



Call and Response

Pulling Down the Monuments in the CoB

by Anna Lisa Gross

One of the traditional tasks of an interim pastor is helping the church come to terms with its history. Picture a fellowship hall lined with newsprint, with newspaper pages and photographs from pastor installations and peace pole dedications. The congregation gathers with the timeline to reflect on where they've been – and of course, glean wisdom for where they might be headed.

What I've learned from the handful of churches that I've served as interim pastor makes me leery of ever leading a timeline activity again. In every church I've known intimately, certain historical events are celebrated by some while painful for others. A former pastor, well-known in the denomination as a former

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Sing a new Song: History and Homecoming



by Kathryn LaPointe

"Just because we share a history doesn't mean we share an interpretation of history."

So much wisdom in so few words.

I don't recognize even one of David Haas' songs, and have no church camp, childhood congregation, hymn sing attachment to them. I won't notice if a single verse is missing, yet I still hear the loss in everyone else's voices. Connections to the divine and the community were forged, sacred spaces created. That matters, deeply.

But I also feel the immense pain of the vast numbers of women howling and hinting #metoo. Their, our, suffering has to be accounted for. I am so grateful

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Moratorium

by Anna Lisa Gross

I learned from *Into Account* that composer David Haas has been sexually abusing girls and women for at least 30 years. After reading some of the survivors' stories, I turned to my hymnals and considered which songs we would now worship without. Beautiful songs. Yet the chance that someone in the sanctuary has been abused by Haas, who travels the world for music conferences where he targets girls and women, is too great.

I posted the news on Facebook asking church kindred if they would stop using Haas' music in worship. Many joined the conversation. I'm quite sure that "never use his music in corporate worship again" is not only inadequate,



it may someday be deemed the "wrong" response. It certainly doesn't RIGHT any of the wrong! We have "texts of terror" throughout our scripture and just like I would take care to tend to the emotional impact those passages have on our worshiping body, we can tend to the emotional impact of songs on our worshiping bodies. Without taking a survey first to see if anyone would be harmed by using a David Haas song, I will (perhaps err!) lean on the side of NOT using until we find another way forward.

Maybe a 20-year moratorium on Haas' songs is enough breathing room for survivors and gives the church time to consider why we prefer false peace to restoration and redemption, choosing popular leaders/singers/writers over the beloved ones they have harmed.

moderator, for example, is a point of pride for some in the congregation. Yet he sexually harassed some women in his congregation and hearing his name lauded evokes the pain and humiliation of not being believed. (I've been part of more than one congregation with this history – I bet you have, too!)

Just because we share a history doesn't mean we share an interpretation of history. Even my sister and I remember specific events from our childhood differently, and that doesn't mean either of us is wrong. I don't mean to imply that remembering the past differently is a problem – it's inevitable and could be a creative difference, rather than a threatening one.

Yet when harm has been done and this harm has not been reckoned with, it's naive to simply dive into a historical exercise. How would you facilitate a congregation's process of *coming to terms with its history* without reinforcing the false-positive stories, and also without further alienating those whose experiences have been marginalized or denied? Have you seen this done effectively?

When I joined Womæn's Caucus last year I wondered if we might advance a #metoo movement within the denomination. *Our Stories Untold* provides this

hospitality for Mennonites (and others) along with *Into Account* (find both online). As I got to know Womæn's Caucus I decided we are too informal, too much a rotating group of volunteers, to play such a role. How would we respect privacy over the years, as new Caucus members are added to the Dropbox login and no one even remembers what we have in there, or in literal boxes in people's basements? And for such a relational entity, what does #metoo even look like? Twitter is both public and anonymous in ways that church will *never* be and shouldn't be.

Basically – it all felt too hard.

And pulling down monuments is exhausting. It often feels impossible. It usually requires a group of people taking turns with the ropes.

Mennonites are confronting abuse, supporting survivors and resourcing communities publicly and formally. Why is the CoB so far behind? It helps that Mennonites *pulled down a monument* as one of their best-known theologians, John Howard Yoder, was publicly accused of sexually abusing over 100 women. Women had been speaking up for decades but institutions suppressed the stories until a local newspaper printed a story.

As the Church of the Brethren shrinks and fractures, many faithful

cling harder than ever to our glory days. Retell our best stories. Look for what *used to work* and hope it will work again. International missions and partnerships are our favorite good-news-story to tell about ourselves. But stories of sexual abuse at Hillcrest School in Nigeria? Mere whispers around the edges.

Unless a grain of wheat dies, it will bear no fruit, teaches our Lord. Reckoning with history may bring us to life again.

I watch denomination and district leaders strain under a burden of "saving the church" or "keeping the church from splitting" and watching their colleagues' positions go half-time or simply go away. Instead of running around grabbing boards and rope to prop those monuments up for another few years . . . what if God is calling leaders to facilitate a reckoning? What if we called them to spend the next, say, five years leading (by example and through wise processes) deep confession and truth-telling? What would the Church become through falling onto our knees, pouring out our secrets and remembering we are not in control?

Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, You comfort me.

A valley of dry bones. The prophets ask, "Can these bones live again?"



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for the strong admonitions to do so. We should live in horror of reviving memories of humiliation and abuse, for anyone, ever. No religion by force.

Anna Lisa's words are perfect as they stand, but I wonder *what is the new song we are to sing, here?*

I fell in love with this denomination because of the active witness for peace and justice, the commitment to non-violence, the incredible congregation in San Diego, and the fierce, FIERCE women clergy. And of course, the heritage: creating shelters for Japanese-Americans forcibly resettled after WWII, involvement with the civil rights movement, resistance to the Vietnam war. Important work for systemic change.

But what is surfacing seems to be deeply personal, "family" harm: excluding people from leadership for gender and sexual expression, and whitewashing of abuse related to the same.

At the women's clergy retreat, Mandy Smith, the speaker, was listing theological resources and included

something by John Howard Yoder. Ever been in a stadium where people do the wave? So many women scooted back in their chairs that I thought I was at a baseball game. The



reaction was so palpable that I swiftly googled his name. Ohhhhhhhhhh . . .

Some years ago, I was wrestling with a decision that would affect a lot of people. I had a great therapist at the time: what should I do? There would be hurt in all directions. How do I choose? Light and air, she said. Light and air.

Anna Lisa's words DEMAND that light and air be applied to those wounds.

I am grateful, having been here for approximately a nanosecond, to have been invited onto the Womaen's Caucus Steering Committee: an honor and a role I do not take lightly. But it's like I married in, and don't know the family stories. An odd feeling of choosing to stay, of being welcomed, but still feeling a deep sense of un-belonging. I will never be able to count Brethren generations, or have a recognizable last name.

While I can't time travel and be born anabaptist, it is also a mercy that I don't share the family history. The reckoning hurts less. I don't know the songs well enough to miss them.

Do you sing "Great Is Thy Faithfulness?"

Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow.

As a refugee from Catholicism and evangelicalism, I am here to say, sisters, that you DO have the good news, the brightest hope I've found for living a Jesus kind of way. A religion of women and slaves.

Fuerte. I hope I can learn to be a friend to you in these times.

Letter to CoB Leaders

By Carol Young Lindquist

On July 13, the Womaen's Caucus sent a letter to the Church of the Brethren Leadership Team and several additional denominational leaders calling upon them to watch the full video of "Speaking Truth to Power" that was recorded on July 3. The powerful words and authentic vulnerability of panel members Debbie Eisenbise, Gimbiya Kettering, and Madalyn Metzger, serve as inspiration for the denomination to reflect on structural and cultural patterns that limit participation of so many persons wanting to be a part of our faith community.



personal influence on the lives and faith of the persons they lead. In addition, the Caucus identified three ways that the work of the panel is influencing the work of the denomination.

If you have not yet watched the video, you are encouraged to do so. The video and a copy of the letter can be found on the Caucus website at <http://www.womaenscaucus.org> and on Facebook.

The letter requested that denominational leaders ask themselves the same questions posed to the panel, sharing their personal responses with one another as a way of auditing their

Defund Dysfunction

by Debbie Eisenbise

It was back in the 1990s that I was first asked to speak at a Womæn's Caucus luncheon; the topic "For the Glory of God and our Neighbors' Good." I was in my 30s. Now, moving on toward 60, I look back at how Caucus has pressed for representation and worked to amplify women's voices, women's concerns and the inclusion of all members of the Body of Christ. There are successes to be sure, but holding the denomination to accountability has been and remains exhausting. Primarily this is true because that is *our* desire, and of little or no interest to the powers that be.

There have been times when our denominational leadership has been much more culturally diverse and women have held more staff positions. I think back to when I entered the church in the 1980s when World Ministries was led by Ruby Rhoades, Yvonne Dilling, Joyce Stoltzfus, Bev Weaver, Barb Ober, Mariana Barriga, and visionary and forward-thinking men including Lamar Gible, Chuck Boyer, Shantilal Bhagat, and Roger Schrock. One time we had a woman General Secretary. We have yet to have a person of color hired into that position.

During the 1980s the General Board created a statement and passed a resolution on inclusive language. (I believe this was in part due to a push from Mary Cline Detrick who was on staff at that time.) It was to hold leadership accountable to using inclusive language for people and God



in all of our publications, promotional materials, and programs including Annual Conference. This does not happen.

Taking that as a case in point, it is time to look past trying to hold denominational leadership accountable to embodying the diversity of the church. The absence of women, and those of the all races, cultures, orientations, and abilities, is not felt by the cisgender, heterosexual, white men who comfortably hold power in our denomination. Our denominational structure keeps white men in power and consistently disenfranchises others because we require people to volunteer time and their own resources to lead. We require



Image by Mark Dukes, Our Lady of Ferguson, 2015, acrylic, Trinity Church, Manhattan

people to pay to play, and those who are economically and socially marginalized rarely have the wherewithal to do so. We do not see or confess the inherent sexism, racism, classism of our structure. True inclusion and power sharing will not occur unless there is systemic reform.

Most recently, our denominational leadership had an



opportunity to address systemic racism in our church and call us to confess our implicit bias. In response to the public outcry after the unjust and horrific death of George Floyd, we could have affirmed that for us as a church, the People of God, the Body of Christ, Black lives matter. That did not happen. Around the world we see the Spirit of God is crying out for justice and an end to violence fomented by white supremacy. To not speak out at this juncture is not just a mistake; it is a sin. How can we give any credence to those who exhibit and encourage complicity with white supremacy? We must be the church ourselves.

It is time to defund our dysfunctional denominational structure. We, as individuals and congregations, can use our capital to create something new: creative forward-thinking ministries / networks based on sharing power, crowd-sourcing ideas, bringing everyone to the table, making the tent bigger. We can call out and support leadership from those who have been economically and socially marginalized. We can amplify the voices of those calling for change and justice. We can simply stop looking to fragile white men for leadership. We can share our wisdom, the prophetic and pastoral words we need to be encouraged, inspired, and empowered. We can turn toward each other and reimagine the church, the Church of the Sintern. Our time has come.

Womæn's Caucus Video Benediction Statements

- ◆ Let us hold one another in our strength and our vulnerability.
- ◆ May we have ears to hear voices like these three powerful women speaking.
- ◆ Go forth with courage, with strength, pursuing justice with peace!
- ◆ We are challenged to be committed to one another, to caring for people, to righting injustice, and to helping each other move forward. May it be so!
- ◆ Blessings to you as you go forth with emboldened hearts and spirits burning with the spirit of courage, strength, vulnerability and joy!
- ◆ Let our vulnerability connect us more deeply to the true source of power and remind us that God's power is exemplified in vulnerability and courageous love.
- ◆ May we clasp hands so that no one of us feels the burden of this work alone!
By God's Spirit, we do this together.
- ◆ Namaste!
- ◆ May we encourage our pastors to speak boldly, giving them our support and love.
- ◆ Holy Spirit, come . . . Enflame us with your love . . . 'til we strive your work to do.
- ◆ May the Light of the Spirit of God shine boldly in all who speak Truth of equality and unconditional Love. May we serve one another in trust and acceptance.

Introducing Carol Lindquist

We welcome Carol Lindquist as our newest steering committee member. Carol is a graduate of Manchester College and earned additional degrees in educational leadership and organizational change.

Carol is retired after more than four decades as a public school and university administrator, having worked as a school principal, assistant superintendent, university assistant dean, and Director of Assessment. Those years taught her much about how the values of organizational power systems drive their impact on individuals and expansive communities. She continues to work on behalf of organizational self-reflection through her involvement with community organizations and higher education. A member of the Beacon Heights CoB in Fort Wayne, Indiana, Carol also advocates boldly for the musical arts as they connect, heal, and serve to level socio-economic inequities.

Carol has deep gratitude for three interesting, caring daughters and their families, including four grandchildren.

Carol brings much enthusiasm, experience and wisdom to our work! Welcome, Carol!



Cindy Weber, one of last year's recipients of our Mother of Caucus award, created these mugs to celebrate Womæn's Caucus and as a reminder that our auction is a great place to purchase unique items and contribute to Womæn's Caucus at the same time. Your donations to WC are always appreciated!



Photo by Elizabeth Bay

God's Word speaks Truth to Power

By Anna Lisa Gross & Bobbi Dykema

#readthisday Brethren Press offers discounts and free shipping on many of these resources. We find these websites, podcasts and books open us to ways scripture speaks truth to power:

enfleshed
bringing what matters back to the gospel
for justice, liberation, and delight



Enfleshed offers words for worship and preaching prompts, along with bi-monthly

reflections. "Our work engages Christian-adjacent communities with particular attention to the wisdom, experiences, and desires of those traditionally on the fringes. We resonate with the poets, the healers, the truth-tellers, the tender and fierce, the messy and untidy, the seekers, the queer and the strange ones."



Drew Hart and Jarrod McKenna interview artists, monks, pastors and prophets about how scripture turns the world upside down.

Showing Up for Racial Justice has a podcast geared toward white Christians (which follows the Revised Common Lectionary): The Word is Resistance: a Podcast for the Revolution. "The Bible is not the victory handbook of the empire, but the outcry and deeply human wrestlings of the oppressed." — Rev. Anne Dunlap



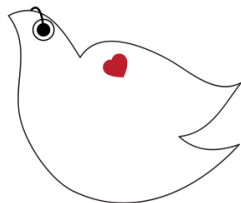
FAITH IN ACTION



Faith in Actions' Prophetic Resistance Podcast is hosted by the Rev. Michael-Ray Mathews and serves as a

source of inspiration and agitation for faith-based organizers. The podcast features one-on-one conversations with Faith in Action's beloved community of freedom fighters, justice seekers and faith leaders.

And there's a lively CoB-youth-driven podcast, Dunker Punks, highlighting individuals and energies throughout the denomination.



Dunker Punks Podcast

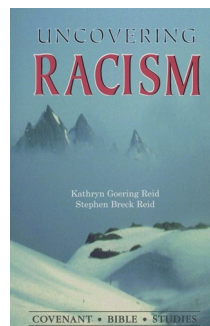
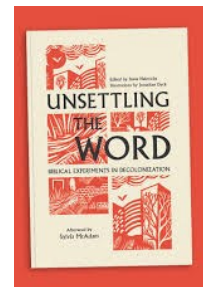


Drew Hart's *Trouble I've Seen: Changing the Way the Church Views Racism* and (brand-new) *Who Will Be a Witness: Igniting Activism for God's Justice, Love, and Deliverance*.

From the publisher (Herald Press): "Drew G. I. Hart provides incisive insights into Scripture and history, along with illuminating personal stories, to help us identify how the witness of the church has become mangled by Christendom, white supremacy, and religious nationalism. Hart provides a wide range of options for congregations seeking to give witness to Jesus' ethic of love for and solidarity with the vulnerable."

Unsettling the Word: Biblical Experiments in Decolonization edited by Steve Heinrichs

From the publisher (Orbis Books): "For generations, the Bible has been employed by settler colonial societies as a weapon to dispossess Indigenous and racialized peoples of their lands, cultures, and spiritualities. Is it possible for the exploited and their allies to reclaim the Bible from the dominant powers? Over 60 Indigenous and Settler authors come together to wrestle with the Scriptures, rereading and re-imagining the ancient text for the sake of reparative futures."



Uncovering Racism, a Covenant Bible Study by Kathryn Goering Reid and Stephen Breck Reid, is available through publisher Brethren Press, which says:

"Subtle forms of racism, prejudice, and discrimination continue to cause difficulty and heartache to billions of people. This study points out inherently racist systems, structures, and attitudes both within the church and the larger society and encourages Christians to take action and avoid complacency."

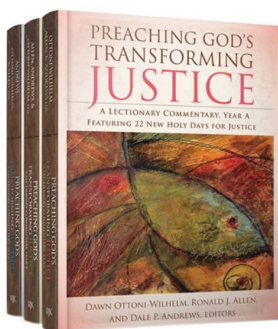
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“White Privilege: let’s talk” is a curriculum for adult study groups from the United Church of Christ, which comes recommended by

Highland Avenue CoB and First CoB Springfield (Illinois). A multimedia, flexible offering to help congregations understand what is meant by “white privilege” and how to live out Christ’s call to radical justice in light of that understanding.

A comprehensive selection of resources for anti-racism work in congregations. The Bible studies come recommended from use at Olympic View CoB. Looking at the way scripture tells stories of oppression, marginalization, liberation, and justice that are not always part of our familiar interpretations.

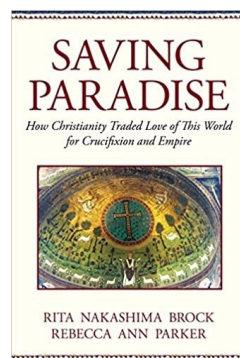
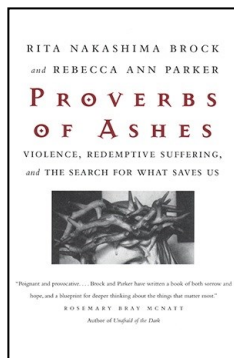


With Rev. Dr. Dawn Ottoni-Wilhelm, Brightbill Professor of Preaching and Worship at Bethany Seminary, as one of the editors, *Preaching God’s Transforming Justice*, three-volume series of lectionary commentary from the perspective of justice, is a

powerful tool for pastors and worship leaders in engaging with scripture to promote understanding of and furtherance of biblical justice, equity, and genuine peace. Westminster John Knox Press.

Proverbs of Ashes: Violence, Redemptive Suffering, and the Search for What Saves Us, and Saving Paradise:

How Christianity Traded Love of the World for Crucifixion and Empire, both by Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Parker, are excellent stimulation for

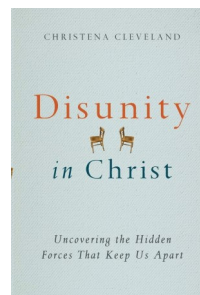
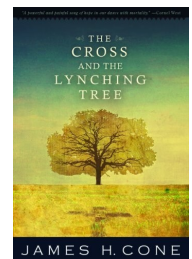


rethinking scripture and Christian theology. *Proverbs of Ashes* explores how contemporary interpretations of scripture are entwined with legitimization of all forms of abuse, and *Saving Paradise* calls us to return to our roots in the early Christian movement, with its emphasis on love that works toward the transformation of this world rather than waits complacently for the next. Beacon Press.



Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and the Justice of God by Kelly Brown Douglas brings Mary weeping for her son at the foot of the cross and the tomb into the lives of present-day Black mothers and families mourning the unjust killings of their daughters and sons. A powerful, riveting read. Orbis Books.

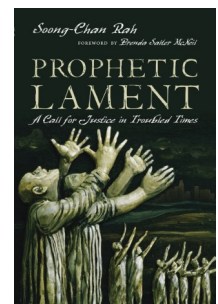
Reading James H. Cone’s *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* opens our eyes to the dual startling truths that the crucifixion of Christ was a state-sponsored lynching, and the lynching of Black men and women is a continuation of crucifixion of the innocent. Prepare to be convicted, uncomfortable, and led by this powerful work of theology. Orbis Books.



Why would the church that Christ prayed in the garden of Gethsemane “may all be one” be not only segregated, but racist? In *Disunity in Christ: Uncovering the Hidden Forces that Keep Us Apart*, 2018 National Youth Conference preacher Christena Cleveland seeks answers to this question as well as

signposting a way forward for individual churches and the whole people of God. InterVarsity Press.

One of the tasks of speaking truth to power and working toward justice is lament: acknowledging the damage of injustice and mourning the losses it engenders. In *Prophetic Lament: A Call for Justice in Troubled Times*, Soong-Chan Rah looks at the oft-neglected biblical tradition of lament and the work that it models for the church in the 21st century. InterVarsity Press.





Womaen's Caucus Needs Your Financial Support to Continue

With your continued support Womaen's Caucus can do so much to help further our mission of decreasing prejudice within the Church, empowering women and advocating for people on the margins. This year we have put focused energy into growing our steering committee and commitments. We continue to find tangible ways to live out our mission and build community.

Options: complete the form below, visit our website at www.womaenscaucus.org and use the donate button, and/or select Womaen's Caucus to receive 0.5% of your purchases at smile.amazon.com.

Make checks payable to: Womaen's Caucus

Cut & mail to: Womaen's Caucus, 818 SW 3rd Ave., #E1299, Portland, OR 97204

Name _____	Contribution	Membership
Address _____	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100	<input type="checkbox"/> I am already a member
_____	<input type="checkbox"/> \$75	<input type="checkbox"/> Membership — \$25/yr
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District/Home Church (if applicable) _____		<input type="checkbox"/> Send by mail
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