

# LET JUSTICE ROLL!

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An Occasional Newsletter Produced & Distributed  
by the "Social Justice & Action Group" (SJAG)  
of St. John the Divine Anglican Church - Victoria, B.C.

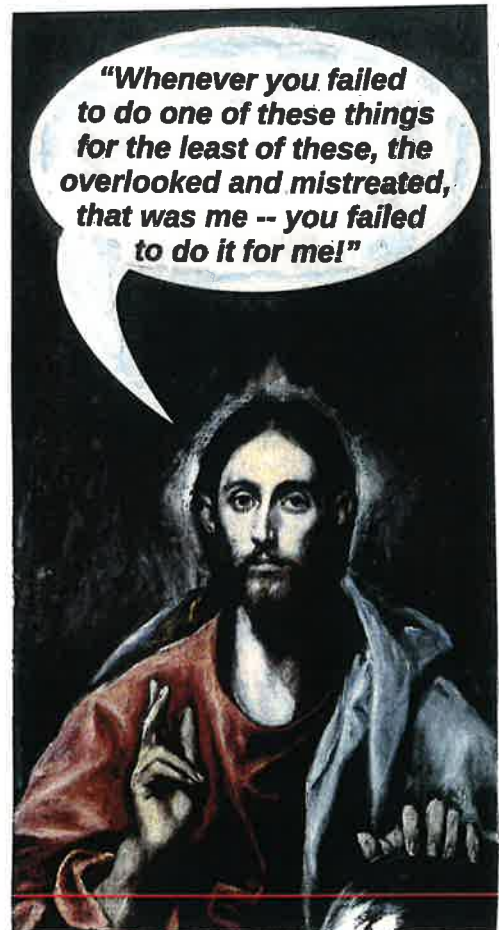
ISSUE #12 - NOV. / DEC. 2020

"LET JUSTICE ROLL!" is intended to educate, inform and challenge readers regarding important issues and ideas at the intersection where faith and justice meet. For the most part, the themes offered here are viewed through a Christian lens. The articles chosen focus on social justice concerns that many of our parishioners already share. The short articles selected for each issue cover a diversity of topics -- FROM poverty/economic inequality, peace and human/LGBTQ rights, First Nations reconciliation -- TO environmental stewardship, refugees, racism, food security and community/international development. The political is never far away from the topics we choose to present. As Cornel West reminds us: "*Justice is what love looks like in public!*"

*"But let justice roll  
on like a river,  
and righteousness  
like a never  
failing stream!"*

*Amos 5:24 (NIV)*

The ideas and opinions expressed, and or positions articulated, in the newsletter may not officially be those of the Parish and the Diocese. Your feedback is encouraged! Please address your comments to either Murray Luft (Editor) [murrayrae@yahoo.com](mailto:murrayrae@yahoo.com) [or] John McLaren (Chair) [jpsmamclaren@gmail.com](mailto:jpsmamclaren@gmail.com) We also invite readers to submit provocative articles, already published or original, for inclusion in future "Let Justice Roll!" newsletters. SJAG's intention is to produce this newsletter four or five times per year. During Covid 19, LJR is available in an on-line format via the St. John's web-site, or in a paper (hard) copy which can be picked up at the Garden Gate entrance.  
M.L. Editor



## LET JUSTICE ROLL #12

We have witnessed recent elections in B.C., N.B., SK., Bolivia, and, of course, in the U.S.A. It's the season of politics! Hence, LJR #12's predominant theme -- "**Faith and Politics**". When Donald Trump staged an impromptu photo-op in front of St. John's Episcopal Church in Washington in June, he ignited a firestorm of reactions. DC Bishop Mariann Bude responded to the President's actions angrily, saying: "*The President used a Bible as a backdrop for a message antithetical to the teachings of Jesus!*" Perhaps you've noticed during this electoral season (especially south of the border) that diverse religious views have jockeyed for prominence. As perplexing questions swirl regarding the impact of faith on the political canvas, **LJR#12** raises important questions which filter electoral politics through the lens of shared (and divergent) Christian beliefs. The longer *YES!* and *Rolling Stone* articles frame this topic by illuminating how religion has polarized and hardened political positions in the U.S. They provoke serious questions about Christian political options in a pluralistic, secular society like Canada. Specifically, is our Anglican faith of any import in helping us to adopt just policies for "*the least of these*"? Catholic sister Karen Donahue summed up the President Trump's Bible-toting opportunism above by saying: "*Our deepest belief as Christians – whether Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox or Evangelical – holds that we are all children of the same loving God and are responsible for one another.!*"

On the congregational front, we feature **Sara Chu's** fine article which highlights the remarkable life of our own **Mavis Gillie**. In the spirit of Remembrance Day, we also provide an update on the TPNW. Other articles covered off in LJR#12 deal with a diversity of topics including **Climate Change, Reconciliation, Inner-City Poverty, the Wisdom of Elie Weisel** and Lessons/Challenges from this season of **Covid Discontent**. As is our custom, we've added some thought-provoking **Poems, Prayers and Meditations** for your pre-Advent edification.

This publication is made possible thanks to the timely, expert assistance provided by these St. John's congregants -- **Carol-Ann Zenger, Karen Coverett, Karyn Lehmann and John McLaren**.

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**Public Virtue - The Heart of Democracy**  
**Rohr and Palmer on Election Day in the U.S.A. \***

*Renewed contact with the Gospel of faith, of hope and of love invites us to assume a creative and renewed spirit. In this way, we will be able to transform the roots of our physical, spiritual and social infirmities and the destructive practices that separate us from each other, threatening the human family and our planet.*

*Pope Francis*

Richard Rohr: "I consider Quaker author and activist Parker Palmer a true elder. He has clearly "fallen upward"—humbly learning and growing over the years while also generously giving of himself to build a better future with the next generation. Parker Palmer's understanding of the "tragic gap" recognizes that no matter what we do, we can never completely solve the problem. In all our actions, there is always a space left incomplete, imperfect, which God alone can fill. The search for "the perfect" often keeps us from "the good." The demand for one single issue about which we can be totally right actually keeps us from reading the whole picture—often this is true in regard to voting."

From that vantage point, Parker Palmer writes:

**"For those of us who want to see democracy survive and thrive—and we are legion— the heart is where everything begins: that grounded place in each of us where we can overcome fear, rediscover that we are members of one another, and embrace the conflicts that threaten democracy as openings to new life for us and for our nation. . . .**

**Of all the tensions we must hold in personal and political life, perhaps the most fundamental and most challenging is standing and acting with hope in the "tragic gap." On one side of that gap, we see the hard realities of the world, realities that can crush our spirits and defeat our hopes. On the other side of that gap, we see real-world possibilities, life as we know it could be because we have seen it that way. . . .**

**If we are to stand and act with hope in the tragic gap and do it for the long haul, we cannot settle for mere "effectiveness" as the ultimate measure of our failure or success. Yes, we want to be effective in pursuit of important goals. . . . [But] we must judge ourselves by a higher standard than effectiveness -- the standard called faithfulness. Are we faithful to the community on which we depend, to doing what we can in response to its pressing needs? Are we faithful to the better angels of our nature and to what they call forth from us? Are we faithful to the eternal conversation of the human race, to speaking and listening in a way that takes us closer to truth? Are we faithful to the call of courage that summons us to witness to the common good, even against great odds? When faithfulness is our standard, we are more likely to sustain our engagement with tasks that will never end: doing justice, loving mercy, and calling the beloved community into being."**

\* From: CAC Daily Meditations (Nov. 2/2020)

**Mavis Gillie: "A Force of Nature!" \***

Mavis Marie Gillie was born in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan in 1927, one of six children of British immigrant parents. Charles Chisholm, her father, had come to Canada and served in the Canadian army in WW I. After her mother, Violet (nee Mee), arrived in Canada, they worked a small holding of Soldier's Settlement land in Saskatchewan.

Eventually Mavis became a secretary in Prince Albert and taught Sunday School. In 1947 she was chosen to attend the World Conference of Christian Youth in Oslo, Norway. On her return, after visiting relatives in Britain, Mavis rejoined her family after they had moved to Victoria. She became school secretary at S.J. Willis school and there she met Bernard Gillie, the school principal. They married in 1959.

In 1962 Bernard was appointed Director of Education for the North West Territories so the family moved to Fort Smith and then in 1969 to Yellowknife. They had two daughters, Susan and Margaret. During her ten years in the north, Mavis became increasingly aware of problems faced by Indigenous people and she became an advocate for them in the NWT.

In 1973 the Gillies returned to Victoria to a farm in Strawberry Vale, where Mavis gardened and kept dogs and ponies. She also began more than forty years of working tirelessly and without pay to address the problems of Indigenous people. Her strengths were many. She was charming but courageous. She was forceful but sensitive to the needs of those around her. She always did thorough research. Sister Marie Zarowny, of the Sisters of St. Ann and Coordinator of the Office of Social Justice for the Roman Catholic Diocese at this time, describes Mavis as someone who "never flinched" from "telling truth to power".

Mavis joined the Anglican Primate's World Relief and Development Fund. She was a founding member of the Public and Social Responsibility Unit of the Anglican Church of Canada. She was also a founding member of Project North, an ecumenical social action group that existed from 1975 to 2000. It is now called the Aboriginal Rights Coalition (ARC). Project North focused on raising public awareness and working for healing and reconciliation.

Here are some examples of issues Mavis worked on. In the 1970s Mavis worked with the Dene opposing the McKenzie Valley pipeline. The Run for Justice in 1988 from Hazelton to Victoria was sponsored by Project North to raise funds for the Gitksan and Wetsuwet'en to fight for the Delgamuukw Aboriginal Title lawsuit. In 1996 the Nisga'a opposed the Amax molybdenum mine dumping tailings into the Nass River. To help them Mavis made submissions to the Select Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs. She also represented Project North before the Environmental Appeal Board. She helped the Tsawout in their fight against the marina proposal for Saanichton Bay.

Mavis always pursued fairness and truth. She organized media events and free information packages. She lobbied cabinet ministers and appeared before committees and commissions. She was a catalyst for change. In 1991 Mavis was given the Award of Merit by the Anglican Primate of Canada.

She continued her work. In 1995 she moderated the three-part TV series "Hearing the Native Voice" and persuaded U Vic law professor Hamar Foster to speak in it. In 2001 Mavis again made a submission the Select Standing Committee regarding the Aboriginal Rights referendum of the Campbell government. The eight questions in the referendum were criticized by Angus Reid as being confusing. There were double negatives, questions too broad to be meaningful, and questions about issues beyond provincial jurisdiction. The referendum was felt to be "amateurish and stupid." And

since their land had been taken without treaty, the First Nations felt the referendum was a distortion of historical reality. The land was theirs anyway. Judy Tethong, a close friend of Mavis, described the ballot burning event they attended along with prominent First Nations leaders such as Dr. Judith Sayers (former chief of the Hupacasaath) and master carver Butch Dick. The ballots were in a canoe and set alight by a flaming arrow.

In May of 2009 Mavis made a written submission on behalf of ARC to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Panel on behalf of the Tsilhqot'in in opposition to the Prosperity Mine proposal. She also helped the Tseycum raise funds for repatriation of ancestral remains. She helped the Haida regarding the Cinola gold Mine proposal. She helped the Nuu-cha-nulth with the Meares Island injunction. In 2010 Mavis helped to recover a Talking Stick that had been given to ARC by the Gitksan so that ARC could speak for them. It had gone missing. After it was found, there was a ceremony in which the Stick was gifted to the U Vic law school and Mavis was instrumental in organizing that ceremony.

Bernard died in 1997 and in 2006 Mavis moved to a bungalow in Oak Bay. She has been a long-time member of St John the Divine. In 2014 she was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Laws degree by the University of Victoria. She also received the Governor General's Caring Canadian Award.

Now 93 Mavis lives in a care facility and could not be visited because of Covid -19 precautions. Information for this biography came from her daughter Margaret and Mavis' many admirers and colleagues such as Doreen Hunter and professors Hamar Foster and John McLaren. Judy Tethong, a life-long advocate for freedom of Tibet, remembers anecdotes that capture Mavis' character:

In 1975 Judy and her husband T.C. arrived in Victoria from India after gruelling work with Tibetan refugees. They had two young children and were homesick and unhappy. One day Mavis appeared on their doorstep with food (fruits and vegetables from her garden) and friendship. Mavis had once worked with Judy's father on the Primate's Fund and had heard about Judy's plight. Thus began a long friendship. That December, Judy was awarded the Order of Canada but she was unable to go to Ottawa for the March ceremony because she was pregnant with her third child. In the autumn of 1976 Judy, T.C. and the baby went to Ottawa and Mavis looked after the two older children (aged six and two).

Another anecdote concerns the visit of some Chinese war ships on a training visit to Royal Roads. Judy planned various interventions to publicize the Tibet situation and Mavis was her accomplice. The most daring escapade involved tours that were being offered on the ships. Mavis and Judy used Mavis' car since Judy's "Free Tibet" bumper sticker would not have been allowed. They wore "Free Tibet" T shirts under their clothes and had Tibetan flags hidden in their belongings. They managed to get on a ship as tourists. They evaded their "minder" and quickly put "Free Tibet" stickers on the guns of the boat. Meanwhile military police were arriving with the Chinese consul. They managed to get off the boat before being detected.

Mavis Underwood of the Tsawout First Nation describes Mavis Gillie as "a force of nature" who "coaxed the settler population to reflect on how they live in BC" and as someone who "is deeply loved and admired."

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\* This article was written by Sara Chu of St. John's Social Justice and Action Group with information supplied by Mavis' daughter Margaret and Hamar Foster; re: The Nomination of Mavis Marie Gillie for an Honorary Doctor Of Laws Degree; presented to the Senate Committee on Honorary Degrees and Other Forms of Recognition (2014).

## The Christian Right and Left Share the Same Faith ... But Couldn't Be More Different!

**By Ruth Terry - Dec 24, 2019 - YES! Magazine\***

I didn't know Christians could be Democrats until I got to college. Though affiliated with the relatively conservative Christian Reformed Church, my school had a small but vocal minority of leftist professors and students. Growing up, I went to church with my family every Sunday. We attended predominantly White non-denominational or Assemblies of God churches. What I heard from the pulpit ranged from apocalyptic altar calls—scary enough that I accepted Jesus Christ as my personal lord and savior every damn time—to sermons that condoned hetero-normative sex and gender roles and condemned premarital sex, abortion, and alcohol. My father, a Black PhD from Washington D.C., and my mother, a second-generation Puerto Rican immigrant who grew up in Spanish Harlem, are statistical anomalies. Until recently—Mami voted for Hillary—they've voted Republican, a political ideology affirmed and assumed in our churches.

So, in school, when I met my then-friend-now-partner Sean, I would often have dinner at his family's house. I was surprised that his parents, Peter and Peggy, who are overwhelmingly astute about politics and current events, were so outspoken in their disdain and distrust of the Republican party and President George W. Bush.

Twenty years later, they're exactly the same—critical of the GOP and conservative leanings overall. But the most confounding thing about them to me—then and now—is their moral, value, and belief systems stem from a *deep-rooted Christian faith*. This same Christian faith is upheld by evangelical Christians, most of whom oppose most of what progressive Christians like Peter and Peggy find support for in the Bible: marriage equity, open immigration, women's reproductive rights, the notion of human-caused climate change. And though liberal Christians have long been engaged in social justice work, this may be the first time they've faced such a widely polarized political landscape. They are now fighting for their beliefs on multiple fronts: in politics, within their communities, and, even within their own congregations.

### **Driving The Right Wing**

While conservative evangelicalism tends to focus on sin, repentance, and salvation, the Christian Left identify Christ's radical love and inclusion for marginalized people as the locus of their faith. White evangelical Christians are the driving force of America's right wing. Nearly 80 percent voted for Trump and about 70 percent still approve of the job he's doing, although, according to a recent poll, his overall rating at the time of this writing has declined to 39 percent since January.

Liberal theology has roots in Enlightenment philosophy, which suggested a rational and contextual reading of the Bible. The Liberation Theology of the 1960s cemented liberal Christians' stance on active participation in social justice work. Postmodern, Black, and queer theologians have also provided new ways of understanding Christ's life and work. Black theology, for example, contends that Black Americans have unique insight into Christ's suffering because of the legacy of slavery.

Although some belong to historically conservative denominations, liberal Christians are helping to frame conversations around issues such as environmental action, LGBTQ+ rights, women's reproductive health, immigration, racial equity, affordable housing, and wealth disparity. And while the conservative agenda opposes all of the above, progressive and conservative Christians do have a few things in common. A Pew Research survey reveals that most liberal Christians pray daily and report feelings of "*spiritual peace*," more than 40% read their Bibles regularly, and 36% attend church at least weekly. Both types of Christians are equally dogmatic about their interpretations of scripture.

For example, Jennifer Butler, founder and CEO of Faith in Public Life, an interfaith advocacy network based in Washington, D.C., expressed great concern when talking about the country's treatment of migrants and refugees. "*The scripture calls, in over a hundred places, to welcome the stranger*," Butler explains. "*In fact, all the rules, all the laws, all of the Ten Commandments... are rooted in the mandate to remember [that] we, too, were once slaves in Egypt, we were strangers in an unwelcome land.*" According to Butler, the church should advance social justice policies. "*The kinds of policies that the scripture calls us to enact*," she says.



Though it's illegal for pastors to endorse political candidates from the pulpit because of the Johnson Amendment (though Trump has promised to rescind this), faith-based organizations like hers are allowed to engage church leadership and parishioners in policy discussions and advocacy, in addition to nonreligious voters and potential voters. *"During election years, we hold these candidates accountable to the policies we believe are called for by our faith traditions,"* Butler continues. And, so you'll see us encouraging people to vote but also engaging candidates, asking them what their stance on immigration is going to be and what kinds of values inform their policy decision."

Despite their political engagement, the Christian Left tends to exist under the media radar, with most stories covering the dogma and divisiveness of the Christian Right. Butler thinks this is partially because, unlike the Christian Right, they don't have single-party affiliation—or related corporate dollars—that attract media coverage. *"We're not as beholden to a single political party,"* Butler says. *"You'll see us challenging Democratic lawmakers [as well], so we would never overlook the weaknesses or the discrepancies between a candidate or politician's faith and their purported religious values. We are driven much more by faith rather than politics."*

### **Grassroots Bridge-Building**

At the local level, progressive Christians link marginalized groups to communities of faith. Many participate in social justice efforts through their churches or in partnerships with community organizations. Peggy, now my de facto mother-in-law, has participated in everything from protests of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank to refugee resettlement—a founding priority for Church of the Servant, where she worships. She also recently joined a rapid response team that supports under-documented residents with encounters related to ICE interventions.

Few Christian churches are homogenous politically. Data shows that most progressive Christians identify as Democrats, but about one-third report being Republican or centrist in their views. This pluralism presents opportunities for liberal and conservative members to contextualize and dialogue about hot-button political issues together within a trusting faith community. Despite this bridge-building, liberal Christianity has a few areas where it lets itself down. For people who are so into inclusion, they still struggle with it. Pew Research reports that 53 percent of people who identify as "liberal" and "Christian" are non-Hispanic White. Also, the Religious Landscape Study by the same group revealed that "Mainline Protestant" churches are 86 percent White—10 percent more White than regular "Evangelical Protestants."

### **Challenges for People of Color and LGBTQ+ in White Liberal Christian Spaces**

Aaron Villareal, a Chicano pastor-in-training at Park Community Church in San Antonio, Texas, is working toward inclusion as the only person of colour in church leadership. The church leans toward liberalism, but the congregation is small, mostly White, and even has a few members who voted for Trump. Being a person of colour in any White space is always demanding, but pastoring a White-majority church presents its own unique challenges. Villareal models inclusion just by being there, and at the same time mobilizes support for social projects that benefit the surrounding Mexican-American community. Against the backdrop of violence against Latinos, he and his colleagues also factor in public perceptions when Villareal preaches outside of his home parish. In the past, this has led to suggestions that he share the pulpit with a White colleague.

*"I've had to have a lot of really difficult conversations with my co-workers about race,"* Villareal says. *"I have a lot of days where I just wonder, like, why me? Why didn't someone else come before me and do all this hard work, so that I could just be on staff, so that I wouldn't have to be the one who answers these questions all the time?"* Despite the challenges, Villareal believes he has been *"called"* to his current position and plans to stick it out. Ultimately, he wants all churches to be more intentional in denouncing violence against people of color. *"I think the church has the opportunity ... the moral obligation to address that, to face, to denounce this, to say that it's evil,"* he says. *"No matter what, the threatening of someone's life is anti-God. It is anti-Christ. God is always for life."*

Similarly, many churches struggle with meaningful LGBTQ+ equity, a contentious issue even for progressive congregations. Some denominations are gay-affirming, but not yet fully inclusive because they refuse to perform same-sex marriages or, more commonly, ordain LGBTQ+ members to ministry. Beth Erickson is a member of

United Methodist in Dallas. Her church visibly displays support for LGBTQ+ rights through participation in Pride Week events, as well as rainbow-coloured banners and signs in and around their church, and the congregation has LGBTQ+ members. But the inclusivity only goes so far. *"You've got these passages that say things like homosexuality is a sin and gay, same-sex marriage is bad and those kinds of things,"* Erickson says, referring to the Book of Discipline, a compendium of Methodist doctrine.

In recent years, the Methodist church has gone through a painful and intensive process of examining denominational writings and doctrine on homosexuality. Erickson's local parish facilitated discussions with LGBTQ+ members, amplifying their voices and allowing more conservative members to unpack inclusion issues in a safe space. Eventually, same-sex marriage was rejected by a worldwide assembly of Methodist leaders. However, Erickson says, the ruling only affects U.S. churches.

### Expect the Unexpected

Despite these shortcomings, we can still learn a lot from progressive Christians. Their focus on civic engagement, community organizing, and social justice requires empathy for the challenges faced by traditionally marginalized groups, but also demands intentional and meaningful interaction with people who are different from them. Empathizing with people who do not look, talk, think, or behave the way you do will always be difficult. Still, with religion and politics, I've come to expect the unexpected. My mom moved to an affluent, gated community in central Florida a few years ago—and ended up a die-hard Bernie Sanders supporter. Within her largely conservative family, she is vocally anti-Trump, and for the same reason as Peggy and Peter: because the Bible tells her so!

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## The Noise of Politics

By Walter Brueggemann

We watch as the jets fly in with the power  
     people and the money people,  
     the suits, the budgets, the billions.  
 We wonder about monetary policy  
     because we are among the haves,  
     and about generosity because  
     we care about the have-nots.  
 By slower modes we notice Lazarus  
     and the poor arriving from Africa,  
     and the beggars from Central Europe,  
     the throng of environmentalists  
     with their vision of butterflies and oil  
     of flowers and tanks  
     of growing things and killing fields.  
 We wonder about peace and war,  
     about ecology and development,  
     about hope and entitlement.

We listen beyond jeering protesters  
     and soaring jets and faintly we hear  
     the mumbling of the crucified one,  
     something about feeding the hungry,  
     and giving drink to the thirsty,  
     about clothing the naked,  
     and noticing the prisoners,  
 More about the least  
     and about holiness among them.  
 We are moved by the mumbles of the gospel,  
     even while we are tenured in our privilege.  
 We are half ready to join the choir of hope,  
     half afraid things might change,  
     and in a third half of our faith turning to you,  
     and your outpouring love  
     that works justice and  
     that binds us each and all to one another.  
 So we pray amidst jeering protesters  
     and soaring jets.  
 Come by here and make new,  
     even at some risk to our entitlements.

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\* Taken from *Prayers for a Privileged People* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2008), pp. 21-22.



**STUDY FINDS “SPIRITUAL” PEOPLE ARE MORE LIKELY TO VOTE!**

**Sept. 22, 2020 - Sojo.net \***

People who consider themselves “spiritual” are more likely to be engaged and involved citizens, according to a Fetzer Institute ([fetzer.org](http://fetzer.org)) study. The study, which was conducted over the course of two years, found the likelihood of assigning importance to bettering one’s community and the world at large is greater among individuals who see themselves as highly spiritual. While the study did not set a strict definition of “spirituality,” common elements of how study participants defined it included the importance of being in nature, religious beliefs, and practices focused on the self.

According to the study, 3 out of 5 participants see a link between their spirituality and investing in their community. Additionally, these individuals are more likely to vote, reach out to elected representatives and officials, and attend political marches and gatherings.

“The health and racism pandemics of 2020 have spurred social and personal upheaval, prompting many people to evaluate their aspirational convictions, and even question traditional sources of meaning, values, and beliefs,” Pamela Ebstyne King, the Peter L. Benson associate professor of applied developmental science at Fuller Theological Seminary, wrote about the study’s findings. “Through spirituality, people potentially have access to pro-social ideals and beliefs, a community to support them, and a source of transcendence that motivates behaviors aligned with their spiritual ideals.”

The study also found that most Americans identify as “spiritual” regardless of their religious affiliation. Seven out of 10 study participants said spirituality is important to their lives, and most participants identify themselves as being both spiritual and religious.

**\* The complete Fetzer report can be viewed at <http://spiritualitystudy.org>**

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“Conservative think-tanks and right-wing critics have bludgeoned liberal Christians with the idea that progressive theology and a commitment to social justice led to mainline decline — and would be the death of their churches. The trends of the last decade, however, upend that thesis. Of all white Christian groups, the most theologically liberal one — *white mainline Protestants* — has shown the smallest decrease, even while their denominations adopted openly progressive social policies including marriage equality and full inclusion of women and LGBTQ persons in their churches. Indeed, white mainline decline modestly matches the overall decline of America’s white population. (Diana Butler-Bass)

## False Idol — Why the Christian Right Worships Donald Trump

EXCERPTS FROM ALEX MORRIS' ARTICLE IN ROLLING STONE MAGAZINE (DEC. 2, 2019) \*

I was raised a child of the Christian right. I know what they believe because the tenets of their faith are mine too. Growing up, I attended church at least twice a week and went to Bible camp every summer, singing songs about Christian martyrs who stood up to tyrants in the name of God. My brother and sister and I learned catechism and sang in the choir, but we also attended public school and played Little League and did community theatre. We read C.S. Lewis, but also Beverly Cleary. We listened to Amy Grant and Simon and Garfunkel. We were taught that evolution was a lie, with NPR playing in the background. We knew that women should submit to their husbands, but also that sex within the confines of marriage could be mind-blowingly good and that we should never be ashamed of our bodies. We felt that homosexuality was a sin, but we loved my mom's Uncle Robert and his handsome boyfriend Ken. We knew that the Republican Party was the party of family values, but we weren't particularly political. In Birmingham, Alabama, in the 1980s, Christianity was the culture; but for my family, it was much more. We believed in the Bible stories my mother read us over our eggs each morning. They girded our lives. More than anything, they taught us that we were beautifully and wonderfully made in the image of God, and because of that we should respect ourselves and everyone else we encountered. They made us believe that our humanity held a divine spark.

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I'm not sure exactly when my family got the idea that we were at war with larger American culture. But I know that at some point our lessons about God's love became peppered with the idea that we were engaged in spiritual warfare, inhabiting a world where dark forces were constantly attempting to sever us from the will of God. The devil was real, and he was at work through "gay" Teletubbies and pagan Smurfs, through Dungeons & Dragons, through the horrors of MTV. At one point, my parents forbade TV altogether, and disconnected the stereo system in my car. We still loved Uncle Robert, but believed that the AIDS he'd contracted was a plague sent by God, just as we believed that abortion was our national sin, for which the country would likewise be held accountable. We awaited the Rapture, when Christians would be spirited away and Jesus would return to deal (violently) with the mess humans had made of things. Over time, and even before the introduction of Fox News, whatever nuance we might have seen in the culture evaporated into a stark polarity. ...

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Unlearning one's religion is not a task that is easily accomplished; I had to leave America to manage it. I was in my early twenties, living in London, ... In a chilly, Victorian-era chapel not far from the tiny room I rented, I stumbled upon a Christianity divorced from the American nationalism I came to believe was poisoning my faith. Here, theology was not wrapped up in some idea of theocracy, but was instead expressed with a C.S. Lewis-style appeal to reason, to compassion, to internal rather than political renewal.

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I returned to America to discover a rich tradition of progressive Christianity, with thinkers like Rob Bell and Rachel Held Evans grappling with their faith with intense intellectual honesty and a deep love for the transformative message of Jesus (Held Evans famously said she was voting for Hillary Clinton because she was "pro-life," not just "pro-birth"). These faith leaders helped me see that no one political party had a monopoly on God; that Jesus himself was revolutionary, upsetting hierarchies wherever he went; and that a form of Christianity that could be co-opted by a political agenda was suspect at its core...."

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In a dimly lit room, with a bottle of red wine, my mom, my aunt, and I pull our chairs close. I explain that I'm taping our conversation, that I love and respect them, and that I want to discuss why my Christianity has led me away from Trump and theirs has led them to him. For a while, we just hit the typical talking points. There's some discussion of Trump being a baby Christian, some assertions that the lewd behavior of his past is behind him, that in office he would never actually conduct himself as Bill Clinton had. But when I really double down, my mom and aunt will admit that there are flaws in his character. Though not that those flaws should be disqualifying.

***"I don't think he's godly, Alex," my aunt tells me. "I just think he stands up for Christians. Trump's a fighter. He's done more for the Christian right than Reagan or Bush. I'm just so thankful we've got somebody that's saying Christians have rights too."***

***“But what about the rights and needs of others. Do you understand why someone could be called by their faith to vote against a party that separates families?”***, I ask.

***“That’s a big sounding board, but I don’t think that is the issue,”*** says my mom.

***“But it’s happening, and I’m not OK with it.”***

My mom shakes her head. ***“No one’s OK with it.”***

***“If that’s your heart, then vote your heart,”*** says my aunt. ***“But with the abortion issue and the gay-rights issue, Trump’s on biblical ground with his views. I appreciate that about him.”***

***“As Christians, do you feel like you’re under attack in this country?”*** I ask.

***“Yes!”*** my mom says adamantly.

***“When did you start feeling that way?”***

***“The day that Obama put the rainbow colours in the White House was a sad day for America,”*** my aunt replies. ***“That was a slap in God’s face. Abortion was a slap in his face, and here we’ve killed 60 million babies since 1973. I believe we’re going to be judged. I believe we are being judged.”***

***“Genesis gives you the description of how God wanted life to go,”*** my mom says. ***“It gives you the Scripture.”***

***“It also says that light was created, and then the sun several days later,”*** I point out.

My mom frowns. ***“Are you going to say that you know how the world was created more than God?”*** ...

***“Do you think because Jesus is coming soon that the environment doesn’t matter?”*** I eventually ask.

***“Alex, the Earth is going to be all burned up anyway,”*** my aunt says quietly. ***“It’s in the Bible!”***

***“But according to billions of people, the Bible is not necessarily true.”***

***“All we can do is love them!”***

***“No, we can cut back on carbon emissions. There are a lot of things we can do.”***

***“It doesn’t matter. We’re not going to be here.”***

***“Imagine that you are someone who thinks that God doesn’t exist. You can’t say to that person, ‘Don’t worry about the fact that we’re ruining the world that your children and grandchildren live in, because this thing that you don’t believe in is going to happen.’ That’s not an argument a government can make.”***

***“Who’s in charge of climate?”*** my mom interjects. ***“Who brings the sun out in the morning?”***

***“You cannot base national policy about what is happening to the environment on one group of people’s religion,”*** I answer.

Finally, my aunt puts her hand on my knee. Her eyes are tender and her voice soft and trembling with emotion: ***“I just want them to know the truth!”*** And it’s moments like this that shut the conversation down because I believe her. I believe — with faith and certainty — that this is what motivates her, politically and otherwise. ***“All we can do is love them!”*** she’d told me. In her mind, this was not about the history of evangelicalism or the Republican Party or American exceptionalism or Christian nationalism or how we got here. This was about her view of love — a tough love that would offer America salvation. By the time my family hug each other tightly and say good night, it is well past midnight. The cicadas hum outside like blood rushing to the ears. The darkness is heavy. We go to sleep saying prayers for each other.

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\* These personal reflections are woven throughout writer Alex Morris' perceptive analysis in [Rolling Stone](https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-features/christian-right-worships-donald-trump-915381/). Her complete account of how contemporary U.S. evangelicalism has nurtured and sustained the presidency of Donald Trump in the U.S. is highly recommended to LJR readers, regardless of your own political persuasions ... and how the US presidential election in Nov. finally play out. Read Morris' entire Rolling Stone article on-line at: <https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-features/christian-right-worships-donald-trump-915381/> and draw your own conclusions.

LJR Poems // Prayers

Vote. Raise your voice. Wear a mask. Wash your hands. Stay home if you can. Support people who can't stay home. Call someone you love and tell them that you love them. Feed those who are hungry and love each other. Rest, for the fight for justice is a marathon. Truly: love, love, love.

\*\*\*\*\* Rev. Dr. Donna Schaper, The Resistance Prays <theresistanceprays@gmail.com> \*\*\*\*\*

**When This is Over**

**By Laura Kelly Fanucci \***

\*\*\*\*\*

When this is over,  
may we never again  
take for granted  
A handshake with a  
stranger  
Full shelves at the store  
Conversations with  
neighbours  
A crowded theater  
Friday night out  
The taste of communion  
A routine checkup  
The school rush each  
morning  
Coffee with a friend  
The stadium roaring  
Each deep breath  
A boring Tuesday  
Life itself.

When this ends  
may we find  
that we have become  
more like the people  
we wanted to be  
we were called to be  
we hoped to be  
and may we stay  
that way — better  
for each other  
because of the worst.

**A UTE PRAYER**

Earth teach me quiet  
~ as the grasses are still with new  
light.  
Earth teach me suffering  
~ as old stones suffer with memory.  
Earth teach me humility  
~ as blossoms are humble with  
beginning.  
Earth teach me caring  
~ as mothers nurture their young.  
Earth teach me courage  
~ as the tree that stands alone.  
Earth teach me limitation  
~ as the ant that crawls on the  
ground.  
Earth teach me freedom  
~ as the eagle that soars in the sky.  
Earth teach me acceptance  
~ as the leaves that die each fall.  
Earth teach me renewal  
~ as the seed that rises in the  
spring.  
Earth teach me to forget myself  
~ as melted snow forgets its life.  
Earth teach me to remember  
kindness  
~ as dry fields weep with rain.

\*\*\*\*\*

**PRAYER \***

For all  
the pain  
passed down  
the genes  
or latent  
in the very grain  
of being;  
for the lordless  
mornings,  
the smear  
of spirit  
words intuit  
and inter;  
for all  
the nightfall  
neverness  
inking  
into me  
even now,  
my prayer  
is that a mind  
blurred  
by anxiety  
or despair  
might find  
here  
a trace  
of peace.

Christian Wiman  
*Once in the West:*  
*Poems (2014) \**

\* Laura Kelly Fanucci is a Catholic writer and the director of *Communities of Calling*. Her writing has been featured in NPR's *On Being*, *the Christian Century*, and *Blessed Is She*. [laurakellyfanucci.com](http://laurakellyfanucci.com).

**A TRUTH THAT HURTS:  
SEEKING JUSTICE FOR  
CANADA'S  
INDIGENOUS PEOPLE  
- BY DR. CHERYL BEAR -**

Justice is one of the attributes of our Creator. The very one whose Word is the foundation of our lives. Do we truly believe in justice? Because if justice is one of God's own attributes, an intricate part of the being of God, then it's kind of a big deal.

The injustice and abuse that occurred at Canada's residential schools between the late 1800s and the early 1990s is widely known in our nation. In fact, elementary and high school students across Canada are now learning about this dark part of our history. When the truth was uncovered, many Canadians felt despair because they didn't know about these schools. And it's true. Most Canadians were not aware. Some lived near First Nations communities, had Indigenous friends and wondered where they went to school. But most folks were blissfully ignorant.

Today, many Canadians are outraged that the Canadian government withheld this information from them. They are appalled to learn of the atrocities perpetrated on Indigenous children in residential schools.

As an Indigenous person, I live with first-hand experience of the ongoing inter-generational damage, which is the legacy of these residential schools.

That's why I cannot write about justice without thinking about all the ways that *injustice* has been perpetrated on Indigenous peoples in Canada. As such, there is another legacy that needs owning up to - the Doctrine of Discovery.

Beginning in 1452 through a series of papal bulls, edicts issued by Pope Nicholas V, Christian monarchs and their explorers were granted the right to "conquer Saracens and pagans and consign them to perpetual servitude." One of the terms used in these edicts is *Terra Nullius* ("nobody's land"). This essentially meant that if explorers found land but did not find a recognized monarch, they could consider the land empty.

This ideology is part of the Canadian DNA. The Canadian government has yet to renounce this racist doctrine and adopt the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

It would not be prudent for me to write about justice in Canada without talking about Colten Boushie who was shot in the back of the head by a white farmer who did not even get charged with wrongful discharge of a weapon. He walked away completely unscathed, while Colten's family stands around his grave with many unanswered, legitimate questions - along with the grief and injustice that now permeate their lives.

Then there is the case of Tina Fontaine. A 15-year-old Indigenous girl who was found in Winnipeg's Red River. Murdered. The person who killed her, again, walked away.

The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls noted that the deaths of many Indigenous women are ruled, "unsuspicious." No one hears about this except the families. This does not get national press.

I heard the findings of the inquiry shortly after reading a news report about a young Indigenous woman who was found naked in a ditch an hour outside of her northern community. Her death was ruled unsuspecting. How can that be unsuspecting? Even more outrageous, the inquiry noted there was a young woman whose death was reported unsuspecting even though she had been shot in the back.

Closer to home, a friend of mine recently sent me a message about an incident involving her son. He was in an altercation and ended up fighting for his life. The person who put him in the intensive care unit (ICU) was later released from custody. Horrifically, the brother of the man in the ICU, who was a witness to the crime, was immediately arrested and put in jail - for being "Indian on a sunny day," as we say.

Are you beginning to feel some of the injustice Indigenous peoples in Canada live with every day?

When I share these truths, I get pushback. People don't want to hear the truth about Canada because it messes with our national identity of right-ness and good-ness. We smugly say, "Well, at least we're not as bad as the U.S."

My friends, it's not enough to learn about the residential schools and say, "Phew, thank God the Prime Minister apologized for that." An apology is only worthy if it is followed by changed behaviour.

Let's acknowledge that there is much more that needs to be done.

If we believe in a God of justice, what do we need to change? We begin by asking Indigenous leaders, scholars and Elders. Therein lies the way of justice.

The more we push the truth away, the more we push our very Creator away.



**DR. CHERYL BEAR** of the Nadleh Whut'en First Nation is CBM's Indigenous Relations Specialist. Based in Vancouver, she is also an award-winning singer/songwriter and educator who inspires churches to seek reconciliation with Indigenous communities.

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**\*This article originally appeared in MOSAIC, a publication of CBM (Canadian Baptist Ministries), in its Winter 2019 Issue.**

**CAN WE ACHIEVE CLIMATE ACTION & RECONCILIATION  
IN A POST-COVID WORLD?**

**Mishkakan James Harper – Yellowhead Institute / CCPA -- Sept. 2020 \***

In a matter of months, the exciting possibilities for continued growth in 2020 have quickly evaporated as the COVID-19 pandemic challenges the resiliency of nearly every institution on Earth. But interestingly, the very idea of “*growth*” has been put into focus by the pandemic as largely harmful, as a *status quo* not worth fighting for after all. The pandemic has made us question, at least made me question, what life after COVID would, could, and should look like. What are the alternatives to that *status quo*?

After taking a step back, we find somewhat obvious overlaps between the ongoing climate crisis, and this pandemic. One more step back, and Indigenous perspectives on life and growth come into view as an interconnected system that presents a clear path forward, all together.

**The Origins of COVID-19 and Importance of Biodiversity**

While the origins of COVID-19 are still under investigation, it is highly probable that the virus has a zoonotic origin (a transfer from animal to human through some interaction). This is known as a spillover event. Indeed, the US Centre for Disease Control (CDC) reports that 6 in 10 infectious diseases are zoonotic, an important insight into the prevention of future viral outbreaks.

As many scientific studies have found, human manipulation of the land is the primary driver in past diseases like HIV/AIDS, Ebola, and Zika virus. The more agricultural and grazing land that requires destruction of forests, as well as the increased urbanization encroaching into animal habitat, increases the risk of zoonotic transmission. Any short-term benefits of social and economic developments are outweighed by the disastrous long-term economic and health effects related to viral outbreaks.

Moreover, land use changes for resource extraction or agricultural activities eliminates carbon reservoirs, and increases pollutants into the atmosphere and nearby waterways, expanding the territorial range of malaria-carrying mosquitos. Fundamentally, these changes on a large scale strip ecosystems of biodiversity, increasing the success of viruses. The case for biodiversity protection and conservation is no longer just about climate action, but about the future of human health.

**The Long Overdue Energy Sector Transformation**

There is much to say about the origins of COVID-19, but there are also the consequences, which can be linked to the climate crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought the petroleum industry to a point we have never seen before: negative oil prices. The Western Texas Intermediate (WTI) traded below \$0 for a few moments in late April, meaning that suppliers would pay for someone to take the surplus oil off their hands. Similarly, Western Canada Select (WCS) traded at -\$4.68 a barrel, forcing the oil economy of Alberta into one of its worst economic conditions it has ever seen.

In response, governments have provided relief to the industry, like the orphan-wells clean-up program. Packaged in the promise of job creation and economic stimulus, lies the ugly truth that the petroleum industry in Canada is too much of a liability. Through government royalty payment reductions, flow-through shares, pipeline buyouts, and clean-up initiatives, the industry continues to thrive despite conditions where it would ultimately fail in a free and open market. This pandemic has shown that the industry is simply too fragile to



weather uncertainties. We must build an energy system that is resilient to even the most adverse and unforeseen circumstances. The good news is that there are plenty of people, communities and groups in Canada proposing policies that can help catalyze clean energy growth through renewable energy sources (most of which have no fuel supply risk).

With solar and wind production costs dropping below that of oil and gas, it also means that the business case for this transition is clear. Modern day power purchase agreements (PPAs) and Feed-in-Tariffs (FITs) that are multi-year contractual pricing agreements (a tool at the disposal of governments), are far more stable and less risk averse than the volatile petroleum market. In a convenient parallel to the phrasing of some Numbered Treaties, renewables offer energy as long as the sun shines, the water flows, and the wind blows.

### **Reconciliation, Empowerment & Self-determination**

It is not simply our relationship with the land and energy that needs to change, but our relationship with each other, as Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. In fact, the protection of our environment and a resilient economy of the future are embedded in a pathway that leads towards building new and strong relationships.

It is understood that Indigenous peoples represent less than 5% of the world's population, but protect over 80% of its biodiversity. Therefore, to ensure that the sensitive ecological systems we know today thrive tomorrow, Indigenous peoples must be empowered to exercise their ability to protect and defend these territories, not just for Indigenous rights, or climate action, but to help prevent the next outbreak, as Indigenous peoples have been telling the world for thousands of years. Known to economists as protection of natural capital, delegating responsibility for Canada's bio-diverse ecosystem to Indigenous peoples is not just an economic pathway, but one that will also exercise each nation's rightful claim to sovereignty.

Moreover, and beyond Indigenous control of Indigenous lands, engaging Indigenous peoples in shovel-ready green projects like housing upgrades can provide immediate employment opportunities that also reduces overall energy demand (not to mention the ongoing housing crises in many Indigenous nations across Canada). Education funding for clean jobs for Indigenous people also ensures long-term economic investment, especially now where there may be more personal opportunity to learn. Finally, as more Indigenous nations, especially those reliant on diesel generators, engage in renewable energy projects, where nations have a major stake, there are opportunities not only to decarbonize the energy system of Canada, but provide long-term economic returns.

### **Preventing the Next COVID/Collapse**

The COVID-19 outbreak has no doubt been an experience that has hurt many families and brought healthcare systems to the brink of collapse. Like any crisis, it is a chance to evaluate what is most important and how to move forward as a stronger collective that protects the health and well-being of all. If there was a way to achieve climate action while also reducing the risk of future outbreaks, would you do it? If there was an opportunity to reconcile a strained relationship while also building a resilient energy system, would you consider it? The more sustainable and empowering government policies are, nations, people and communities worldwide are only to benefit.

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\* Citation: Harper, Mihsakwan James. *Yellowhead Institute*, 19 June 2020, <https://yellowheadinstitute.org/2020/06/19/can-we-achieve-climate-action-and-reconciliation-in-a-post-covid-world/> Aarticle reprinted in *The CCPA Monitor*, Sept./Oct. 2020.

# A wealth tax on the super rich is within reach

BY ALEX HEMINGWAY

Canada needs a wealth tax on the super rich to rein in extreme inequality and contribute to crucial public investments in the wake of COVID-19. The rise in inequality has become increasingly evident in Canada and other countries, and wealth inequality reaches even greater extremes than income inequality.



PHOTO: TIMOTHY KRAUSE / FLICKR

As the CCPA has documented, Canada's 87 richest billionaire families control 4,448 times more wealth than the average family and as much as the bottom 12 million Canadians combined. A growing body of research shows that extreme inequality puts a drag on economic growth and worsens health and social outcomes.

COVID-19 has shone a light on a simple truth: no individual or corporation becomes wealthy without an enormous collective effort, both by workers and through public investments. A wealth tax is a policy whose time has come.

Taxing the super wealthy has the backing of a growing body of economic research. Building on the work of French economist Thomas Piketty, Berkeley economists Emmanuel Saez and Gabriel Zucman recently developed the research case for wealth taxation in detail, and policy proposals have begun proliferating in the US, Canada, Spain and in the EU.

Wealth taxes enjoy strong public support, at levels rarely seen on any public policy issue. The latest poll in Canada shows 75 per cent public support, including 69 per cent support among Conservative Party voters.

What would a wealth tax look like in Canada? A proposal put forward by the NDP in last year's federal election would apply a 1 per cent annual tax on net wealth over \$20 million, which the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) estimated would raise \$5.6 billion in the first full fiscal year, rising to \$9.5 billion per year by 2028.

Would a wealth tax really work in practice? Saez and Zucman make a strong case that it would.

A wealth tax would apply to the worldwide assets of any Canadian citizen or resident above the established threshold. Legally, shifting funds to low tax jurisdictions won't help you.

Some suggest that the wealthy will go so far as renouncing their citizenship to avoid the tax. To address this, a much steeper "exit tax" would apply.

The super rich could engage in outright illegal tax evasion. Ramping up tax enforcement and cracking down on tax avoidance and evasion is critical to make a wealth tax work. This should be done regardless of a wealth tax. The PBO recently estimated that investing an additional \$750 million in tax enforcement would raise federal tax revenues by about \$3 billion.

As Saez and Zucman emphasize, we largely know how to crack down on tax havens—targeting the financial services industry that helps enable tax avoidance and evasion, stronger data transparency requirements for banks, and greater resources and penalties for tax enforcement. What's needed is political will.

/// A wealth tax is one of the tools available to reduce inequality, expand public services and help pay for the major costs of the COVID-19 crisis.

A wealth tax is one of the tools available to reduce inequality, expand public services and help pay for the major costs of the COVID-19 crisis. For taxation, additional policy tools include an excess profits tax, corporate tax reform, raising the capital gains inclusion rate and closing a proliferation of tax expenditures that mainly benefit the affluent.

Given the increasing recognition of our deep interconnectedness in the modern economy, it's no surprise that policies like a wealth tax enjoy such strong public support. If people get organized to demand it, change is within reach.

*Alex Hemingway is an economist and public finance analyst at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives BC Office.*

## Elie Wiesel—Evil, Forgiveness and Prayer

September 2020 - by Dan Clendenin \*

The following interview by Krista Tippett was recorded for her *On Being* Podcast of July 8, 2016, just one week after Elie Wiesel died at the age of 87.

**KRISTA TIPPETT, HOST:** The extraordinary and wise Elie Wiesel (1928–2016) was often cited as an icon of a reasonable loss of faith. There is a terrible moment in his memoir on the Holocaust *Night*, when he watches a young boy die slowly by hanging and repeats the question posed by someone in the crowd: “*Where is God now?*” Wiesel writes: “*I heard a voice within me answer him: “Where is He? He is hanging here on this gallows...”* In 2006, I sat across from Elie Wiesel in a hotel room that my producers had turned into a makeshift studio and I asked him to tell me what happened after he lost his faith forever, as he wrote, at Auschwitz. He answered: “*What happened afterwards is in the book. I went on praying.*” Elie Wiesel ever after enriched my understanding of prayer and forgiveness and the problem of evil, which was nowhere more embodied in the 20th century than in Germany, where I first encountered him as a young journalist in divided Berlin.

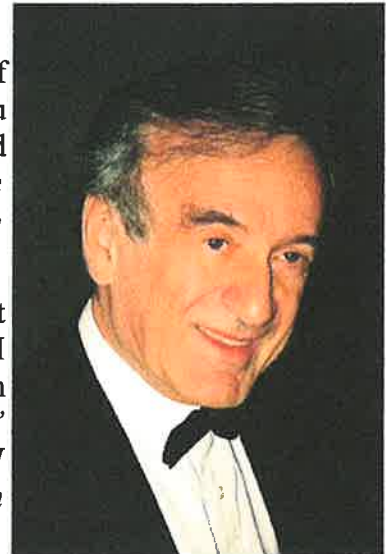
**ELIE WIESEL:** Germany, you were there, and I was there once visiting. I am asked occasionally, do you forgive? Who am I to forgive? I am not God. I don’t believe in collective guilt.

**TIPPETT:** I met you there. We talked about it. It was January 20, 1985. Now, I have a recollection it was one of the first ...

**WIESEL:** First time in Berlin.

**TIPPETT:** First time you’d been in Berlin. You met with a group of young Germans, and I have never forgotten what you said when you came out. I was there with another *New York Times* correspondent, and you said, “*I had never before considered that it could be as painful to be the children of those who ran the camps as to be the child of those who died in them.*”

**WIESEL:** Because I have students from Germany and you cannot imagine the affection I have for them, the empathy I have for them. I want to help them. They need help. One of them said to me, even in Berlin then, said, you know, “*I just discovered a few weeks ago that...*” He discovered that his father was an S.S. officer. He said, “*What should I do? What Hitler has done, he destroyed so many lives that had not been born yet. His people.*”



**TIPPETT:** How did you respond to that student?

**WIESEL:** Well, you can imagine. I took him aside and we spoke, and we spoke, and we spoke. And I simply said, “*Look, he’s your father. Talk first. First let him talk to you, and you talk to him. And then you decide what to do. I understand. Absolutely, I understand.*” I went back to Berlin for the last time in the year 2000, January 27. The Bundestag, which is the parliament, came to Berlin for the first time. They had a session, the parliament, in the Reichstag in Berlin, and they invited me to speak. And I came. The 27th of January. At the end of my speech, I turned to the president, who was there, and the entire government and diplomatic corps. I said, “*Mr. President, why not ask the Jewish people for forgiveness? I’m not sure the Jewish people can accept, but why not ask?*” A week later, he went to Israel, to Jerusalem. He went to the parliament and he asked for forgiveness.

**TIPPETT:** That trip was a result of your speech.

**WIESEL:** I think so. So I felt good.

**TIPPETT:** Is “*forgiveness*” a big enough word or a good enough word for this?

**WIESEL:** No, I cannot. No, I cannot forgive.

**TIPPETT:** You said you can’t forgive. So if you can’t forgive, what can you do? What is the endeavour, the holy endeavour?

**WIESEL:** This is the aim — first of all, to tell the truth, and to sensitize other people not to do the same thing. We aren’t here to forgive. We are, in the Jewish faith, on the eve of Yom Kippur, which is the holiest day of the year, and we plead with God for forgiveness, and God forgives, I hope. But one thing He does not forgive: the evil I have done to other fellow human beings. Only they can forgive. If I do something bad to you, I cannot ask God to forgive me. You must forgive me.

**TIPPETT:** That’s much harder, much more exacting. I wondered if I could ask you to read the prayer that I found in your book *One Generation After*. You talked a lot in *Night* — and we talked about this already — about struggling with prayer, to be able to pray or not, or what it meant. And I think this was a prayer that you wrote in a diary.

**WIESEL:** I agree, yeah.

**TIPPETT:** And I wondered if you would read that to me, and talk to me about how you began to pray again, and how you pray differently now because of the life you’ve lived.

**WIESEL:** I no longer ask You for either happiness or paradise; all I ask of You is to listen and let me be aware and worthy of Your listening. I no longer ask You to resolve my questions, only to receive them and make them part of You. I no longer ask You for either rest or wisdom, I only ask You not to close me to gratitude, be it of the most trivial kind, or to surprise and friendship. Love? Love is not Yours to give. As for my enemies, I do not ask You to punish them or even to enlighten them; I only ask You not to lend them Your mask and Your powers. If You must relinquish one or the other, give them Your powers, but not Your countenance.

They are modest, my prayers, and humble. I ask You what I might ask a stranger met by chance at twilight in a barren land. I ask You, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to enable me to pronounce these words without betraying the child that transmitted them to me. God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, enable me to forgive You and enable the child I once was to forgive me too. I no longer ask You for the life of that child, nor even for his faith. I only implore You to listen to him and act in such a way that You and I can listen to him together.”

**TIPPETT:** I’m wanting to ask you if, in this journey from being a person who would say that your faith was gone forever, were there any dramatic moments or turning points where you couldn’t make that statement anymore?

**WIESEL:** I couldn’t make it ten minutes later. At that moment, I made it. And because it was there, I had to make it. But as I said earlier, then I went back to prayer. What is prayer? You take words, everyday words, and all of a sudden they become holy. Why? Because there is something that separates one word from another and then you try to fill the vacuum. With what? With whom? With what memory? With what aspiration? So when words bring you closer to the prisoner in his cell, to the patient who is dying on his bed alone, to the starving child, then it’s a prayer.

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\* For Tippet's original 2006 interview with Wiesel, see: <https://onbeing.org/programs/evil-forgiveness-prayer-elie-wiesel-2/#transcript> Dan Clendenin is editor of the weekly web-zine *Journey With Jesus* — [dan@journeywithjesus.net](mailto:dan@journeywithjesus.net)

## **GOOD NEWS / BAD NEWS: TPNW RATIFIED - WHERE IS CANADA?**

**The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW)** is finally a reality! On 24 October 2020, the TPNW came into force when the 50<sup>th</sup> state (Honduras) ratified it. Ninety days from today, it will enter into force and become binding international law! This is a huge victory for citizen action, led by **The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons**, a coalition of almost 60 civil society groups around the planet.

The nine nations who have kept the entire world and all its citizens hostage for the past 75 years are now being "*called out*" on their actions. Their nuclear weapons are not just immoral now, but also illegal! The TPNW bans development, testing, production, manufacture, transfer, possession, and stockpiling of nuclear weapons. It bans the use, or threatened use, of nuclear weapons. States which join the TPNW convention must agree to destroy any nuclear weapons in their possession with a legally binding, time-bound.

The embrace of the TPNW by the global community stands in stark contrast to the United States, where just a few days ago it sentenced one of its citizens, Rev. Stephen M. Kelly, to almost 3 years in prison for protesting the continued existence and threat of use of nuclear weapons by the US. Since his arrest nearly three years ago on trespassing charges after invading a nuclear submarine base with six others as part of a symbolic nuclear disarmament action, the 71 year-old Jesuit Priest, was sentenced to 33 months in jail. Kelly described himself as a "*prisoner of conscience for Christ*," and one who preaches against "*the sin that flourishes in weapons of mass destruction*." Kelly said: "*I answer to a higher authority in that my faith imperative, as outlined in the tenets of the Catechism, missions me to respond to the needs of the poor, oppressed, disenfranchised*." Kelly also repeatedly invoked the Nuremberg principles which established international laws to stop crimes against humanity.

Nine nuclear-armed powers, including the United States, continue to stand unified against the treaty. The message of this treaty is that the world must do more than just "*reduce nuclear risks*." The world must eliminate nuclear risks by eliminating nuclear weapons. And Canada? Unfortunately, we are still conspicuous from our absence on the list of TPNW signatories, primarily due to NATO membership.

But there is still hope ... On Sept. 21/20, Lloyd Axworthy, Jean Chrétien, Bill Graham, John McCallum, John Manley, and John Turner all signed an open letter (that includes 53 former high officials of other NATO countries) expressing support for the TPNW. This is an astonishing rebuke on Canada and NATO's moribund policies on nuclear weapons, and the most serious challenge to NATO's nuclear orthodoxy in its 71-year history.

**To all 50 states parties to the treaty so far: you are on the right side of history and we applaud you for standing up to the nuclear-armed states and leading the way to a world free of these terrifying weapons for good.**

**M.L. - Editor**

## The Time for Postponing Climate Action Is Over!

David Korten - Jan 21, 2020 - From: YES MAGAZINE \*

***"We are now awakening to the responsibilities that come with our distinctive ability to consciously create our future." (Rachael Carson)***

In 1962, Rachael Carson warned us, with the publication of *Silent Spring*, that the indiscriminate use of pesticides was disrupting critical ecosystems and causing severe damage to human health. Her message led to a ban on the use of DDT in the United States and eventual restrictions on its use in much of the world. Her warning also helped launch the environmental movement and its call to humanity to accept responsibility for the consequences of our impact on Earth.

Ten years later, in 1972, the book *The Limits to Growth*, by an MIT research team led by Donella and Dennis Meadows, again focused global attention on humanity's environmental responsibility. Presented as a report to the Club of Rome, the book used computer modelling to demonstrate that sustained economic growth on a finite planet would lead to environmental and economic collapse in the early- to mid-21st century. It sold more than 3 million copies in some 35 languages.

The book stirred significant public debate at the time and had a defining influence in shaping the lives and thinking of many members of my generation. It came under withering critique, however, from a corporate establishment that profits from growth, and from neo-liberal economists who provided intellectual cover for the establishment. To the detriment of people and planet, and unlike Carson's book, *The Limits to Growth* had no discernible impact on public policy.

Yet, over the next 20 years, concern for the growing human threat to Earth's essential living systems gained in status to become the dominant scientific consensus. In 1992, the Union of Concerned Scientists issued a proclamation, "World Scientists' Warning to Humanity," signed by more than 1,700 scientists, including a majority of the then-living Nobel Laureates in the sciences. Its message was clear and unambiguous: ***"The earth is finite.... Current economic practices which damage the environment, in both developed and underdeveloped nations, cannot be continued without the risk that vital global systems will be damaged beyond repair."***

In November 2017, exactly 55 years after *Silent Spring*, 45 years after the *Limits to Growth*, and 25 years after the "Warning to Humanity," the Alliance of World Scientists issued a new proclamation: "World Scientists' Warning to Humanity: A Second Notice." This one was signed by more than 20,000 scientists in 184 countries. It concluded: ***"We face deforestation, ocean acidification, diminishing fresh water supplies, the Earth's sixth mass extinction event, exponential human population growth, over-consumption and a climate system veering outside of the conditions within which human civilization developed."***

Less than a year later, in October 2018, the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change issued a report calling for dramatic action on climate change along with specific targets required to avoid catastrophic and irreparable consequences. *The New York Times* summarized the key findings and recommendations: ***"To prevent 2.7 degrees [Fahrenheit] of warming, the report said, greenhouse pollution must be reduced by 45 percent from 2010 levels by 2030, and 100 percent by 2050. It also found that, by 2050, use of coal as an electricity source would have to drop from nearly 40 percent today to between 1 and 7 percent. Renewable energy such as wind and solar, which make up about 20 percent of the electricity mix today, would have to increase to as***



*much as 67 percent.”*

BBC environmental correspondent Matt McGrath pointed out last July that to achieve the UN’s initial target of a 45% cut in carbon emissions by 2030 will require decisive global action by the end of this year—2020. His point is that reaching that initial target in just 10 years will require massive changes. So, if we don’t get going immediately, we will not make it.

Humanity is reawakening to a basic truth understood by earlier humans, by many Indigenous people today, and now confirmed by the leading scientists: We are born of and members of a living Earth community. We are now awakening to the responsibilities that come with our distinctive ability to consciously create our future. The environmental consequences of our neglect of this responsibility have been known for more than half a century, but for many people, the urgent need to act is just now sinking in.

Science is significantly advancing understanding of how this community works. We now know, for example, that Earth’s early microorganisms sequestered Earth’s excess carbons and toxins deep underground to create surface conditions that later would support more complex life forms, including humans.

In the arrogance of our quest to bend the living Earth to our will, we have organized much of our economy around extracting these carbons and toxins and releasing them back into Earth’s air, waters, and soils. This, and many other human assaults on the planet’s regenerative systems, demand immediate remedial action.

As we awaken to the consequences of our self-destructive relationship to Earth, we confront a fundamental truth of our past 5,000 years of history: The past civilizations we have celebrated as affirmations of the greatness of human accomplishment centralized power to exploit people and nature to benefit the rulers at the expense of everyone else. Each of these civilizations collapsed—and our present one is headed in that direction, too—imposing yet more suffering on massive numbers of people over the course of history.

Now, for the first time in the human experience, we are a global species with an inter-dependent global civilization. But the basic pattern of imperial domination continues. The dominant institutions are now corporations rather than governments and the dominant rulers are financiers and corporate CEOs rather than kings and emperors.

The basic dynamic remains much the same, however, and the consequences are playing out on an unprecedented scale, rendering ever more of Earth’s once-livable places unlivable, and driving millions of people from their homes. Current events are only a foretaste of what lies ahead if we continue to hold to our current path.

With luck and collective determination, we may have time to avoid self-extinction and even create a world of joy and meaning. But that will happen only if we prioritize healing over consuming, and cooperation over competition; embrace our individual and collective responsibilities to one another and the Earth; and remake our culture, institutions, technology, and infrastructure in recognition that we are part of a living Earth community. We have just entered humanity’s decisive decade. This is our time to step up to the challenge of our age and to create a future consistent with our reality as living beings born of and nurtured by a living Earth.

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\* David Korten is a member of the Club of Rome, and the author of influential books, including **“When Corporations Rule the World”** and **“Change the Story, Change the Future: A Living Economy for a Living Earth.”** His work builds on lessons from a career living and working in Africa, Asia, and Latin America on a quest to end global poverty. David is a regular contributor to **YES! Magazine**.

# **PLEAD THE CAUSE - A CALL TO STAND AGAINST INJUSTICE!**

## **An Interview with Toronto Community Advocate, Rick Tobias**

**By Lourena Zondo, MOSAIC, Fall 2019 \***

**MOSAIC:** YOUR ENTIRE CAREER YOU'VE WORKED ON THE FRONTLINES OF POVERTY IN CANADA IN VARIOUS COMPASSIONATE MINISTRIES. BUT NOW YOU'RE SAYING THAT COMPASSION IS NOT ENOUGH - WE NEED TO MOVE BEYOND IT TO JUSTICE AND ADVOCACY. WHY THE SHIFT?

**RICK:** I believe in the church's compassionate ministries. I have spent my whole life involved in compassionate service. However, compassion in and of itself does not bring to light the underlying causes and forces that severely limit the options available to the poor and marginalized. When we begin to ask what constrains the options available to the poor, we begin to touch on issues of injustice and justice.

As a teenager, working in Saint John's Crescent Valley, I heard stories of inner city children who would fall asleep in class each morning because they came to school hungry - only to become hyper, bouncing off the walls, after they "lunched" on penny candy and pop, the only lunch available for many. By the time I was 16, I realized the deck was stacked against people trapped in chronic poverty. I didn't understand all the dynamics, but the inequality was clear. Reasonable nutrition, education and health care are but a few of the "universal benefits" belonging to all Canadians that somehow don't quite make it to the poorest of the poor. In 1989, all political parties in Canada voted to end child poverty by the year 2000. We didn't come close to achieving that goal and the impact of that failure can, and often does, scar children for their whole life. Child poverty is, biblically, a justice issue.

Then there is the grave injustice faced by First Nations people who have been dispossessed - they not only lost their stakehold in the land, but they lost their land. In the Old Testament, God mandated his people to practise a "jubilee" whereby every 50 years those who lost their land get it back because it is their stakehold in society. Those who have land, or own their own homes, have more power and influence in their society. In Canada, we have a whole nation of people who lost their land. We took it and have never declared a jubilee. In Nova Scotia, there is the Black community who've been dispossessed in a whole different way: we took them from their land. I don't think we yet fully understand the multi-generational impact of these injustices - not to mention the continuing impact of residential schools, forced assimilation, racism, police profiling, to name but a few. The "dispossessed" is but one term the Bible uses to describe a people who have been denied justice.

There are no easy answers and it's hard to honestly engage in meaningful dialogue ... Justice is much harder than compassion.

**MOSAIC:** AND MORE DANGEROUS.

**RICK:** Yes, more dangerous! It irritates people and raises issues. Over the years, I've sat with numerous corporate leaders; there's always been a struggle ... what do I call them to? What is the journey I invite them to take? In the early days, I just wanted them to give some money so we could run our programs - I wanted a

compassionate response. Later, as relationships grew, there were conversations about ethics and what might be different. There were economic conversations about fair wages and shared values and issues that quickly went over my head. It's a scary thing to risk funding and relationships, but the conversations need to continue and evolve.

**MOSAIC:** FOR A CHURCH THAT WANTS TO MOVE FROM COMPASSION TO JUSTICE, WHAT IS SOMETHING PRACTICAL THEY CAN DO? HOW CAN THEY BEGIN?

**RICK:** First and foremost, as people of faith, we pray. Perhaps the core of our prayer is that God will soften our hearts towards individuals and groups who have been victimized by injustice. Perhaps we pray that God anoints us with the grace to see the beauty and worth of all people. Dare we pray all life will be precious to us?

Secondly, we study, starting with the Scriptures. How much personal time or pulpit time is given to issues of justice or even compassion? Quite bluntly, I think that given the enormous amount of Scripture - something like 2,000 references dedicated to the issue of poverty - churches should tithe their pulpit time and other teaching times. If you have 100 sermons a year, let 10 of them touch on issues of poverty, compassion and justice.

Thirdly, we need to have actual involvement. Getting personally close to people who suffer injustice helps us to better understand the issues. We can all find a way to volunteer and serve. And out of our actions should come some questions for reflection: Who are the poor and oppressed in our community? What are the injustices they face? What is God calling us to?

And finally, speak! Recently, Cheryl Bear (CBM's Indigenous Relations Specialist) posted a quote shared by Melissa McEwan (founder of a political and cultural blog): "There are times when you must speak, not because you are going to change the other person, but because if you don't speak they have changed you."

We stand in the great prophetic preaching tradition of the evangelical Church. How can we be silent?

**MOSAIC:** WHAT ABOUT CHURCHES THAT FIND IT HARD TO CONSIDER ADVOCACY OR MAYBE FEEL THAT IT IS TOO POLITICAL, THAT CHRISTIANS SHOULDN'T BE INVOLVED?

**RICK:** The gospel doesn't force us to engage; it invites us. So we have the right to disengage or remain disengaged. However, we can't ignore one of the largest bodies of biblical teaching and still claim to be living a biblical faith. Again, almost 2,000 verses of Scripture call us to action. In calling us to justice and to advocacy, the Bible focuses on four groups beyond all others – aliens, widows, orphans and the poor – who are deemed most susceptible to injustice and therefore are to be the prime recipients of our justice-related activities. This is not to suggest that other justice issues are of no consequence. We stand against injustice wherever and whenever it raises its evil head. Still there is a biblical understanding that these four groups are particularly prone to be excluded, preyed upon and deemed less than worthy.

I wasn't at Yonge Street Mission long when I learned that not all widows lost their husband to death and not all orphans lost their parents to death. Women become widowed when their men disappear or when they are forced to flee domestic violence. Children become orphaned when parental neglect or abuse leaves them to fend for themselves. Often the children we call "runaways" are, in truth, orphans.

But it is interesting that the alien, stranger or foreigner are most often named first in God's call to compassionate intervention. The Israelite did not get to say, "We care for our own first!" Biblical hospitality demanded that the sojourner in the land was first when care was to be extended – an interesting concept in an age when many contend to exclude the refugee!

**MOSAIC:** THE PROPHETS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT WERE ALWAYS CHALLENGING THEIR SOCIETY, THEIR PEOPLE, WITH GOD'S DESIRE TO SEE JUSTICE DONE. WHAT IS YOUR CHALLENGE TO THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY TODAY?

**RICK:** I think my number one challenge would be to "plead the cause." King Josiah would be my example. In Jeremiah 22, we see that King Josiah lived a just life – he was personally just in all of his dealings. But we also see that he did justice. He intervened on behalf of the poor and oppressed. However, he not only acted, but out of his actions he spoke. He pled the cause; he became an advocate – for all of the oppressed and needy. He was active in addressing systemic injustices in his society. The message is clear. "He pled the cause of the afflicted and needy; then it was well. Is not that what it means to know Me? declares the Lord." (Jeremiah 22:16)

Perhaps our failure to speak gives birth to the question, "Do they know the Lord?"

**"Does the church have a reasoned position on Canada's dispossessed people? Can we live with the fact there may need to be a lot more 'Truth Telling' before we get to the 'Reconciliation?'"**

Maybe we begin by using our pulpits and pastoral relationships to raise questions like, "How much is enough?" Maybe we move beyond a minimum wage discussion and ask questions about a living wage. Dare we ask about the work conditions and hourly wages of the nannies who tend our children? Or what is our ethical response when candy manufacturers tell us they "cannot" guarantee that our chocolate is not child labour free? Does our church have a reasoned position on Canada's dispossessed peoples? Can we live with the fact there may need to be a lot more "Truth Telling" before we get to the "Reconciliation"? Do we have the courage to face issues of injustice head on? Maybe one of the dangers is that we have to face ourselves.

**MOSAIC:** A LOOK IN THE MIRROR – THAT DOES TAKE COURAGE! CAN YOU SPEAK MORE ABOUT THAT?

**RICK:** We have all been victims of injustice at some point in life, usually a personal injustice – someone has cheated us or we have been bullied, excluded, or a victim of crime or corporate fraud. Some of us have experienced a more institutional or systemic injustice – we were caught up in the Sixties Scoop or became a victim of abuse at the hands of clergy, teachers, coaches, orphanage workers, youth leaders, etc. Perhaps we have all been the wounded sheep Ezekiel talks about when he calls down wrath on the shepherds who fail to protect and heal the sheep. (Ezekiel 34:2-4) Perhaps our experience has made us overly focused on our rights or we've become impatient and uncaring towards others. Or perhaps our attitude is, "I survived, why can't they?"

Conversely, we have all been oppressors who have hurt others. Maybe we cheated in our business practices, overcharged for our products and services. Maybe our retirement fund is a little fatter because of unethical products – like those that use slave or near-slave labour? If one's full-time salary is not enough to live on, is that not slave labour? Maybe we harbour racist or sexist attitudes that we fear will surface if we get too close to the issues. Ezekiel suggests that it is not simply the rich and powerful that commit injustice; the "people" are also guilty. (Ezekiel 22:25-29)

As Ray Bakke (a leader in urban ministry) says, "Until our heart is liberated by Jesus, we will all be oppressors." The Bible uses at least 40 different Hebrew and Greek words to describe the various forms of injustice we inflict on each other. Injustice is, in and of itself, a major body of biblical literature that we have skillfully avoided. Knowing our own shortcomings, maybe it is easier to shy away from social justice and lose ourselves in "personal spirituality." Yet despite our own scars and sins we are called to stand against injustice and to stand for justice.

NO TURNING BACK – LEEANN MCKENNA / BPFNA \*

We've just finished playing the "*Village Game*," a rambunctious route to understanding economics and, in particular, economics as the root cause of violence. Over a couple of hours, participants have had the opportunity to imagine and create, at least on flip-chart paper, their "ideal village." The six or seven villages then give a village tour for the others, pointing out the beauty, the self-sufficiency in governance, education, health care, manufacturing and food production. They have given their village a name that reflects the passion they have put into the exercise. Suddenly, into this idyll marches a trio, dressed up as developers, international financiers and a recognizable—if not particularly trustworthy—collaborator. They are suspicious, but they are polite, inviting the visitors in for tea and conversation that becomes increasingly heated.

The villagers decline the offers of "development and assorted emoluments"—and then the action takes off as the visitors wield magic markers like bulldozers, chainsaws and tanks, destroying forests and fields, playgrounds, river beds and neighbourhoods—to "improve" them with McDonald's, Walmarts, oil rigs and gold mining—with the tailings dumped in their river. As the financier starts to rip off pieces of their villages, the resistance mounts. Villagers form tight circles around their villages. At one point, one of the villagers takes what is left of his village and stuffs it up his shirt. The visitors stop and everyone goes quiet. "Oh, that's actually against the rules," the developer says. Painfully, slowly, the young man removes it from his shirt and lays it back on the floor. The financier grabs it and walks off. The game is called. It is difficult to wrap words around the emotion in the room. The grief is palpable. As we begin to unpack the experience, the observations, feelings and meaning, one elderly man cries out, "*Why didn't you come years ago when we needed you?*" He weeps.

They talk about what their economy used to look like, their proud exports of rice and a fish caught off Panay that was a delicacy. They are now reduced to imports from Vietnam, their share of the "*export quality*" fish reduced to the heads. The public services are now privately owned. Their largest export now is people—people to raise other people's children, tend to other people's sick, to the sex trade. It is a powerful exercise designed to invite participants into a new understanding of their own local and national economies—within a global pandemic of neo-liberalism. In the course of the training, participants move from a sense of despair to a sense of agency.

COVID-19, as with the rest of the world, has confined me to barracks, with training projects in the Philippines, Uganda, Ecuador and North East India postponed indefinitely. It took me awhile to accept the gift—because everyone doesn't have it—for what it could be. These are, after all, days of reckoning, a "*portal, a gateway, between one world and the next.*" "Normal" is not our destination. This virus has irrevocably severed our future from our past. And what arrives is up to us. It is going to be either much worse under the business-as-usual types; or it is going to be much better, guided by what Otto Scharmer calls "*a new superpower in the making: citizen activism.*"

The deficit-slayers are strangely silent. Right-wingers are fretting about people in precarious work who might "fall through the cracks," sounding like born-again socialists. Leading climate-change deniers are urging us to listen to doctors and scientists. Government leaders are frankly admitting that they don't know what's going to happen next. And then people begin to say out loud: If precarious work with no sick-days or long-term care facilities cut to the bone or underpaid and over-worked Personal Support Workers and those who are keeping our supply chains functioning, cutbacks to everything that matters, is wrong during a pandemic, it's always wrong. **There is no turning back!**

Our Prime Minister stands before us every day at 11:15 adding each day to the list of those in need of help who will be getting it—and soon. Governments are listening to multiple layers of Canadians in "congregant" living spaces—from long-term care to jails and homeless shelters to group homes; to the self-employed, those on social assistance, laid-off employees and employers concerned that they will

have to fold. They are listening to Indigenous communities, renters and landlords, low-income families without devices and internet to enable online learning for their student children, students without summer jobs hoping to head for university. Our safety net is being rewoven—and then some. **No turning back!**

Instead of the \$30 billion they requested, the oil patch got \$1.7 billion—to be used to create jobs cleaning up their mess. Calls for transition funds—out of tarsands and into green energy—are coming from across the political spectrum. The crowing after the NAFTA signing has been muted as it becomes clearer every day what a doomsday machine we have created, how fragile the systems that support us. With trade agreements founded on just-in-time manufacturing, lowest-wage migration of jobs, and neo-liberal economics, disaster capitalism has a free hand. **Not this time! No way!**

There is a great uncovering taking place, a shaking off of a deadly complacency. We know things now that we didn't notice before or couldn't name. We know that this pandemic is a dress rehearsal for climate catastrophe. We now know that the next time governments say they cannot afford something, a social benefit necessary for well-being—clean water in First Nations communities, pharma care, home care and oral health care, clean waterways, legal aid—we will not believe them.

We know that our future requires a pivot from war. Tell Lockheed Martin that we can do without those warships; I'm sure they'll understand. And for God's sake, end the shipments of LAVs to the Saudis. We've shown we haven't forgotten how to retool: but this time not for war but for jobs bent to human need and creation care. We must hold tight and continue to pull back the veil.

\* LeeAnn McKenna is a Canadian global trainer-facilitator in Conflict Transformation, specializing in the intersections of violence with gender, race, tribe, religion and economics. She is a former Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America board and staff member. For more information on her NGO, go to [www.partera.ca](http://www.partera.ca). This article appeared in the Baptist Peacemaker Newsletter, June 12, 2020.

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### Post-Election Day

Walter Brueggemann (b. 1933)

You creator God  
who has ordered us  
in families and communities,  
in clans and tribes,  
in states and nations.

You creator God  
who enacts your governance  
in ways overt and  
in ways hidden.

You exercise your will for  
peace and for justice  
and for freedom.

We give you thanks for the  
peaceable order of our nation  
and for the chance of choosing—  
all the manipulative money  
notwithstanding.

We pray now for new governance that  
your will and purpose may prevail,  
that our leaders may have a  
sense of justice and goodness,  
that we as citizens may care about  
the public face of your purpose.

We pray in the name of Jesus  
who was executed  
by the authorities.

\* A professor emeritus of Old Testament studies at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia, Brueggemann has authored over seventy books. This poem is taken from his Prayers for a Privileged People (Nashville: Abingdon, 2008), pp. 149.

**KEEPING QUIET***by Pablo Neruda \**

Now we will count to twelve  
and we will all keep still.

For once on the face of the earth,  
let's not speak in any language;  
let's stop for one second,  
and not move our arms so much.

It would be an exotic moment  
without rush, without engines;  
we would all be together  
in a sudden strangeness.

Fisherman in the cold sea  
would not harm whales  
and the man gathering salt  
would look at his hurt hands.

Those who prepare green wars,  
wars with gas, wars with fire,  
victories with no survivors,  
would put on clean clothes  
and walk about with their brothers  
in the shade, doing nothing.

What I want should not be confused  
with total inactivity.  
Life is what it is about;  
I want no truck with death.

If we were not so single-minded  
about keeping our lives moving,  
and for once could do nothing,  
perhaps a huge silence  
might interrupt this sadness  
of never understanding ourselves,  
of threatening ourselves with death.  
Perhaps the earth can teach us  
as when everything seems dead  
and later proves to be alive.

Now I'll count up to twelve  
and you keep quiet and I will go.

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\* Neruda is the best known Chilean poet.  
He won the Nobel Prize for Literature  
in 1971.

**Pandemic**

What if you thought of it  
as the Jews consider the Sabbath—  
the most sacred of times?  
Cease from travel.  
Cease from buying and selling.  
Give up, just for now,  
on trying to make the world  
different than it is.  
Sing. Pray. Touch only those  
to whom you commit your life.  
Center down.  
And when your body has become still,  
reach out with your heart.  
Know that we are connected  
in ways that are terrifying and beautiful.  
(You could hardly deny it now.)  
Know that our lives  
are in one another's hands.  
(Surely, that has come clear.)  
Do not reach out your hands.  
Reach out your heart.  
Reach out your words.  
Reach out all the tendrils  
of compassion that move, invisibly,  
where we cannot touch.  
Promise this world your love—  
for better or for worse,  
in sickness and in health,  
so long as we all shall live.

**By Lynn Ungar, March 2020**

**You can read more of Lynn's poetry  
and learn about her work at  
<http://www.lynnungar.com>.**



## Knowing From The Bottom

Fr. Richard Rohr (CAC) \*

The vast majority of people throughout history have been poor, disabled, or oppressed in some way (i.e., “on the bottom”) and would have read history in terms of a need for change, but most of history has been written and interpreted from the side of the winners. The unique exception is the revelation called the Bible, which is an alternative history from the side of the often enslaved, dominated, and oppressed people of Israel, culminating in the scapegoat figure of Jesus himself.

We see in the Gospels that it’s the lame, the poor, the blind, the prostitutes, the tax collectors, the sinners, the outsiders, and the foreigners who tend to follow Jesus. It is those on the inside and the top—the Roman occupiers, the chief priests and their conspirators—who crucify him. Shouldn’t that tell us something really important about perspective? Every viewpoint is a view from a point. We must be able to critique our own perspective if we are to see a fuller truth.

Liberation theology—which focuses on freeing people from religious, political, social, and economic oppression—is mostly ignored by Western Christianity. Perhaps that’s not surprising when we consider who interpreted the Scriptures for the last seventeen hundred years. The empowered clergy class enforced their own perspective instead of that of the marginalized, who first received the message with such excitement and hope. Once Christianity became the established religion of the Roman Empire (after 313), we largely stopped reading the Bible from the side of the poor and the oppressed. We read it from the side of the political establishment and the usually comfortable priesthood instead of from the side of people hungry for justice and truth. Shifting our priorities to make room for the powerless instead of accommodating the powerful is the only way to detach religion from its common marriage to power, money, and self-importance.

When Scripture is read through the eyes of vulnerability—what we call the “preferential option for the poor” or the “bias from the bottom”—it will always be liberating and transformative. Scripture will not be used to oppress or impress. The question is no longer, “How can I maintain the status quo?” (which just happens to benefit me), but “How can we all grow and change together?” Now we would have no top to protect, and the so-called “bottom” becomes the place of education, real change, and transformation for all.

The bottom, or what Jesus called “the poor in Spirit” in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:3), is where we have no privilege to prove or protect but much to seek and become. Jesus called such people “blessed”. Dorothy Day (1897–1980) said much the same: *“The only way to live in any true security is to live so close to the bottom that when you fall you do not have far to drop, you do not have much to lose.”* From that place, where few would expect or choose to be, we can be used as instruments of transformation and liberation for the rest of the world.

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\* Centre for Action & Contemplation -- Daily Meditation – Feb. 10, 2020