverts attention from humans who are suffering from systemic racism and the lives that have been lost because of it. Today, we must call for a continued focus of attention and a commitment of resources to dismantle deadly racism and supremacist culture.

“THIS IS THE MOMENT THAT BECOMES A MOVEMENT.”

This is the moment that becomes a movement. This is the inflection point in our history that can change things for the better in our church, our city, our nation, and our world. We are the ones for which we have been waiting. There can be the moral turning for which we long in the world if we but answer the call of Micah 6:8, “To do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.” Therefore, we who believe in freedom should not rest or be silent until freedom comes, as we commit ourselves anew to this ongoing work.

▲ *Rev. Dr. Kelle Brown is the Lead Pastor of Plymouth Church United Church of Christ of Seattle. She is a progressive Christian minister who uses her voice to promote justice, equity and inclusion for the most vulnerable in our community. Kelle curates conversations that promotes finding our moral center and help birth the Beloved Community. She lives by the quote from Dr. Howard Thurman, “Don’t ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive, and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.”*

White What?

BY JACQUELINE BATTALORA

THIS ARTICLE ORIGINALLY APPEARED IN THE SPRING 2019 ISSUE OF
A MATTER OF SPIRIT, WHITE PRIVILEGE

PEGGY MCINTOSH (1997) DESCRIBES WHITE PRIVILEGE AS

“an invisible package of unearned assets.”

These assets are largely unrecognized by those who hold them and are rendered invisible through dominant social practices. Law provides many concrete examples of white privilege. The U.S. Naturalization Law of 1790 is one such example. The very First Congress of the country determined that in order to naturalize a U.S. citizen one had to be white. This particular structural advantage that conferred white privilege was shared by poor and wealthy, Christian, Jewish, and Muslim alike and it did not matter whether one was aware of the advantage or desired it. The advantage was simply built-in, a feature of law. The requirement of being white to naturalize lasted more than 150 years, conferring an advantage to immigrants who were seen as white not because they did anything special, but rather, simply because they were white in the eyes of courts. The Naturalization Law of 1790 is an example of systemic white advantage with the reverse side of the same coin being systemic racism.

The advantage extended beyond immigrants to other whites both in the past and present. The law worked to construct a white = American equation that continues today creating both systemic and personal advantage for whites and disadvantages for people of color. Regardless of when one's family arrived on North American shores, those who are seen as white are treated as Americans, as people who belong here, as those who should access and

claim the rights and liberties of the U.S. This is not how Americans of Asian descent, for example, are treated despite some having family in the U.S. for more than 150 years. These Asian Americans are frequently presumed to be immigrants and complimented for their good English. White privilege derived from Naturalization law goes beyond common everyday assumptions about who is presumed to be American. It has also shaped how people are commonly referenced. Americans with descendants from Asia, for example, are referred to as “Asian Americans” while those with descendants from Europe are simply “American.”

White privilege operates to give white people unfair access to resources both material (land, money, jobs) and symbolic (positive representations including common toys like Superman, Barbie) advantages simply by virtue of being white. The benefits conferred by virtue of being white are, of course, mediated by gender, class, sexuality, religion, disability among other fiercely enforced categories. For example, a white man's U.S. citizenship was not impacted by the person he married. On the other hand, a white woman lost her U.S. citizenship if she married a noncitizen ineligible for naturalization (i.e., not white). And of course, one of the most important expressions of citizenship, the vote, was accessible to white men but only to white women beginning in 1920 with the passage of the 19th amendment.

White Fragility

White privilege allows white people to move around in the world with greater ease, dignity, and comfort than most people of color. The social structure that creates white privilege also insulates white people from race-based stress caused by such triggers as a claim that one's behavior had a negative impact on a person of color or that one's success came, in part, by virtue of being white, to mention just a couple. According to Robin DiAngelo (2011), the social context of the U.S. produces an environment of racial protection for whites. It results in expectations that they will maintain racial comfort. This environment simultaneously lowers the ability of white people to tolerate or navigate race-based stress. This inability to tolerate race-based stress is what DiAngelo calls, “White Fragility” and defines as, “a state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves... [that] function to reinstate white racial equilibrium.”

DiAngelo, explains that white fragility is what happens when white privilege gets contested. White fragility gets expressed in a variety of ways. Some people avoid confronting racial bias by walking away or bursting into tears or both while others respond with anger and rage. Crying when confronted with facing racial bias diverts attention away from the topic of bias and results in the crier's hurt feelings becoming the center of attention. Rather than cry or walk away, some avoid facing their racial bias by exploding in anger and citing hard work and personal struggle as the true source of successful whites. The anger works to sharpen focus upon one's impassioned claims and to sideline the issue of racial bias. The claims of individual effort completely bypass the structural advantages that made it possible for one's hard work to pay off. In these ways, white fragility works to preserve the racial status quo and to keep central white people's feelings, interests, and claims.

White fragility is the biggest roadblock keeping communities, organizations, and white individuals from developing the competency to identify the workings of Whiteness.

Whiteness

Both white privilege and white fragility rest upon a foundation of Whiteness. In fact, both are the result of the dynamic interplay of Whiteness. Sociologist, Ruth Frankenberg (1993) defines Whiteness as:

a location of structural advantage, of race privilege. Second, it is a 'standpoint,' a place from which White people look at ourselves, at others, and at society. Third, 'Whiteness' refers to a set of cultural practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed.

The Naturalization Law of 1790 is an example of a structural advantage. It, in turn, worked to shape white viewpoints of white people as desirable, of non-whites as undesirable, and a view of the world as better when white. Together these worked to constitute the national practice of seeing white as American. There are many thousands of structural examples throughout U.S. history through the present moment. That most of us are not taught about them and that our U.S. history texts exclude them is a major challenge for K-12 educators and a huge red flag to all who seek social justice.

The history of legal disputes arising from the Naturalization Law of 1790 provides examples of race as a construct. Because “white” was never defined as

a matter of federal law, disputes over who is white were fought in courts. Ian F. Haney Lopez’ (1996) analysis of these legal disputes reveals that one court defined being Caucasian as being white while yet another court rejected the equation. The court cases expose that those we see as white reflect not a genetic or biological group but a complex matrix of law, policy, and practices that have created meaning we describe as race.

When we understand that race is a social construct, not rooted in biology but rather the result of human actions and choices, the path out becomes clear. Whiteness requires continual affirmation and reconstruction to be sustained. There is a way out of Whiteness, a construct of domination and exclusion. The way out is to dismantle Whiteness and instead, choose liberation and belonging. This is no small feat but is absolutely doable. Each one of us possesses the power to reject Whiteness within our own lives and spheres of influence.

Understanding some of the history of institutionalized white superiority within each moment of U.S. history is critical because it makes clear what Tim Wise has noted, “Whiteness has been done to all of us.” There is no need for white people to fall into guilt or despair because the structures we were born into ensured the pervasive message of the superiority of white people. It is no one’s fault. There is, however, a desperate need for white people to identify

the workings of Whiteness and make daily choices that fracture the domination and exclusion it asserts, I call this Whiteness Competency.

Daily choices include the areas we drive through or avoid, the areas we select to live within, the businesses we patronize, the people we hire, the comments we make, the people we see and those we do not, those we invite over for dinner, those we confide in, the trust we have or withhold, etc.... In countless daily activities, we either support the status quo (i.e., Whiteness as domination and exclusion) or forge a new construct rooted in liberation and belonging for a diverse humanity. Whiteness must be dismantled within minds and hearts, through daily choices made, through policies and practices supported, through structures and institutions rejected and new ones created, through entirely new ways of being. New structures and institutions aligned with liberation and belonging for a diverse humanity will result from many individual actions that envision and support them.

▲ *Jacqueline Battalora is the author of Birth of a White Nation: The Invention of White People and Its Relevance Today, an attorney, professor of sociology at Saint Xavier University, and former Chicago Police Officer. She is an editor for the Journal of Understanding and Dismantling Privilege.*



On Fire, the World and Me

BY KELLY HICKMAN, MATS

“What can any artist set on fire but his world?”¹

My skin is on fire. It became noticeable, intrusive, debilitating in early June, but I don’t actually recall when it started. May? April? Had it been here all along, since March? Maybe it had been since then. Time has become every possible thing this year—rapid and difficult to track (wasn’t it just Spring?), unhurried and exacting (how is it only 11 am?), folded and virtual, spacious with blurred edges, steady and gentle. At the time of this writing, it has been nearly thirty weeks since I tested positive for the virus causing a global pandemic. While the body politic scrambles to adequately respond, my body is a-scramble as its response—the skin on fire is only one of a myriad of neurological symptoms.

Fatigue is another lingering symptom. A new friend. The other day, I was so fatigued (it helps to keep using this in sentences, I find) that I was only able to stand for ten or fifteen minutes before needing to sit down. This, after no exertion really. I learned the hard way the consequence of a short bike ride, trying to run again, a moderate hike—days lost to fatigue and needing to rest. Other symptoms persist as well, too many and uninteresting to name them all here. It is my skin on fire that I return to.

Fire, like time, seems to have transformed into some multi-dimensional entity. Perhaps it was ever thus. There is my skin on fire, yes. And there is the menacing phrase “You’re Fired!” which for some reason always feels appropriate as it is belted out by a man with fire for hair, a president who spews fear and fans the flames of nationalism, bigotry, and hate. There

is the fire of revolution that has taken hold of the American² consciousness, deeply emblazoned on our collective psyche in the form of a police precinct set on fire. As I write this, the air quality where I live in Seattle is indexed as “unhealthy” and the windows have been shut for days followed by more days due to smoke from wildfires throughout the western United States. Fire is painful and consuming, quick and absolute, rebellious and subversive, ravaging and devastating.

As a person born and raised in the Pacific Northwest, I know something about “fire ecology.” Fires are part of the natural cycle of a forest. There’s even “fire-stimulated flowering” in which fire helps certain plants to re-sprout, flower, release seeds, and germinate. Fire can be necessary for new growth and renewal.



Am I, or better, are *we* being consumed and destroyed, or are we somehow instead re-sprouting and flowering?

In her short work *Holy the Firm*, Annie Dillard recollects watching a moth attracted to her candle flame.

¹ Annie Dillard, “Holy the Firm,” in *The Annie Dillard Reader* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994)

² American, in this context, refers all persons living in the continental U.S.

One night a moth flew into the candle, was caught, burned dry, and held...And then this moth essence, this spectacular skeleton, began to act as a wick. She kept burning...The candle had two wicks, two flames of identical height, side by side.³

To say that fire is transformative feels like a preposterous understatement. Like the moth, I feel caught and held—by illness, by quarantine, by racial reckoning, by the transfixing horrors of our planet and society on fire. Like the moth-wick, I and my world, seem wholly unrecognizable.

Wholly unrecognizable.

Like a moth that becomes a wick. Like a God that becomes human. Like a divine-human. When Christ emerged from the tomb in Mark's Gospel, "he appeared in a different form" (Mk 16:12); in Luke, on the road to Emmaus the disciples "were kept from recognizing him" (Lk 24:16); and in John's Gospel, Mary Magdalene "did not realize that it was Jesus" (Jn 20:14). In the transfiguration, Jesus is described as "dazzling" (Mk 9:3), and shining "like the sun" (Mt 17:2), and that "his face changed" (Lk 9:29). Maybe my skin and our world on fire are similarly transfiguring, bringing about something unrecognizable.

The word recognize is derived from the Latin re- "again" and *cognoscere* "to get to know," meaning "know again, recall or recover the knowledge of, perceive an identity with something formerly known or felt."⁴ This time of quarantine, "forced retreat,"⁵ is forcing us to know ourselves—as individuals, as communities, as global citizens, and as beloved by God. If the other side of this quarantine tomb-time is unrecognizable, then are we not invited and challenged to prophetically imagine a radically new vision for ourselves, our community, our Earth?

This is the time for prophets and artists and dreamers and visionaries. This is a disturbing, chaotic, disordering time. We are being stripped bare of comfort and convention. May the fires of our time purify and bring us to truly recognize all that no longer serves humanity and creation, what needs to be torn down, burned down, die. My damaged cells will regenerate, but also, my body-self remains forever touched by coronavirus. In what ways will I be unrecognizable when the dust of transformation settles? Who am I becoming? Who are you becoming? Who will we be?

▲ *Kelly Hickman, MATS, is a lifelong Catholic and third-generation Seattleite in her thirties. She is currently unemployed as her continued coronavirus symptoms prevent her from participating in full time work. She previously served as the Co-Executive Director of the Washington Bus, and prior to that spent eight years helping to direct the Missions Office of the Archdiocese of Seattle. She has been a member of the AMOS Editorial Board since 2018.*

³ Dillard, 428-429

⁴ Online Etymology Dictionary www.etymonline.com

⁵ From Rev. angel Kyoto williams' interview with Krista Tippet on the "Living the Questions Podcast," September 10, 2020.

YOU CAN TEACH AN "OLD DOG" NEW TRICKS

BY VINCE HERBERHOLT

From January to August, I have been involved in a Jesuits West Province program called the Faith Doing Justice Discernment Series (FDJDS). Provincial, Scott Santarosa, SJ, claimed this program would help build "Jesuit Muscle" for the poor and marginalized. For a person who self-identifies as a "social justice junkie," Scott's call compelled me to sign up immediately.

Over six months 100+ representatives in five states from Jesuit Works, including IPJC, were virtually schooled in community organizing, discernment, Ignatian Spirituality, and advocacy. Much of this training was old hat but presented in a new way. I felt like an "Old Dog" learning the new tricks of faith-based community organizing.

We learned how we could pray, discern, organize, and act with those who are poor and marginalized. And, Thanks Be to God, at the end of the FDJDS, we acted. As Jesuit allies working with the LatinX led Washington Immigrant Solidarity Network (WAISN), we demanded a \$100 million fund for undocumented workers who have been denied unemployment and CARES Act stimulus payments.

Our actions were a Jesuit letter supporting the fund, an action alert generating over 200 letters, and a two-day virtual prayer vigil attended by over 500 individuals. In August, after a threat of protest, the Governor funded \$40 million to support undocumented workers.

The FDJDS went on to set up the Province-wide CORE initiative—Collaborative Organizing for Racial Equity which set as one of its goals, 10,000 racial equity actions by the end of 2020.

▲ *Vince Herberholt lives in Seattle and is a member of the AMOS editorial board. He serves as the chair of the St. Joseph Parish Pastoral and Missions Council and is a member of the Parish Faith Justice Commission.*

Finding Hope

in Times of Pandemic

BY GRETCHEN GUNDRUM

"I'm tired of all this COVID stuff," nine-year-old Molly said. *"All I want to do is go back to school and hug my grandpa."* Ah! Some sense of normalcy, please. The hardest part is not knowing when it will be over. Will there be a vaccine soon? Will it be safe or a ploy to try to rescue a teetering presidency? Perhaps you've suffered from "COVID brain": mental fogginess, forgetfulness, inability to concentrate, impaired problem-solving, low-grade depression with anxiety. Or "Covidsomnia": fatigued but unable to sleep well, with fitful dreams, and often early morning awakening with a vague sense of dread. And then there's the addictive "Doom-scrolling": constantly checking the newsfeed on your phone to see if anything else bad has happened. And it often has.

We are in the midst of what one journalist described as a "trauma pandemic" in this country. We have huge amounts of stress due to financial worries, fears about our physical safety as we look our mortality daily in the eye, the frustration of trying to accommodate family space for work-from-home and school-from-home, the dearth of social outlets, fear for the health of loved ones, and the tedium of isolation. And that's just the chaos from COVID. The national cacophony of peaceful protesting for racial justice laced with violence and rioting from so-called bad actors, verified Russian interference in our elections, and the chaotic and confusing messages from our government have left our heads spinning, our hearts confused and troubled. And then, what if our votes don't get counted properly? Things taken for granted in the past are suddenly in total jeopardy. Did I mention the West Coast in flames and the calving of icebergs in the Artic Circle and Antarctica? It's too much. Please God, some peace, some hopeful good news.

One wonders where God is in all of this mess or even if God cares about us. When God is seen as a patriarchal, retributive



God, there might be the temptation to think we're being punished. If that's the case, the whole world is being punished. Or, maybe we're being invited to something else, something new. There is an opportunity for growth in consciousness both individually and in terms of our planet. This might be an evolutionary moment of creativity in the chaos, and a renewed commitment to the common good, despite the isolation and self-centeredness that our circumstances can foster. It's a moment of respect and community with each other as we mask-up, socially distance, and digitally connect with family, neighbors, and friends. It's a moment that invites deeper connection to other nations as the race for a vaccine to thwart the virus absorbs scientists and preoccupies governments. It is also a moment for a dialogic relationship with the Divine. There's a story about St. Teresa of Avila that's heart-warming. Teresa had an authentic, reciprocal relationship with God. It is said that once when she was on her way to deliver supplies



United Nations, COVID-19 response, unplash

to one of her far-flung monasteries, her heavily laden donkey slipped in the river and upended the whole cargo. Agitated, she lifted her head to heaven and said, “If this is the way you treat your friends, no wonder you have so few of them!” It was probably helpful to give God a piece of her mind. We are invited to do the same.

So where is God in the midst of our tra-
vails? Hopefully, riding right next to us in
the co-pilot’s seat. We don’t get rescued but
help will come if we ask for it.

In the person of Jesus, we have a God who
suffered for us and continues to suffer
with us. His piercing cry on the cross,
“My God, my God, why have you forsaken
me?” (Psalm 22, v.1) rings true for many
of us now. Feeling bereft, abandoned, and
sometimes scared out of our wits, we cry
out in our own, multi-pronged, pandemic
crucifixion. If God does figuratively hold
us in the palm of his hand, we might
remind God to look at his (or her!) hand
more often.

Her book, *Acedia & Me: A Marriage,
Monks, and a Writer’s Life*, Kathleen
Norris presents the asceticism necessary
to withstand the depression, anxiety, and
discouragement that can accompany daily
life. She cites the recitation of the Psalms
as an emotionally stabilizing practice for
her. She also underscores the grace of
surprising blessings that come and the
importance of the practice of gratitude.

How can we stay grounded in faith and hope, how can we
endure the daily tedium of this marathon—a tedium that
Kathleen Norris describes as the acedia monastics grapple
with, in the sameness of their days?

An informal survey of relatives and friends produced a
number of blessings during the restrictions and isolation of
the coronavirus. Many spoke of the delight of being more,
not less, connected to family members through the use of
Zoom and other digital platforms. Some noted time to do
more reading and reflection—on racism and climate change
in particular. Others talked about having had to let go of
the illusion of being in control of their lives, their futures,
even next week! Knowing that we’re all in this together has
yielded times of humor and solidarity. While working-
from-home and school-from-home often create tension
with the confinement of space and competing needs for

internet access, it has also brought a deeper connection to
each other.

Heightened awareness of global suffering, the heroic sacrifice
of first-responders, the courage of activists working for justice,
and firefighters facing the effects of global warming head-on,
yields an irrefutable wake-up call. Teilhard de Chardin once
said, “The Universe is unfolding as it should.” With all the
crises we are facing, one wonders how that can be true.

He also stressed the importance of being co-creators with God
in the evolution of the Universe. What does that mean for
us? Do we indeed, accept the challenge to build the earth? To
understand that we are truly at-one with the Cosmos? That
God is within all? What does that mean for us as individuals,
as a nation, as citizens of the world? Are we learning what
these crises can teach us?

These questions are weighty and have no easy answers. Yet,
we must ask them because our future is at stake. To succumb
to despair, to lose hope, and to fear this chaos will never end
creates a kind of useless paralysis. “But I’m just one person—
what can I do?” Even if you do one small act of kindness a
day, one act of compassion for yourself during these hard
times—which will lead to an expanded capacity for compas-
sion toward others—the world will be a bit safer, a bit kinder,
a bit more peaceful.

A daily practice of gratitude is essential. It’s very simple: Every
night before bed or every morning upon awakening, think of
three things that you’re grateful for. They can be as practical
as “I’m grateful I can still get out of bed/or see/or smile;” or as
profound as “I’m grateful I have meaningful work to do/or the
planet has not been blown up/or that God and I are becoming
better friends.”

Did you know that the sense of gratitude cannot coexist
with fear, anxiety, or depression? It fosters trust, and trust—I
believe—is even more important than hope. In a prayer found
in the *Seeds of Contemplation*, Thomas Merton says:

*My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do
not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain
where it will end... Therefore will I trust you always,
though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of
death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you
will never leave me to face my perils alone.*

We learn to trust by trusting. Our Co-pilot joins us at the
instrument panel. Have a good conversation with God.
Stay safe.

▲ Gretchen Gundrum is a psychologist and spiritual director
in Seattle. She also serves on the editorial board for
A Matter of Spirit.



INTERCOMMUNITY

► Pope Francis Calls for End of Death Penalty

Pope Francis' new encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*, declares that there is no going back. "The death penalty is inadmissible and Catholics are to work for its abolition." Responding to this call and the U.S. resuming federal executions after 17 years, IPJC is collaborating with our faith based allies and the Catholic Mobilizing Network to discuss the death penalty and restorative justice.



"The death penalty is inadmissible and Catholics are to work for its abolition."

Join us on November 12, at 12 pm on Zoom
Registration available soon from ipjc.

► Women's Justice Circles Now Virtual!



During the summer IPJC responded to our Justice Circle community's expressed need for support in this time of COVID with sessions covering mental health, trauma, self-efficacy and resilience. Each virtual session was designed to strengthen the women's mental health and build

relationships and confidence in their ability to create change. In the process, the women identified a pressing need for their children to participate fully and effectively in virtual education. This fall women in Grays Harbor; Skagit; Snohomish; and Thurston Counties will gather in Circles to focus on equity in education for their children.



Are you part of a group of women who want to change the world? Contact Giselle at garcamo@ipjc.org about our grassroots organizing program, Women's Justice Circles. In the program's twenty-first year, the Circles have been redesigned to be virtual.

► Justice Cafés

In our twelfth year our young adult program is now virtual! Contact Samantha at syanity@ipjc.org about the creative ways in which groups are using the program.



2020-2021 Topics

- SEPT **White Privilege**
- OCT **Black Lives Matter**
- NOV **Education Equity**
- JAN **Essential Workers**
- FEB **Health & Safety**
- MAR **Criminal Justice**
- APRIL **Earth Justice**

► Donations

In Honor of: 20 Years of Women's Justice Circles, Patty Bowman, Judy Byron, OP, Dominican Sisters, Jillian Evans, Linda Haydock, SNJM, Janea McCoy, Eloisa Nguyen, Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace Ministries, Bria Stokes, Audrey Tribble
In Memory of: George Burrows, Gael O'Reilly

PEACE & JUSTICE CENTER

NEWS • ANNOUNCEMENTS • UPCOMING EVENTS



“Voting is a civic sacrament.”

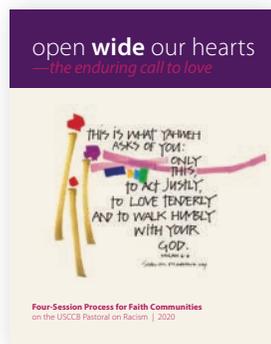
—Fr. Theodore Hesburgh, University of Notre Dame 1952-1987

“We cannot uphold an ideal of holiness that would ignore injustice in a world where some revel, spend with abandon and live only for the latest consumer goods, even as others look on from afar, living their entire lives in abject poverty.” —Pope Francis

► Undoing Racism: Discerning the Call

PERSONAL	COMMUNAL	SYSTEMIC
Order a copy of IPJC’s study guide for faith communities on the USCCB Pastoral on Racism— <i>open wide our hearts, the enduring call to love.</i>	Form a group to use the study guide.	Go into boardrooms and courtrooms, police stations and council meetings, institutions and churches until all people are free!
Embrace the bishops’ statement that “racism is a life issue” and study how disregard for human life impacts people of color.	Organize a dialogue on how the bishops’ teaching can enlarge and expand the life issues important to our faith community.	Create laws/policies to end racism in prisons, education, housing, employment, etc.
Explore the Black Lives Matter Movement. Resource: tolerance.org/magazine/summer-2017/why-teaching-black-lives-matter-matters-part-i	Convene a group to study the Movement.	Be part of a movement to ask for accountability when racism is suspected or evident.
Patronize Black/People of Color (POC) businesses.	When planning events intentionally engage Black and POC businesses.	Advocate for equitable bank lending, business licenses and hiring policies and practices.
Discover what unique contribution you can make to eliminating racism. Explore how your energies and passions might contribute to the larger effort.	Ask communities that you are a part of to create a vision and commitment statement to address racism in collaboration with people of color.	Examine our systems that are in need of reform and take action, e.g., education, criminal justice.

► Racism Publication



IPJC’s publication, *Open Wide Our Hearts—the enduring call to love*, on the USCCB Pastoral on Racism, is a helpful resource for individuals and groups who want to consider how racism is evident during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Cost: \$5 + postage per copy
Contact IPJC or order at ipjc.org

JESUITS WEST COLLABORATIVE



ORGANIZING FOR RACIAL EQUITY

IPJC participated in the Jesuits West, Faith Doing Justice Discernment Series over the past year, which resulted in the Province and its works (includes IPJC), committing to collaborate on 10,000 actions for racial equity by the end of 2020!



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Reflection *Individually, or as a group, read and reflect on this issue of A Matter of Spirit.*

Leader: As we begin this time of reflection, let us ask God to open our hearts to thoughtful dialogue. Together may we commit to taking prophetic action for the common good.

- ☞ Humbly confessing his shortcomings, Travis Russel, SJ invites to look at our own. Who have I failed to see? When have I failed to act? Who in my own backyard can I invite into my life?
- ☞ Tricia Wittmann-Todd asks, “How does a reimagined church look to you?” and to your community? How has this time of remote church changed your view of church and what has remained the same?
- ☞ Rev. Dr. Kelle Brown transforms the Beatitudes for us in this current moment. As persons of faith, how can we undo systems of anti-Blackness that uphold white supremacy? How can we tear down these systems of oppression within our own faith tradition and places of worship?
- ☞ Jacqueline Battalora closes her article “White What?” with “New structures and institutions aligned with liberation and belonging for a diverse humanity will result from many individual actions that envision and support them.” What concrete actions can we take both personally and institutionally that will bring liberation? What current actions hold on to the status quo?
- ☞ Kelly Hickman shares her experience of having COVID, drawing the parallel between her situation and our current political and environmental crises. How do you imagine we will be transformed by all that we are experiencing?
- ☞ Vince Heberholt refers to himself as an “Old Dog” learning some “new tricks.” Everyone, no matter their age, can learn new ways of acting for justice. What are you interested in pursuing that you might have been afraid to because of your age or experience? How can we engage persons of all generations to collaborate on justice issues?
- ☞ Gretchen Gundrum invites us to reflect on, “Where is God?” How can we trust in God’s presence and be assured that God is holding us closely in these times?

Closing Prayer

*My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going.
I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end...
Therefore will I trust you always, though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow
of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to
face my perils alone. —Thomas Merton*