



Words Matter

Rev. Sue Artt

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In the fall of 2017, I visited Bandelier National Monument in New Mexico. Like Mesa Verde to the north, Bandelier preserves the compelling culture and landscapes of a group of cliff-dwelling people; I was surprised when no informational sign named these people what I had long known them to be – the Anasazi. Upon research, I learned that the current day Pueblos, descendants of these cliff-dwellers, asked that the term no longer be used to describe them or their ancestors; you see, “Anasazi” was how another native tribe referred to these cliff-dwellers, and the term meant “ancient enemies”.

As people of “the Word,” we know that words matter, and continuing to use a word that means “enemy” runs fully counter to Jesus’ commission that we should all be one.

What is Learned Can Be Unlearned

The Hatfields and McCoys – two white families of European descent – settled on opposite sides of the Kentucky/West Virginia border over which they feuded for 28 years. That’s a long time to carry a grudge, and that infamous family feud could only have been continued through the teaching of the next generation that the other was to be feared and not trusted.

The fear and disdain of another must be taught – it is not inborn – and just as it can be learned, it can be unlearned.

Race is an Illusionary Dividing Line

In America we have a notion of “race” as a dividing line between peoples. That dividing line is an illusion. Rather, “race” is a learned concept, taught by one generation to another out of fear in some cases, and to gain advantage in others. Since the colonization of North American lands from the original native inhabitants, and the first abduction of Africans brought to America to build white wealth on the backs of black slave labor, this caustic notion of race has kept us — and continues to keep us — from realizing a true democracy whose ambition was “liberty and justice for all.”

What has been learned can be unlearned, and as Christians, it is our call to provide for God’s peace and justice for all.

RMC is Launching an Anti-Racism Initiative

With this call to action clear, this past fall, in the shadow of the continued strife witnessed in the murders of so many persons of color, the RMC Board of Directors authorized the formation of an Anti-Racism Ministry for the Rocky Mountain Conference. Alongside them, I believe this to be the most important work we can do in our lifetimes for the kingdom of God. Until we take seriously the reality of systemic racism both inside and beyond the walls of the Church, the oneness to which Christ calls us will never be achieved. Therefore, the Rocky Mountain Conference will work intentionally to shift our culture from long-instilled and to some, invisible racism, toward a full embrace of Anti-Racism. This shift will ask deep reflection and intentional action on all of our parts and will also entail an examination and potential retooling of every process and practice of our shared ministries.

Words Matter, continued

To move this work forward, the Board has authorized \$450,000 over the first three years, from the Conference's unrestricted net assets, as a demonstration of our commitment to move toward a culture of equity for all. A significant part of that set-aside is the calling of an additional Associate Conference Minister (ACM) to provide expanded resources to our Conference team. Alongside current ACM Rev. Erin Gilmore and myself, this additional ACM will provide direction and leadership to this Anti-Racism initiative. This new ACM will also provide support for search and call, churches in transition, leadership development, and other conference offerings to ensure the integration of the Anti-Racism culture we seek to build. The position posting will be finalized on the UCC Opportunities Listings by the end of the month, and we anticipate our new ACM will be onboard in the second quarter of 2021.

Anti-Racism Ministry Team

Because change only really occurs when people work together to make a difference, a new Anti-Racism Ministry Team will also be put in place to help mobilize this cultural work. Initial thoughts on team membership includes a lay person and a clergy person from each association, along with a couple of at-large members. While a call went out to the Conference in the fall of 2020 for nominees to this new team, it has now emerged that the new ACM who will provide direction for that team should help build that team, so also watch for an additional team recruitment announcement in second quarter. If you have already submitted your name or the name of another for that team, please know the RMC Nominating Committee still has notes of your interest and will include your thoughts as they seek to build the team with the new ACM.

For Now We See Dimly...

The task of unlearning racism and re-learning how to love and cherish one another without the illusion of race is work for each of us to do both individually and collectively. As I envision our collective investment of time, talents, and treasure in this vital work, I see multiple entry points for congregations and associations to choose as they start their work toward a culture of Anti-Racism. Please know that this work will be more fully shaped as the new ACM, the RMC staff, and the Anti-Racism Ministry Team work together to determine needs and offerings to build this new culture. And please know that the shift that will take time does not have a "one size fits all" solution. Our work will evolve over years, and yet, every step makes a difference.

And with a bit more clarity...

One thing I am clear on: we will stumble and not get it right some of the time. At the RMC Annual Meeting of 2014, the Rev. Steve Sterner admonished us to follow the path of the tech companies in Silicon Valley: "Experiment, be fearless, and if you fail, fail fast, forgive faster, and get back to experimenting to find what works."

I pray this becomes our motto: experiment, fail if necessary, forgive & learn, experiment again. Be gentle with yourself and gracious with one another.

A peek in the rearview...

It has been 60 years since Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King's work to create a world of equity for all, and although strides have surely been taken, the work is not yet accomplished. Along my way toward ordination, I wrote this thought about the work toward which I felt called: "The world changes gently, one heart at a time." While I now know the world doesn't always change gently, I am still convinced change happens one heart at a time.

The Invitation...

So I am inviting each member of the Conference to engage in this work of changing our hearts and changing our culture toward one of Anti-Racism. Jesus knew his commission to his followers wasn't an easy path – but it is a spiritual one – and one we are all called to follow. While I am sure that achieving a culture of equity for all will not be the end of the journey, once we get there, we'll see what God has in store for us next.

Praying your wholeness, your boldness, and our oneness in the Spirit of the Living Christ,

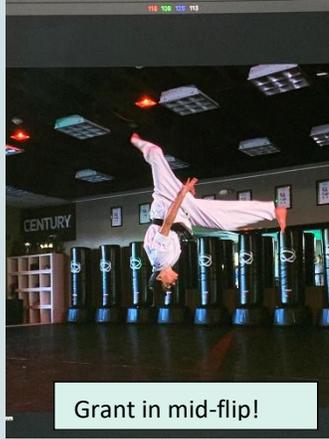
Sue



Mouse Morsels

Hello, everyone! We sure miss you, and we can't wait to see you all in person. We have collected a few tidbits of information for you. **Grant Kenney** is back at karate. He had a virtual tournament in which he had to perform over

video for judges. Also, he advanced to the black belt group and was part of a photo shoot for the Century Martial Arts gear catalog in January! **Claire Kenney** had her regional school mock trial competition in February, where she won the Best Attorney! Her team took second place overall, so they will advance to the state competition in March. It was really nice to catch up with



Becky Hill. She is doing well, but husband **Doug** is still recovering from his bicycle accident. However he is much improved. They plan a trip to Mississippi in May to attend their grandson's high school graduation.

Zoe and Tyce Brozovich have resumed soccer and baseball. Everyone in the family is very happy about that. **Charles Idler** has put together his own recording studio, and he even made his own banjo.



I hope we can hear him play in church one day! We are sad to report that **Beverly Fox** has moved to Carbondale. We will miss you Beverly, but we wish

you the best. We had a nice conversation with **Carol Blair**. She is staying fit and positive by running regularly and volunteering weekly at the Cat Care Society in Lakewood. Siblings **Antares and Leon Whitehead** are moving into an apartment together. **Krista Williams** let us know she will be traveling to Arizona to celebrate her Mom's 90th birthday on April 13. We received a nice update from the **Meyer** family. They are all doing well. **Kevin** is now part of a program called the Advanced Resource Medic. This is where a firefighter-paramedic is teamed with a physician assistant or nurse practitioner from Dispatch Health. They try to get the patient the appropriate care in order to avoid a trip to the hospital. **Lucy** and **Georgia** are back in school every day. **Levi** is attending school part-time on Zoom and part-time in person. **Lee's** photography business is growing. How wonderful! We received a lovely thank you card from the **Title I Holiday Stars Program**. It said "We want to thank you and those in your congregation who donated so generously to our programs. The gift cards were given to families who are struggling during this

unprecedented time. Your generosity ensured a holiday for teens that was very much needed." We also want to give a big thanks to **Curt Daly**. One of the sanctuary furnaces was malfunctioning, and Consolidated Water is now requiring us to install a backflow device on our boiler. We've had a new backflow device installed but more corrections are still required. Ugh. Curt is taking care of these issues, and this is at a time when his mom's health is rapidly declining. We had a lovely conversation with **Nancy Lawrence**. She has been facilitating some amazing Zoom classical concerts, and Warren Lawrence will be singing in an upcoming Zoom concert. Warren also teaches a Zoom course on how to Zoom.

We have had many **prayer concerns** and difficult situations recently. We are very sad to report that **Rod and Joanne Gustafson** will be moving to Cheyenne, Wyoming, and Rod may enter hospice care. They will be living with their daughter Donna. Joanne reports that they will still try to join us for worship via Zoom. Their new address will be 825 Doc Bar Drive, Cheyenne, WY 82007. Joanne's cell phone number is 303-870-8804. Her old phone number and address is still current too. Another pillar of our church, **Norma Daly**, is currently receiving rehab at the Garden Terrace Alzheimer's Center at Aurora. Sadly, Norma is not improving. **Spencer Rains** has been released from the West Pines Behavioral Health facility. He is showing some improvement but he needs our continued prayers. **Linda Warren** had a concussion several months ago, and but she reports that she is feeling better. **Veronika Brooks**, the 24-year-old granddaughter of Deb and Kendall Johnson, has been diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis. She lives in Florida and has just begun training to become a nurse. **Linda Parkinson**, wife of Robin Parkinson (Karen and Cynthia's brother), has been diagnosed with cancer and she is receiving treatment. **Sue Schafer** had knee replacement surgery and she is recovering slowly. **Dan Henry**, the nephew of Donilyn Thomson, has been hospitalized with leukemia since September. We have received the news that his marrow transplant has been delayed until March 17. Fortunately, Dan is stable right now. In the Good News Dept., we are happy to hear that **many of our members have received both vaccines**. We hope that before many more weeks we may be able to host limited attendance at church on Sunday morning. The re-gathering task force is meeting next week to discuss topic. That's all for now. Peace and blessing to you all.

Book Recommendations



Wanda Bonner recommends *Dewey the Library Cat: A True Story* by Vicki Myron and Bret Witter. This nonfiction book recounts the life of Dewey Readmore Books, the cat in residence at the public library in Spencer, Iowa.

Wanda has also just finished the three volume set of Carl Sandburg's *Abraham Lincoln*. She comments "Being from Illinois I loved the book!"

Some of **Carol Blair's** favorites:

Jonathan Livingston Seagull, *The Little Prince*, *the Art of Stillness*, and *Prescriptions for Happiness*. She also owns the entire Stephen White mystery series.

Crystal Wilcox loves, *Where the Forest Meets the Stars* - A graduate student doing summer research on birds nests comes home one evening to find a little girl in her yard. She says she's from the pinwheel galaxy and is here to earn a PhD on earth. To do that, she needs to witness 5 miracles.

Crystal says, "That's what the story is. It's about is love, love of family, friends, yourself, strangers. It's about Love. The best book I've read in a long time!!"

Donilyn Thomson says, "*The Honey Bus* is one of my favorite books about a memoir of loss, courage, and a girl saved by bees and her grandfather, the beekeeper. Another book I recently enjoyed was *When Harry meets Minnie* about the power of friendship among dogs and people. The author is Martha Teichner, correspondent for CBS's Sunday Morning since 1993."

Shirleen Joha says, "I'm currently reading 'The Sixth Extinction - An Unnatural History' by Elizabeth Kolbert. The book digs into several specific species that are currently endangered and asserts that we are in the midst of a sixth mass extinction of species on Earth (there have been five mass extinctions over the last half-billion years). It is written in a way that makes it accessible even to the average person.

From **Floy Jeffares**, "Highly recommended. David Treuer, *The Heartbeat of Wounded Knee*. A history of native America, written by a Gen Xer, whose father is Austrian and mother is Lakota. Super interesting perspective. Super deep historical analysis. I started reading it 2 years ago and am not yet half way through. But what I have read so far is revolutionizing my heretofore minimal knowledge about the confrontation between European settlers (and invaders, thieves, murderers, and supremacists) and Native peoples over the past 550 + years."

Floy also recommends: Laura Ruby, *Thirteen Doorways, Wolves Behind Them*. A young adult novel that sucks you in. Takes place in brutal times, but thankfully is not too graphic about such brutality. For me, this novel is the mental face of the 2020 pandemic-induced (personally, for me, much welcomed) social and inter-personal cut-off-ishness. A close friend of mine and I have been conducting a two-woman book-buddy-club for about 3 years now, and Frank McCourt, *Teacher Man*. A sequel to "Angela's Ashes" of the 1990s, which I read and still treasure. McCourt describes the utter brutality of Irish-American-Irish poverty of the first half of the 20th century in the most humorous and yet true to the subject ways. "Teacher Man" is funny to read, instructive on life in the mid-20th century in Euro-American ways, and hard to put down. Yet...moving into the second third of the 21st century, the reading becomes ever so slightly outdated.....still brilliant, funny, and profound...but 20th century nonetheless.

David Conner says, "I recommend *Albert Schweitzer's Mission: Healing and Peace*, by Norman Cousins [ISBN 978-0-393-02238-4]. This is Cousins' first-hand account of Albert Schweitzer's work as a medical missionary at the hospital he founded in Lambaréné, Gabon, in central Africa. Cousins, who edited the *Saturday Review of Literature* for 30 years and was a life-long advocate of world peace, writes with a very engaging style.



OUR CHURCH OFFERINGS

Jan 3	\$ 980.00
Jan 10	\$2367.00
Jan 17	\$2205.00
Jan 24	\$ 425.00
Jan 31	<u>\$1040.69</u>

January Total \$7,017.69

Feb 7	\$1501.00
Feb 14	\$2720.00
Feb 21	\$1718.00
Feb 28	<u>\$3353.00</u>

February Total \$9292

Shortfall for Jan and Feb \$3,690.31

The church needs about \$10,000 per month to cover operating expenses. In addition, the church insurance for our building has increased 29% for 2021. We now pay \$14,232 annually. As you are able, be generous in your giving to our church.



Calendar and Activities

March 7 – Third Sunday in Lent

March 14 – Fourth Sunday in Lent; Daylight Saving Time starts

March 21 – Fifth Sunday in Lent

March 28 – Palm Sunday

April 1 – Maundy Thursday Communion service *via Zoom*

April 2 – Good Friday; The sanctuary will be open for reflection and meditation from noon to 3:00 p.m.

April 4 – Easter Sunday

Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal Program

The Pastoral Relations Committee has been meeting regularly for several weeks to discuss plans and prepare an application for a sabbatical grant for Pastor Claudia. Sabbaticals once every five years are a standard benefit for pastors in the Metro Denver Association of the UCC. A sabbatical allows pastors to step away from the on-going obligations of parish life, providing an extended time for intentional reflection and renewal. This gives the pastor adequate time and spaciousness to deepen her or his relationship with God and become re-energized for ministry.

The Lilly grant for which we are applying is given to “those congregations and pastors who have a strong relationship with one another, a high degree of mutual trust and support, and are eager to see their relationship strengthened, renewed, and continued.” Thus the grant is not simply an “escape” or a “break” from ministry but rather a means of renewing the bond between the minister and the congregation. Eligible congregations are allowed to apply for up to \$50,000, with \$15,000 available for congregational expenses (such as compensation for a guest pastor). As the Lilly Foundation reviews the application, they look for evidence that the congregation affirms the pastor’s need for a sabbatical and commits to their own renewal while the pastor is away. The deadline for the application is April 21, 2021. Notification of approval or disapproval of the grant will be received during August 2021. The three-month sabbatical will begin in the **summer of 2022**.

The Pastoral Relations Committee needs to receive input and affirmation from our whole congregation. The Committee will offer two Zoom opportunities for all of us to gather and discuss what you see as the benefits of the sabbatical for the congregation and the minister. If you are a church member without computer access, we would like to hear from you by phone or by letter. We don’t want to exclude anyone. A Pastoral Relations committee member will contact you to answer any questions and receive your input. The theme of the sabbatical will be “Drinking from God’s Living Water.” We are grateful for your interest and support!

Women's Suffrage

Constance Wise

The fight for the right to vote forms an important segment in women's history in the United States and in my personal life. On March 30, 1776, Abigail Adams wrote to her husband John, who along with other white men, was meeting in Philadelphia at the Continental Congress to forge our nation. She wrote: I long to hear that you have declared an independency. And, by the way, in the new code of laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make, I desire you would remember the ladies and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the husbands. Remember, all men would be tyrants if they could. If particular care and attention is not paid to the ladies, we are determined to foment a rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have no voice or representation."

As we know, John ignored Abigail's request and in the new United States of American women had neither voice nor representation. Neither did the vast majority of people living here. The only people who had the voice of the vote in this new country were white male property owners, less than 25% of the population. This severe limit on suffrage came not from the U. S. Constitution, which at the time did not say who could vote, but from state laws.

In July 1848 a group of determined white women met in Seneca Falls, New York and demanded that women be granted the right to vote. One of the more vocal members of the movement, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, wrote "We are assembled to protest against a form of government, existing with the consent of the governed – to declare our right to be free as man is free, to be represented in the government which we are taxed to support, to have such disgraceful law as give man the power to chastise and imprison his wife, to take the wages which she earns, the property which she inherits, and, in case of separation, the children of her love."

Unfortunately, Stanton's words had no more impact than those of Abigail Adams. Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and others assembled there did not live to see their demands met.

After the Civil War, the 14th Amendment, ratified in 1868, gave former slaves the same rights as other citizens. For the first time Black men could vote. Black women, all women in the United States, would not gain the same legal right for another 52 years. In August 1920 the 19th Amendment was ratified. It states "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex." Finally, women could vote! This basic civil right, however, did not really extend to all Americans. Soon after the Civil War, in southern states laws were soon enacted to prevent Blacks from voting. Moreover, Native Americans were not granted full citizenship until 1962. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 guaranteed the vote for these two groups and other American of color, but progress toward registering them to vote was a long struggle.



Fifty years after the passage of the 14th Amendment, in August 1970, we took to the streets to celebrate this momentous victory. I say "we" because at age 23 I was there! The New York City government refused a parade permit to what they thought would be a small group of crazy feminists. With no internet, the leaders communicated primarily through posters on college campuses, including Barnard College, where I was a lowly secretary. We met on August 26 at 5 pm, 10,000 strong. Arm and arm, sidewalk to sidewalk we took 5th Avenue, blocking traffic at rush hour and having a fine time! We chanted and sang and called out to women office workers in the windows above. We felt free, strong, proud!! It was one of the most exciting events of my life.

Determined to make our voices heard, we just knew we could finally make those men listen! In the name of all women, we demanded equality with men in all aspects of life: College and university education, fulltime work outside the home in meaningful careers, with legal abortions and government paid childcare to make those changes possible.

Reality soon set in. Not only were men not willing to meet our demands, but much to our surprise women of color, especially Black women soon let us know our demands did not voice the needs of *all* women. Women of color and poor women had been working “outside the home” since they were 14, primarily cleaning white women’s houses and white men’s offices. In many Black communities’ grandmothers and “aunties” took care of their children while they worked, so childcare and abortions were not high on their lists. Instead of being angry at men, they were angry at white men, *and* white middle-class women, who denied their much more basic needs. Rather than “meaningful careers,” they and their men needed to be paid a living wage for their hard work. Rather than college educations, they needed decent primary and secondary education for their children, and a reasonable chance for their sons to grow up to be adults without being shot or imprisoned.

While white feminists complained about the evils of patriarchy, Black feminist scholars like bell hooks voiced a broader perspective: “When women and men understand that working to eradicate patriarchal domination is a struggle rooted in the longing to make a world where every can live full and freely, then we know our work to be a gesture of love. Let us draw upon that love to heighten our awareness, deepen our compassion, intensify our courage and strengthen our commitment.”

In the 1970s and 1980s white feminists soon recognized this justified critique of our self-centered analysis, and today feminism is a broad movement addressing oppression across a wide spectrum. Moreover, academic feminists have established a standard for legitimacy that requires scholars to state their race, gender, class, etc. in their publications so that readers can understand their context and the limitations of their perspective. I consider this a good move, allowing us to write with confident voices without over generalizing on our personal experiences.

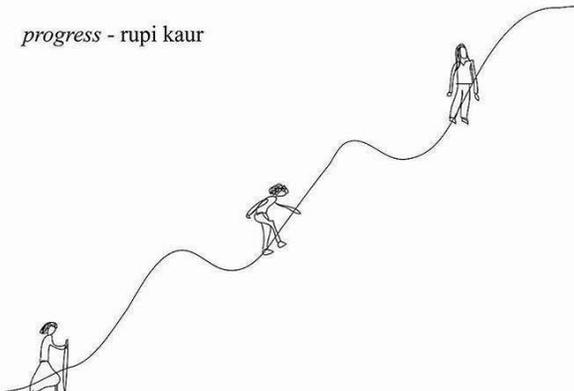
Here’s more good news: Fifty years after the 1970 celebration of 50 years of women’s suffrage, many more Americans have awakened up to the oppressions that exist across divides of race and class as well as gender. The protests of 2020 finally caused many white Americans to become conscientized about the injustices in our history and today’s society.

Consider these words of wisdom from one of our congregation’s youngest members, Connor Anderson: “I’m mostly just meant for eating. And smartness. Like, if you don’t know what $5 + 1$ is, then who are you?!”

That’s right: We humans are mostly focused on eating and all the other pleasures of our lives. But as six-year-old Connor notes, we are also meant for “smartness.” One of the smarts required of those of us who are adults is to acknowledge our past mistakes as individuals and as a nation. Rather than just going on with our good lives, we must work hard to effect serious systemic changes to address racism, sexism, ageism, homophobia, economic injustice, and environmental degradation. Even as we celebrate women’s suffrage, if women fail to vote for justice, who are we?

our work should equip
the next generation of women
to outdo us in every field
this is the legacy we’ll leave behind

progress - rupi kaur



of course
i want to be
successful but
i don’t crave
success for me
i need to be
successful
to gain enough
milk and honey
to help those
around me
succeed

- rupi kaur