

Reflection for February 6, 2022

Nancy's Remarks

Luke 5:1-11

February is Black History Month. Rev. Charmain Bailey, who serves the United Church of Canada in Windsor, Ontario, has written many of the prayers in today's service. She has also graciously shared a sermon with the wider church. Let's listen...

(VIDEO-"Fishing so Others can have a meal"-*Youtube*.)

I have to admit that as a white liberal, it makes me nervous to lead worship on topics like Black history month. I am worried that I will say the wrong thing, that in my ignorance and privilege I will blunder and somehow make things worse. But I can't let my anxiety paralyze me or allow me to turn a blind eye to the racial injustice in our society and in our church.

Ibram X. Kendi, in his book *How to Be an Antiracist* (*Random House Canada, 2019*), says that it is not enough to be non-racist.

On October 24, 2020, the commissioners of the 43rd General Council voted to declare the intention that The United Church of Canada is become an anti-racist church. Yet, as the Moderator Richard Bott added, "This doesn't mean that we have achieved this goal."

The United Church first acknowledged the sin of racism in 1960 in response to the destruction of the Africville neighbourhood in Halifax, N.S. Yet, I remember being at General Council in the summer of 2018, and hearing painful, personal stories of racism that people have endured in our United Church. Those stories are hard to hear, but we have to receive them and pay attention, even if we feel uncomfortable.

Our scripture today was a story of call and discipleship. We need to ask ourselves, what does God want for all creation, if not loving-kindness, justice, and humility? Martin Luther King Jr said, "No one is free until we all are free."

We who are white need to learn from the written word, from online videos and courses, and especially from the United Church's Black, Indigenous, and Asian leaders. (Did you know there is a tour of Ross Bay Cemetery that you can take that highlights the lives of black settlers in Victoria?) We need to learn so that we can stand against oppression and speak out against casual racism. We need to learn so much that when a person of colour tells me they have been hurt by my words or actions, I will listen and apologize for the impact my words caused. I need to learn (and this is a hard one for me) not to be defensive. I need to learn to not try to explain my intentions, to realize that intentions don't matter, what matters is the impact my words and actions have had. I need to accept that I will get things wrong, and commit to doing better tomorrow. I need to trust that God is in the learning.

Did you hear the questions Rev. Bailey asked:

“Do you see us?”

“Do you feel us?”

“Do you understand the suffering we endure that oftentimes feels like it’s never ending?”

“Are you able to imagine my pain, will you stand with me?”

“Are you willing to be partners in a Beloved Community?”

Sources:

www.united-church.ca

<https://www.saltproject.org>

www.workingpreacher.org

<https://www.theworkofthepeople.com>

The Gathering Lent/Easter 2022

Let down your nets

*“Put out into the deep water
and let down your nets for a catch.”*

—Luke 5.4

What might it mean for you
to let down your net in these deep waters?

To listen deeply to someone,
for what they are saying or not saying,
beneath the surface...

To seek even in your most disappointing failure
the blessing that lurks beneath...

To seek, in someone hard to love,
the divine child, wounded, hidden...

To let the net of your heart
down into the vast depths of humanity
and take it all in, with tender compassion....

To love this world
and let your heart down into its darkness,
trusting the grace of the Beloved schools there...

Steve Garnaas-Holmes

www.unfoldinglight.net