

After years of practicing Centering Prayer and consenting to God's presence and action within me, my heart began to soften, and I became more open to being vulnerable.

I was nudged by the Spirit to attend an anti-racism workshop in 2019 at St. Philips in Beulah, Michigan. We were learning about the history of the GI Bill and how it was designed to help the returning GI's purchase a home and develop financial wealth. I was filled with pride as I heard how our country established a program honoring those who had risked their lives so we could be free. The feeling of pride quickly turned into shock and guilt as I was informed one million black GIs were not able to obtain the loans because of the color of their skin. The banks and real estate brokers believed if a person of color purchased a house the value of the other homes in the community would decrease and hurt their investment. WOW! I then recalled a real estate agent in 1977 warning me "if a black person moves into your neighborhood you better sell quickly, or you will lose your investment." At the time I was given this advice, I felt grateful for the tip and believed he was just trying to help a young man with a family be a good provider. This memory produced feelings of being duped and manipulated. I was ashamed and angry. Why didn't I see the inherent unfairness and racism in that comment? I had been part of the systemic racism in our country without recognizing it. I also realized how privileged I was being a white, heterosexual male. My eyes were opened, and my heart knew this was wrong. We are all children of God created in God's image and likeness. All of us no exception. Over the next few weeks, as I processed this information and my emotions, I knew I had to become part of the healing. I believe all the changes in laws and policy, although needed as an important part of healing, will not be sufficient to change peoples implicit bias toward racism, sexism, genderism, classism or any other way we attempt to separate ourselves due to greed, power, or fear. Each person's heart needs to change and accept the facts as reality and not some manufactured manipulated version of what happened. During the pandemic, I was honored to be part of a Sacred Ground group on Zoom. This experience and the relationships developed helped me gain further knowledge about racism and provided me support in integrating my emotions. I am currently looking forward to becoming more involved with the Micah Ministry and the Dismantling Racism Ministry at St. Mark's. I believe we are all called to honor the covenant we made with God at our Baptism to "strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being" and to "seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself." Book of Common Prayer p.305