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ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Newsletter – Summer 2020

A Message from the Reverend Diane Wong, Rector

Because of the coronavirus, we have been living constantly in a virtual world, and socially distanced from one another. And just as we are getting used to living in a virtual world, and finding a certain degree of peace from being socially distanced, our lives are thrown off balance again, this time by police brutality against people of color, especially against people of the Black communities.

With the knee of a white cop pressed on the neck of George Floyd, a black man, for over eight minutes, we were shocked that the inhumanity of racial discrimination is alive and well in our country even in 2020. We all want to do something to eradicate systemic racism, but we also wonder if what we want to do would be enough. A couple of my acquaintances posted on FB saying that because they don't know if their individual actions would make any difference to the situation, they decided not to do anything.

I want to share a story with you, a story that is in the book that our book group is reading right now, and it is a story about the hummingbird and the fire.*

The story starts with an enormous fire, which breaks out and rages through the forest. All the animals flee to the forest edge to watch - all, that is, except a tiny hummingbird. "I will do something about this fire," says the tiny bird. So it flies to the nearest stream and dives beneath the surface. Rising into the air, it carries a bead of water in its beak that it releases over the flames. The fire is huge, but over and over the hummingbird flies to the stream, returns with a droplet in its beak, and lets it fall onto the flames. Each time, the bird believes that this one drop might make the difference.

The other animals - some with large trunks and large mouths like the elephant, giraffe, lion and beyond - laugh at the diminutive creature. "What do you think you're doing?" they jeer. "You're only a hummingbird. You can see how big the forest fire is. Do you think you're going to do any good at all?" Without wasting any time and tired of their discouraging words and inaction, the hummingbird turns to the other animals as it prepares to fly back to the river, and says, "Well I'm doing the best I can!"

The tiny hummingbird believes that putting out the fire is possible; it has hope. If we truly believe that racial justice is possible - that is, if we have hope--we will be empowered to carry “a bead of change.” Having hope does not deny the suffering and adversity of this world; Christian hope says that suffering, adversity, violence, hatred do not have the last word, God’s power of love does. As one writer says, Christian hope is fierce, so like the hummingbird bird, we must keep doing our best, and keep doing it along with others to bring change.

Blessings,

Diane+

*Ruth Valerio, *Saying Yes to Life*, pp. 133-134

Drawing of George Floyd by Maya Pachter



Resources on Racial Justice Suggested by Bethany House of Prayer

We offer these Episcopal and Ecumenical resources and suggested readings to further support your ongoing commitment and engagement:

Episcopal City Mission: <https://www.episcopalcitymission.org/racial-justice>

Massachusetts Council of Churches: <https://www.masscouncilofchurches.org/>

Episcopal Church: <https://episcopalchurch.org/office-government-relations>
<https://episcopalchurch.org/racial-reconciliation>

EDS at Union, Chapel Service June 5, 2020: A Call and Response to Anti-Black Violence: Challenged to Transform: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bb0xcSNAhro>

A few suggested readings:

Jesus and the Disinherited, Howard Thurman

The Fire Next Time, James Baldwin

Strength to Love and other books by Martin Luther King, Jr.

Race Matters, Cornel West

Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and Justice of God, Kelly Brown Douglas

The Cross and the Lynching Tree, James Cone

Meant for Good, Fundamentals of Womanist Leadership, Debora Jackson

Hallelujah, Anyhow: A Memoir, Barbara C. Harris with Kelly Brown Douglas

Conversations with God: Two Centuries of Prayers by African Americans, Edited by James Melvin Washington, Ph.D.

Book Recommendation by Sarah Boulet

Here is a little info about the book Beyond Colorblind – Redeeming Our Ethnic Journey, written by Sarah Shin. Each chapter ends with discussion questions. I would be interested in another book discussion focused on race and I was thinking this book could be a good contender.



For a generation or so, society has tried to be colorblind. People say they don't see race. But this approach has limitations. In our broken world, ethnicity and racial identity are often points of pain and injustice. We can't ignore that God created us with our ethnic identities. We bring all of who we are, including our ethnicity and cultural background, to our identity and work as God's ambassadors.

Ethnicity and evangelism specialist Sarah Shin reveals how our brokenness around ethnicity can be restored and redeemed, for our own wholeness and also for the good of others. When we experience internal transformation in our ethnic journeys, God propels us outward in a reconciling witness to the world. Ethnic healing can demonstrate God's power and goodness and bring good news to others. Showing us how to make space for God's healing of our ethnic stories, Shin helps us grow in our cross-cultural skills, manage cross-cultural conflict, pursue reconciliation and justice, and share the gospel as ethnicity-aware Christians.

Jesus offers hope for healing, both for ourselves and for society. Discover how your ethnic story can be transformed for compelling witness and mission.”

A Reading List On Race For Allies Who Want To Do Better - from WBUR

'The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in The Age of Colorblindness' by Michelle Alexander

'Parable of the Sower' by Octavia E. Butler

'So You Want To Talk About Race' by Ijeoma Oluo

'This Bridge Called My Back' Writings by Radical Feminists of Color

'Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?: And Other Conversations about Race' by Beverly Daniel Tatum

'We Are Not Yet Equal: Understanding Our Racial Divide' by Carol Anderson and Tonya Bolden

'White Fragility' by Robin DiAngelo

'How To Be An Antiracist' by Ibram X. Kendi

'God's Bits of Wood' by Ousmane Sembène

'They Were Her Property: White Women as Slave Owners in the American South' by Stephanie E. Jones-Rogers

Notable Mentions:

- "Kindred" by Octavia E. Butler
- "People Before Highways: Boston, Activists, Urban Planners, and a New Movement for City Making" by Dr. Karilyn Crockett
- "Women, Race and Class" and "Are Prisons Obsolete?" by Angela Y. Davis
- "Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty" by Dorothy Roberts
- "Black Skin, White Masks" by Frantz Fanon
- "A Small Place" by Jamaica Kincaid

Update on Re-gathering a/o June 22, 2020

We wanted to write with news about how we are beginning to think about re-gathering again in our Sanctuary and building. A team has been formed to work on the re-gathering plan. Cate Barr, Donna Sullivan, Christine Carney, Dorothy Mallam, David Wilcox and Rev. Diane are members of the team, and we will work with the Diocese and others and take our cues not only from the government timeline but from the timeline set by our Bishops as well. We are taking this very seriously. Research suggests church services and the closeness of worshipers as well as the length of time they are in a building incubate hotspots of viral transmission.

Last week, David Wilcox and Vernon Brown attended a Zoom meeting with the diocese and representatives from Church Insurance Company to clarify liability, responsibilities and expectations on re-gathering. This coming week, Dorothy, David and Rev. Diane will be attending another Zoom meeting with the diocese for parishes that have renters and groups such as AA using the parish building.

In the meantime, we are using the checklist provided by the diocese to prepare for the pre re-gathering cleaning and come up with specific tasks for the cleaning needed after each service when we do re-gather. We also will be working on a list of expectations for our renters when we are ready for them to return. When our planning and preparations are ready, we will contact “deanery shepherds” to walk through and certify our plan.

Please feel free to contact us with any questions, concerns or needs you may have.; our emails and phone numbers are listed below.

From the Re-gathering Team

Camp Trinity

Trinity Church in Boston invites the diocesan community to join its virtual Camp Trinity summer learning and fellowship opportunity for people of all ages, July 29-Aug. 1. Under the theme “One Body, Many Members,” Camp Trinity will consider shared connections, gifts and responsibilities, through morning groups meeting in age cohorts, noonday community worship with music and reflections from community members and afternoon of-line activities or intergenerational electives on Zoom, ending each day with an all-camp activity. Four counselors from the Barbara C. Harris Camp and Conference Center—Michael Fenn, Tina Seng, Charlie Groves and Avery Nasworthy—are working with Trinity to plan the program. There is no cost to participate; sign up online by July 9th at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/8Z7KKJN>.

Update from Neighbors Eating All Together

Neighbors Eating All Together (NEAT) is a group of dedicated volunteers who have served over 24 free dinners over the last 3 years for a total of approximately 1500 meals served to guests. Sadly, due to the COVID 19 crisis, we had to cancel our spring meals; and, frankly, we are still uncertain how to move forward come Fall. However, the volunteer committee continues to meet monthly via Zoom and we do have some updates to share. Thanks to the help of Dorothy Brooks Commons and the Boston College Law School Community Enterprise Clinical Program, we are nearly finished securing our 501(c)3 non-profit status. Once that is complete, we will actively fundraise and move forward with our plans for expanding our outreach to the community. NEAT is still accepting ideas and volunteers, so if you have any desire to join us, please contact me directly at lpmanion@gmail.com. NEAT sincerely appreciates all the support St. John's has given to us; we also could not have achieved our successes without the support of Stanley and the Undercovers as well as all who have volunteered and donated. I've never been involved with such a generous group of people; and I look forward to safer times when people can meet and eat and fill our body and soul with community nourishment. Stay safe everyone, and thank you again.

Laura Manion, NEAT President and St. John's Parishioner

A Memory of Lenox Street

By Frank Foster

On a late spring Saturday in May 1966, I joined an ecumenical group of teens from Arlington to respond to a call to help clean up a lot on Lenox Street in Dorchester, so that it could become a safe location for a children's day camp. Our curate at the time was the Rev. Edward J Smith who led us as well as youth group members from St. Paul Lutheran Church. We spent most of the morning carefully clearing construction rubble from the lot: broken glass, heavy pieces of concrete, cement and rocks.

At mid-day, the mothers who lived in one of the adjacent housing project buildings invited us into their community room. Tables had been spread and we were served delicious vegetable soup and bread and butter. There was much joy and many "God Bless you"s in the lively conversation as we got to know each other and planned some of our afternoon work. I remember a meal that brought all ages and races together with real joy.

We finished our clearing of the lot and before saying our goodbyes and heading home had a chance to see actual future plans where the slides and the jungle gym would be placed.

And it did not stop there! My mother heard of a need for transporting some of the high school students who worked as counselors. She would pick them up by 8 AM and be there with cool water, snacks, and fresh fruit each weekday at 5 PM when their day ended to take them home.

I remember all sorts of things, but it is most important to remember the things that will last:

- My mother’s example of service to and with others
- The joy of creating some space safe and for a new purpose
- Fr. Smith saying to me after the lunch: “I have never been “God Blessed” so much!”
- The sheer radiance in his face as he said this.

Summer Services

For this summer, we will continue to have Sunday services at 10 a.m. on Zoom.

Reading for Sunday Worship

If you are interested in doing a reading for our Sunday worship service, please let Rev. Diane know. Thank you.

Milestones

June Birthdays: Cate Barr, Charlotte Pierce, Andrea Nyamekye, Charles Nyamekye, Carol Hoover, Bob Goode, Dorothy Mallam

June Anniversaries: Don & Nanci Richardson, Peggy Jo & Don Webb

July Birthdays: Adam Pachter, Lucy Pachter, Vicki Ford, Don Richardson

August Birthdays: Aidan Wilcox, Gene Downing

August Anniversaries: Vicki & Larry Ford

Arlington EATS Market Update

St. John's remains the location for the Arlington EATS Market, but the Market is closed to shoppers. Volunteers are coming in to sort and bag food, and to deliver food to residents. Arlington EATS and the Town of Arlington will deliver shelf stable food to any Arlington resident in need. To receive food, call the Arlington Food Hotline at 781-316-3400 or go to arlingtoneats.org/requestfood.

Arlington EATS Market Donations

AEM is once again accepting food donations. Items that AEM has a specific need for include:

- * cereal
- * oatmeal
- * canned green beans
- * canned diced tomatoes
- * canned or dried beans
- * canned soups
- * salad dressing
- * shelf-stable soy milk or almond milk
- * brown paper bags

Donations can be dropped off on Thursdays from 9 a.m. to 12 noon. AEM puts a table by the sidewalk on Lombard St. for donors to leave donations. Please wear a mask and be sure to keep a good distance from other donors and volunteers.

AEM accepts financial donations as well; they are grateful for whatever you can contribute. Checks can be made out to Arlington EATS Market and mailed to AEM at the church. Or you can contribute online at their website: www.arlingtoneats.org.

**St. John's Episcopal Church
74 Pleasant Street
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Rev. Diane Wong's office hours: Saturdays, 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at St. John's.

Please feel free to arrange with Rev. Diane for other times to meet.

Her cell phone number is 617-417-8102. Her email is dianeckwong@gmail.com.

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