

Jeff's Jottings
June 19, 2020

Where Do We Start?

"Ours is not the task of fixing the entire world all at once, but of stretching out to mend the part of the world that is within our reach. Any small, calm thing that one soul can do to help another soul, to assist some portion of this poor suffering world, will help immensely. It is not given to us to know which acts or by whom, will cause the critical mass to tip toward an enduring good."

"What is needed for dramatic change is an accumulation of acts, adding, adding to, adding more, continuing. We know that it does not take everyone on Earth to bring justice and peace, but only a small, determined group who will not give up during the first, second, or hundredth gale."

Clarissa Pinkola Estes

I hear it daily from an array of connections, from New England to California; from the front page of the Star-Tribune to my Facebook newsfeed; from quiet conversation to amplified protest. From you. And I see it every time I look in the mirror. A kind of growing, heavy, undefined, sense of urgency. Current coronavirus isolation and mixed messages. Economic uncertainty (or outright panic). The murder of George Floyd shining again the harsh light of America's original sin of racism and our inability—or lack of desire—to change it. The enormity of its needed response. Whatever part you touch, it is for many becoming an overwhelming of brokenness and sorrow, desire and paralysis—of desperately wanting to do something, while at the same time seeing something seems so big and out of reach.

Will anything ever change? Where do we start?

The liturgical calendar calls this time in the church's year "ordinary time." It is anything but. The season after Pentecost has again invites us to breathe deeply and consciously, expecting to be filled with God's Spirit, God's holy breath. Expecting to be changed by it. And in doing so, expecting to find ways, like those very first disciples, to speak things we did not think we had the courage to say. To be a voice for and to and with all who, in these difficult times, are afraid or grieving or hopeless or isolated. To bring change to the next generation, in ways we might scarcely believe.

Where do we start? Here's one piece of good advice I've gotten, an invitation for the days and years ahead: that we who are white and wondering "How do we stop this racism?," consider shifting our question to "What must I do to engage in the anti-racism work needed to dismantle the white supremacy that is causing this systemic racial violence, trauma and oppression?" To find specific places and pieces of this issue within own own reach, both internally (our own education) and externally (our own practice); and in embracing them, to learn and grow.

Where do we start? Here's another place, a two minute and 9 seconds reminder from our leadership in Louisville of who we are and what we stand for: <https://vimeo.com/429992698>.

Then pair that with the three words that have always launched the work of the church, from the very first until now: "Come, Holy Spirit." Fill us with your love, that we may live and act and speak the life you would have for us. A new "accumulation of acts."