

I recently underwent the second cataract surgery of my life. The doctor spared my bruised ego of having an “older persons” surgery by assuring me that there was, in fact, a “younger persons” version. All the good that it did. Whenever someone found out that I had cataract surgery, the inevitable response was, “Wow, I didn’t realize that you were *that* old!” Thank you very little!

Ego aside, the surgery continues to amaze me. You walk in with a haze in one eye, undergo a light anesthesia and surgery for about 20 minutes, and head home with a patch on the healing eye. The next day the patch is removed. The doctor admires his handiwork. And you head home. However, when I walked out of the doctor’s office and into a recent sunny and colorful fall day, I could not believe how vibrant, rich, and deep the colors were. Was I missing this all the while? I was stunned at what existed in front of me, but only now was I able to see it.

On many levels, I think this is a wonderful metaphor for life. On the one hand, the whole spiritual life is predicated on the idea, or more so the reality, of something larger, deeper, more mysterious existing on a plane that we rarely get to experience. In this case, we know that we have an impediment--a cataract, if you will--to seeing that reality. However, we sense that it is there, and, sometimes, we are blessed to see or experience it. We have the feeling of our life caught up with and connected to the whole of reality. We sense an acceptance that defies our worthiness or goodness. We hear a promise of unconditional love that reframes the whole of the world and our lives. Again, these moments are flashes, epiphanies, thin places where we see, for however briefly, what we were not able to notice moments before and may not recognize moments later.

On a more concrete level, this metaphor possesses a double-edged quality to it. On the one hand, eyes being opened--like cataract surgery--opens us up to the great beauty that we could not see before. As we grow, we go through various stages of figuring out what it is that we want to be when we grow up (even when we are long past growing up!). Of course, we sometimes stumble into something that clicks everything into place. We may wonder how it is that we survived so long without knowing that *this* was the very thing that we love to do.

Or we learn skills and activities that call us out of ourselves and to see ourselves in a different way. “Success” may not be instantaneous. However, there are moments where we breakthrough to a different experience, and it opens up to us a deeper and richer way of being than we could have imagined. And finally of course, the connection between another is, perhaps, the greatest example of wonder and beauty opening up to us. And rarely does this connection conform to some specific aesthetic. Rather, this type of awareness is the stumbling into the gift of another who surprises, engages, humors, comforts, and accepts us. Just as we are. It didn’t have to be this way, but it is. Life is never the same, and we see in a wholly different way.

However, the other edge of the sword is not so much the beauty that we see when our eyes are truly opened. Rather, it is the heinousness and hideousness that we would prefer to cover up that is revealed to us. The killing of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor to name just a recent few are examples of this. For many of us, these killings forced our eyes to be open to a reality that we can neither deny and one that forces us to reckon with our culpability in creating a world where these types of killings occur and systemic racism continues. Was I missing this all the while? While we were not directly involved, we swim in the culture where such things will continue to happen *unless we begin to actively work against the larger structures that perpetuate this injustice.*

In late spring, we, with over a 100 other organizations in Stamford, signed a pact that Stamford Stands Against Racism. We committed ourselves to actively work to become aware of systemic racism, white supremacy, and anti-black bias within ourselves and our institutions and community. We committed to taking steps to root these realities from our institution and others in Stamford. We committed to concrete steps that move us from simply saying that we are not racist, to actively working in ways that are anti-racist. In essence, we committed ourselves to keeping our eyes open and seeing the world in its stark beauty and its disturbing oppression.

We will not solve everything overnight. There is much to work on. Certain educational opportunities have been created, more will be coming, and I invite you to participate as you are able. (The vestry seeks to be involved in this discussion and will use the work of Robin DiAngelo and the concept of *White Fragility* to frame a special meeting on November 30.) Other initiatives will emerge, and, again, I invite you to be involved where possible. Particularly, if you are unsure or a bit uncomfortable, this may be an opportunity for you to “try on” something that may impact the way that you see and, thus, how you are in the world. Regardless, the time is right, and we must not wait any longer.