

Why not put off today what we can do tomorrow? This has long been part of the human condition, as even Paul in the first century is relaying. The time is NOW to start living into what God would have us be, “for salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers” (13:11) he tells the Roman followers of Christ (and us). And what does Paul say is required to bring us closer to God’s dream for us? First Paul exhorts, “Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires” (13:13-14). But what does this mean for our everyday interactions with one another? “Let us therefore no longer pass judgment on one another, but resolve instead never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of another” (14:13). There are two parts to this: one about judgment and the second about intentionally putting up roadblocks. For the Colorado Haiti Project, over our nearly 30 years working with the area of Petit Trou de Nippes, Haiti, we have learned that we don’t have all the answers. When we first arrived in Haiti, we wanted to share God’s gifts that we have been fortunate enough to be born into, like an education, health care, and all the privileges we take for granted living in the United States. At first, we felt that we knew what was best – that they needed education and health care, and they did. But we thought we knew what kind of education would help them the most. Fortunately, the people of this area were patient with us, and as the relationship grew, we started listening to one another. We found that just because they have different ways of addressing challenges in their own society doesn’t mean they are wrong and we are right. In fact, this interaction and this relationship have given us insight into how to address our own challenges in ways we had not thought of before. We listened to these people who primarily support themselves through the bounty of their crops and finally created an agriculture curriculum as part of St. Paul’s School. Who are you to pass judgment on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand. – Romans 14:4 When meeting the people of Haiti, rather than reacting immediately to preconceptions and judgment, we need to have enough respect to honor each person and each culture and to understand at a deep level that we can learn from one other. We are all so blessed and grateful for the lessons we have learned from our brothers and sisters in Haiti. I have often heard Americans come home from a visit to this part of Haiti saying, “These people are so poor but are also so happy.” Truly, they may not always be happy, no one is. But they can be happy in their sense of community and family, which is so apparent when we are fortunate enough to visit. I think the Lord has made them stand together. They have grown where they were planted. The goal of the Colorado Haiti Project is to provide water and fertilizer so that they and we can grow together into what God would have us be, so that we can all stand together. It is easy for us to fall into the complacency and the false comfort of tribalism, that is, believing our own group has all the answers for everyone else. However, we at the Colorado Haiti Project have found that, when we open ourselves to the Haitian culture and ways of doing things and we are able to do so without judgment, we are taking part in God’s call to us to truly love one another. “May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (15:5-6). 40 41

WEEK 7: FEBRUARY 18-24, 2019 Teresa Henry and Anne Skamarock, Colorado Haiti Project READ: ROMANS 13:11-15:6 REFLECT: Why not put off today what we can do tomorrow? This has long been part of the human condition, as even Paul in the first century is relaying. The time is NOW to start living into what God would have us be, “for salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers” (13:11) he tells the Roman followers of Christ (and us). And what does Paul say is required to bring us

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