Beloved Conversations Coming to First UU!

By Jan Garbosky for Journey Toward Wholeness (JTW)

Beginning in April and for the following 18 months, 120 of us will have the opportunity to participate in Beloved Conversations: Meditations on Race and Ethnicity. The program—developed by Dr. Mark Hicks of the Fabs Collaborative at Meadville Lombard Theological School—is a teaching and learning curriculum and spiritual journey designed to help us understand institutional racism, challenge our own beliefs, and help us to become accomplices working for a racially just world, both within and beyond First UU.

Beloved Conversations asserts that:
- dismantling white supremacy is, first and foremost, spiritual work: on the individual, interpersonal, institutional, and systemic levels for both people of color and [non-people of color],
- in order to loosen the stronghold of racism, we must learn to nurture relationships of resilience, courage, skill, and radical imagination to help build a world for which our hearts yearn, but our eyes have not yet seen.

To develop this “spiritual musculature,” Beloved Conversations makes space for individuals to understand how harmful narratives about race live with and among us and shape our actions and our worldviews. The program also pushes us to understand racism as much more than individual prejudice or bias in isolation, helping congregations to look critically and compassionately at the ways in which the congregation’s culture, practices, and norms support and perpetuate white supremacy culture. And, because this is spiritual work, Beloved Conversations also attempts to help congregations move from critique of what is, into creation of what could be—the Beloved Community in which all of us are free, whole, and flourishing.

Opening with a 1.5 day immersive retreat, participants are encouraged to go deep quickly and form a learning community together. Following the retreat, groups of 10-15 meet for eight 2-hour sessions. Each session is designed to help the group examine their assumptions about race and to develop skills to build racial justice as individuals, as a faith community, and in partnership with others beyond the walls of the congregation.

Learn more about Beloved Conversations and its impact from the following videos:
- Why Beloved Conversations: https://vimeo.com/162554100 (10:22)
- Bearing Witness Part 2: https://vimeo.com/173614666 (12:44)

In deep gratitude, the Journey Toward Wholeness team thanks the following Advance Givers who pledged more than $8,500 toward our goal of raising $10,000 needed to fund 3 cohorts of Beloved Conversations:

Rev. Lorne Brouillard
Stevie Carmody, Intern Minister
Kay Chandler & Sue Marberry
Joan Couplis & Tomas Firle
Jan Garbosky
Angela Garcia-Sims
Rev. Julie Forest & Macen
Outwater
Rev. Jim & Berry Grant
Lee & Scott GrandSmith
Bob & Lisa Hartman
Lawrence & Suzanne Hess
Steve Howard

Our Monthly Publication
February 2019; Vol 13 No. 2

Our Website:  http://www.firstuusandiego.org  On Facebook:  https://www.facebook.com/firstuuandiego

To view sermon video casts, click on these YouTube or Vimeo buttons:
Giving:  http://www.firstuusandiego.org/giving-overview
Click on these Amazon Affiliate or iGive buttons for your online shopping and First Church receives a portion of the sales. Secure and private.

Our Online E-mail & Web Addresses
First Words Editor & Submissions, Nancy Fisk: afire@iuscs.com
To be added to the E-mail List: freewords@firstuusandiego.org
Scheduling of Church Property Requests: scheduling@firstuusandiego.org
Order of Service submissions: s@firstuusandiego.org
The Window submissions (Church bulletin): window@firstuusandiego.org
Care Network: carenetwork@firstuusandiego.org
First Church Web Site
Main Website: http://www.firstuusandiego.org
South Bay Campus:
http://www.firstuusandiego.org/out-of-the-south-bay
http://www.firstuusandiego.org/giving-overview

Beloved Conversations

Meditations on Race and Ethnicity

Developed by Dr. Mark Hicks of the Fabs Collaborative at Meadville Lombard Theological School

March 2019; Vol 12 No. 2

Our Website:  http://www.firstuusandiego.org  On Facebook:  https://www.facebook.com/firstuuandiego

To view sermon video casts, click on these YouTube or Vimeo buttons:
Giving:  http://www.firstuusandiego.org/giving-overview
Click on these Amazon Affiliate or iGive buttons for your online shopping and First Church receives a portion of the sales. Secure and private.

Our Online E-mail & Web Addresses
First Words Editor & Submissions, Nancy Fisk: afire@iuscs.com
To be added to the E-mail List: freewords@firstuusandiego.org
Scheduling of Church Property Requests: scheduling@firstuusandiego.org
Order of Service submissions: s@firstuusandiego.org
The Window submissions (Church bulletin): window@firstuusandiego.org
Care Network: carenetwork@firstuusandiego.org
First Church Web Site
Main Website: http://www.firstuusandiego.org
South Bay Campus:
http://www.firstuusandiego.org/out-of-the-south-bay
http://www.firstuusandiego.org/giving-overview

Beloved Conversations

Meditations on Race and Ethnicity

Developed by Dr. Mark Hicks of the Fabs Collaborative at Meadville Lombard Theological School

March 2019; Vol 12 No. 2

Our Website:  http://www.firstuusandiego.org  On Facebook:  https://www.facebook.com/firstuuandiego

To view sermon video casts, click on these YouTube or Vimeo buttons:
Giving:  http://www.firstuusandiego.org/giving-overview
Click on these Amazon Affiliate or iGive buttons for your online shopping and First Church receives a portion of the sales. Secure and private.

Our Online E-mail & Web Addresses
First Words Editor & Submissions, Nancy Fisk: afire@iuscs.com
To be added to the E-mail List: freewords@firstuusandiego.org
Scheduling of Church Property Requests: scheduling@firstuusandiego.org
Order of Service submissions: s@firstuusandiego.org
The Window submissions (Church bulletin): window@firstuusandiego.org
Care Network: carenetwork@firstuusandiego.org
First Church Web Site
Main Website: http://www.firstuusandiego.org
South Bay Campus:
http://www.firstuusandiego.org/out-of-the-south-bay
http://www.firstuusandiego.org/giving-overview
While we aspire, as Unitarian Universalists, for Love to be the spirit of our church, we may not always agree on what Love looks like when practiced in religious community. Our month’s spiritual theme, “Just Love,” nudges me toward exploring both the simplicity of acting from Love, and the capacity of Love to hold the complexity of transformation towards justice.

Over the last weekend in January, Unitarian Universalists from San Diego-area congregations gathered to learn, worship, and sing with the Rev. Jason Shelton, a composer, musician, and minister in our faith. Rev. Jason’s workshop entitled “The Faith We Sing,” reminded us of the power and necessity of singing together the good news of Unitarian Universalism: that we can be many and different, together. What, and how, we sing together matters.

Sometimes there are songs in our hymnals that we might not “agree with” — because of their theology, or their style — that hold deep resonance for someone else we worship alongside. Can we act on our love by singing and supporting worshipful expression that is not always our personal preference? And indeed, how may we grow from it?

Simultaneously, our own history — told in the songs we sing together — has often created a “We” that does not feel like home for everyone. We must challenge this reality. Rev. Jason powerfully recalled the origin of his song “Standing on the Side of Love,” articulating a faith-based claim for marriage equality. But he also spoke of how he was challenged by accessibility advocates for depending on a metaphor of able bodies (“Standing”) in expressing our faith. Rev. Jason changed the refrain — “Answering the Call of Love” — and in doing so, helped our faith more fully speak to everyone.

But that transformative work is hard: for the advocates who loved our faith enough to speak up, and for Rev. Jason who let go of part of what he created in the name of the Love he wrote about. May we too be willing to act in Love towards a more inclusive and more just faith, that we can sing to the world.

I speak these words with blood on my lips
And wounds on the souls of my feet.
I, have come here to fight.
But this woman, this white, told me no
“We do not want a revolution”
Broken down I begged “why?” stammering over parched raspy lung.
“Because people will die!” She raised her hands to the air.

It was almost as if I could see her hands lift the shroud between our two worlds.
For her, there was something to loose.
For me, to get down from this noose.
I’m almost completely consumed with the illness of trauma passed down through my family.
Through back breaking desperation
Constantly holding up structures that serve someone else.

This isn’t my world.
This isn’t my stuff.
This isn’t my house.
But I built it.
And I buried my hopes beneath the foundation where snakes and rodents live.
You stand on my porch
Telling me to stand down
You eat my food with my silver
You say, even hunger can be conquered
You cover yourself with my blankets, in my bed,
And tell me the cold is only worsened with dread.
You have taken my wealth, my health and my dollar
But when I holler in agony, you whisper sweetly, “ssshhhhh, more quietly”

When I look in the mirror I see faulty shame,
porous guilt for wanting back what should be in my name.
Sure I can ask nicely, and I have.
Sure I can write letters and requests.
Fill out forms at my desk.
I can take questions and write answers.
Now I can vote and pick my masters.

So now what,
I’m supposed to just sit here, and wait?
I hear the complaints
But I’m not here to debate.
My right to life is moral obligation
Not a platform for negation
We seem to think we can just converse ourselves out of this mess.
That some how, despite all the evidence against it, our situation is somehow “workable”
white people, you have our money, you have our lively hoeds in the palm of your hands and you seem to think this is our issue.
We need to fight along with you
Revolution has no right time
It has no clear rhythm or rhyme
It is chaos
The unraveling of the world that we know
The building of a structure that has never left the blueprints,
A mismatch sequence of strength and resistance.
And it’s scary
And it’s raw and its real
But for us it is hope, its the prospect of freedom and safety
The quieting of sirens and waking
One page fewer in the morning obituary
One page fewer of ‘could have been’
One year fewer of me or them.
It’s no more needing, no more begging, no more praying to the god of our oppressors
It’s a warm home, in a safe city, in a soft bed with food for the taking.
It’s love and vision and it all starts with one, real decision.
Will you stand with us, or bail?
it’s our people in jail
and these guys in their ties are wagging their tales
and with action they win
with inaction we fail.
Reflection: “Go Back and Get It”

By Kendric Hornsby

Sankofa is a term from the Twi language of the Akan tribe in Ghana. It is part of a phrase that means “it is not taboo to fetch what is at risk of being left behind,” or put simply, “go back and get it.” It is symbolized by a bird that is flying with its feet forward, while its head is turned backward, carrying a pebble of knowledge in its beak.

When black history is taught in school, we learn about the men (Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, and Huey Newton), but the women are barely mentioned—if they are mentioned at all! This trend is unfortunately continuing in modern times as the black women who started several movements get overshadowed by the black men and white people who joined later. It’s time to remember the black women.

We associate Martin Luther King Jr. with the bus boycotts, but none of it would have happened had Rosa Parks given up her seat. Coretta Scott King is often noted as simply being the supportive wife of our great hero, yet her contributions to the Civil Rights Movement continued well beyond those earlier years.

Fannie Lou Hamer was a powerful spokeswoman and activist for voting and women’s rights, and organized Mississippi Freedom Summer as co-founded with Ella Baker and others, the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).

Ella Baker participated in sit-ins and freedom rides. Before that she served as the Director of Branches, the highest position a woman could hold in the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People). Her organizing skills helped form the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), a key coalition in the Civil Rights Movement.

Paul Murray was the first African American to receive a J.S.D from the Yale Law School and went on to get her full law degree at Howard. Her book, States’ Laws on Race and Color, would be used as evidence in Brown vs. Board of Education. She founded the National Organization for Women (NOW) and became the first black woman Episcopal priest.

In modern times, black women continue to lead the civil rights movement.

Most people my age know about Dassy McKesson, his activism, and his famous vet, but fewer know Black Lives Matter was founded by three black women: Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi.

Black women founded the “Say Her Name” campaign to raise awareness of the black women who are victims of police brutality.

In 2015, Bree Newsome removed the Confederate flag from the South Carolina State Capitol. Soon after, then Gov. Nikki Haley to sign a bill removing the flag from the building.

And it doesn’t just end at civil rights for black people. Abelismionist Sojourner Truth gave one of the most famous women’s rights speeches in American history: “Ain’t I A Woman?”

Tara Burke founded the #MeToo movement.

In 2018 Patricia Okoumou climbed the Statue of Liberty to protest the family separation of immigrants. Black women even saved us from ourselves by overwhelmingly voting against alleged pedophile Roy Moore in the Alabama Senate election.

And the influence of black women doesn’t just extend to activism.

Black women got US astronauts into space and to the moon, allowing the United States to win the Space Race. Not to mention all the scientific advancements those black women made to achieve that goal.

Olympic Gold Medalist Simone Biles is the first woman—not black woman, but woman—to win Four All-Around World titles and has the most Gold Medals of any gender in gymnastics.

Black female doctors worldwide are saving countless lives and healing the sick.

Even today, despite facing some of the worst academic discrimination our white supremacist society has to offer, black women have become the most educated group of people in this country.

In both the past and in the present, black women have been at the forefront of progress. As long as we continue to voice and document their accomplishments, they will not be forgotten. But we can’t just remember them, and we can’t just rely on them to save us. We need to stand up and save ourselves!

I didn’t have to look far to find an example of this month’s theme: Just Love. My parents are some of the best models of justice and love that I’ve known.

The early story of their relationship has all the gushy details that might lead one to believe that love is nothing more than a romantic feeling. They grew up in the same neighborhood and went to the same church, but really didn’t associate with each other.

Then, in his sophomore year of high school, my dad went on a school retreat. Out of nowhere, he had a dream about my mom, got her a souvenir pencil from the retreat center gift shop which (also out of nowhere) he gave to her, and they’ve been together ever since. It’s disgusting, really, how cute they are together.

But that’s not what makes their relationship stand out for me as an example of Just Love. While the romantic details are present, there are equal amounts of work, practicality, wisdom, and an ability to face life’s challenges together. When my sisters and I came along, my parents decided one of them should stay home with us until we were old enough to go to school. Both of them were teachers, but my dad took a second job as a night janitor so that my mom didn’t have to work. It couldn’t have been easy for either of them, but they somehow managed to maintain a balanced family life and still have time for each other.

Each summer, while my dad was off for the summer, they would save up and do one major home project. One year they decided to wallpaper the house. Prior to starting the project, they sat my sisters and I down to prepare us for the experience. They warned us that it was going to be messy, but they also warned us that it was likely to be stressful. They prepared us to hear what might sound like arguing, but assured us that it wasn’t really anger – just frustration. That little talk stuck with me. It let me know that it was possible to be mad with someone and madly in love with them at the same time. There was never any real fighting in our home, but when there were arguments, they didn’t try to hide them or put on a fake front “for the sake of the children.” Instead, they did something, in my opinion, much harder: They argued in a way that modeled what a healthy argument between two people who love each other looks like.

Even now, I’m amazed when I think about that. My mom spent her whole day managing the house and dealing with my sisters and I. My dad spent eight hours teaching middle school English and then spent the evenings mopping floors and cleaning bathrooms. Then, in their most frustrated and angry moments, they still managed to “fight” in a way that modeled justice to their children! More than any of the romantic details of their life-long relationship, that taught me what love means.

Even now, as my dad’s Alzheimer’s makes for some frustrating days, they continue to model how love can find a way to respond justly in some very unjust circumstances. They remind me that “true love” isn’t about getting to feel perpetually happy with someone until you waltz blissfully off into the sunset. Sure, there will be happiness, bliss, sunsets, and maybe even some waltzing, but, more importantly, there will be an ability to live more justly and lovingly because of the love you share.
Reflection: “Go Back and Get it”
By Kendric Hopnaby

Sankofa is a term from the Twi language of the Akan tribe in Ghana. It is part of a phrase that means “it is not taboo to fetch what is at risk of being left behind,” or put simply, “go back and get it.” It is symbolized by a bird that is flying with its feet forward, while its head is turned backward, carrying a pebble of knowledge in its beak.

When black history is taught in school, we learn about the men (Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, and Huey Newton), but the women are barely mentioned—if they are mentioned at all! This trend is unfortunately continuing in modern times as the black women who started several movements get overshadowed by the black men and white people who joined later. It’s time to remember the black women.

We associate Martin Luther King Jr. with the bus boycotts, but none of it would have happened had Rosa Parks given up her seat. Coretta Scott King is often noted as simply being the supportive wife of our great hero, yet her contributions to the Civil Rights Movement continued well beyond those earlier years.

Fannie Lou Hamer was a powerful spokeswoman and activist for voting and women’s rights, and organized Mississippi Freedom Summer as well as co-founded with Ella Baker and others, the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Ella Baker participated in sit-ins and freedom rides. Before that she served as the Director of Branches, the highest position a woman could hold in the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People). Her organizing skills helped form the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), a key coalition in the Civil Rights Movement.

Paula Murray was the first African American to receive a J.S.D from the Yale Law School and went on to get her full law degree at Howard. Her book, States’ Laws on Race and Color, would be used as evidence in Brown vs. Board of Education. She founded the National Organization for Women (NOW) and became the first black woman Episcopal priest.

In modern times, black women continue to lead the civil rights movement.

Most people my age know about Darsy McKeon, his activism, and his famous vest, but fewer know Black Lives Matter was founded by three black women: Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi.

Black women founded the “Say Her Name” campaign to raise awareness of the black women who are victims of police brutality.

In 2015, Bree Newsome removed the Confederate flag from the South Carolina State Capitol. Soon after, then Gov. Nikki Haley to sign a bill removing the flag from the building.

And it doesn’t just end at civil rights for black people.

Abolitionist Sojourner Truth gave one of the most famous women's rights speeches in American history: "Ain't I A Woman?"

Tarana Burke founded the #MeToo movement. In 2018 Patricia Okoumou climbed the Statue of Liberty to protest the family separation of immigrants.

Black women even saved us from ourselves by overwhelmingly voting against alleged pedophile Roy Moore in the Alabama Senate election.

And the influence of black women doesn’t just extend to activism.

Black women got US astronauts into space and to the moon, allowing the United States to win the Space Race. Not to mention all the scientific advancements those black women made to achieve that goal.

Olympic Gold Medalist Simone Biles is the first woman—not black woman, but woman—to win four All-Around World titles and has the most Gold Medals of any gender in gymnastics.

Black female doctors worldwide are saving countless lives and healing the sick.

Even today, despite facing some of the worst academic discrimination our white supremacist society has to offer, black women have become the most educated group of people in this country.

In both the past and in the present, black women have been at the forefront of progress. As long as we continue to voice and document their accomplishments, they will not be forgotten. But we can’t just remember them, and we can’t just rely on them to save us. We need to stand up and save ourselves!

Justice In Love
By Tony Bianca, Interim RE Coordinator

I didn’t have to look far to find an example of this month’s theme: Just Love. My parents are some of the best models of justice and love that I’ve known.

The early story of their relationship has all the gushy details that might lead one to believe that love is nothing more than a romantic feeling. They grew up in the same neighborhood and went to the same church, but really didn’t associate with each other. Then, in his sophomore year of high school, my dad went on a school retreat. Out of nowhere, he had a dream about my mom, got her a souvenir pencil from the retreat center gift shop which (also out of nowhere) he gave to her, and they’ve been together ever since. It’s disgusting, really, how cute they are together.

But that’s not what makes their relationship stand out for me as an example of Just Love. While the romantic details are present, there are equal amounts of work, practicality, wisdom, and an ability to face life’s challenges together. When my sisters and I came along, my parents decided one of them should stay home with us until we were old enough to go to school. Both of them were teachers, but my dad took a second job as a night janitor so that my mom didn’t have to work. It couldn’t have been easy for either of them, but they somehow managed to maintain a balanced family life and still have time for each other.

Each summer, while my dad was off for the summer, they would save up and do one major home project. One year they decided to wallpaper the house. Prior to starting the project, they sat my sisters and I down to prepare us for the experience. They warned us that it was going to be messy, but they also warned us that it was likely to be stressful. They prepared us to hear what might sound like arguing, but assured us that it wasn’t really anger – just frustration. That little talk stuck with me. It let me know that it was possible to be mad with someone and madly in love with them at the same time. There was never any real fighting in our home, but when there were arguments, they didn’t try to hide them or put on a fake front “for the sake of the children.” Instead, they did something, in my opinion, much harder: They argued in a way that modeled what a healthy argument between two people who love each other looks like.

Even now, in my thirties, I think about that. My mom spent her whole day managing the house and dealing with my sisters and I. My dad spent eight hours teaching middle school English and then spent the evenings mopping floors and cleaning bathrooms. Then, in their most frustrated and angry moments, they still managed to “fight” in a way that modeled justice to their children! More than any of the romantic details of their life-long relationship, that taught me what love means.

Even now, as my dad’s Alzheimer’s makes for some frustrating days, they continue to model how love can find a way to respond justly in some very unjust circumstances. They remind me that “true love” isn’t about getting to feel perpetually happy with someone until you wake blissfully off into the sunset. Sure, there will be happiness, bliss, sunsets, and maybe even some wailing, but, more importantly, there will be an ability to live more justly and lovingly because of the love you share.
February 2019; Vol 13 No. 2

Just Love

By Stevie Carmody, Intern Minister

While we aspire, as Unitarian Universalists, for Love to be the spirit of our church, we may not always agree on what Love looks like when practiced in religious community. Our month’s spiritual theme, “Just Love,” nudges me towards exploring both the simplicity of acting from Love, and the capacity of Love to hold the complexity of transformation towards justice.

Over the last weekend in January, Unitarian Universalists from San Diego-area congregations gathered to learn, worship, and sing with the Rev. Jason Shelton, a composer, musician, and minister in our faith. Rev. Jason’s workshop, entitled “The Faith We Sing,” reminded us of the power and necessity of singing together the good news of Unitarian Universalism: that we can be many and different, together. What, and how, we sing together matters.

Sometimes there are songs in our hymnals that we might not “agree with”—because of their theology, or their style—that hold deep resonance for someone else we worship alongside. Can we act on our love by singing and supporting worshipful expression that is not always our personal preference? And indeed, how we may grow from it!

Simultaneously, our own history—told in the songs we sing together—has often created a “We” that does not feel like home for everyone. We must challenge this reality. Rev. Jason powerfully recalled the origin of his song “Standing on the Side of Love,” articulating a faith-based claim for marriage equality. But he also spoke of how he was challenged by accessibility advocates for depending on a metaphor of able bodies (“Standing”) in expressing our faith. Rev. Jason changed the refrain—now, “Answering the Call of Love”—and in doing so, helped our faith more fully speak to everyone.

But that transformative work is hard: for the advocates who loved our faith enough to speak up, and for Rev. Jason who let go of part of what he created in the name of the Love he wrote about. May we too be willing to act in Love towards a more inclusive and more just faith, that we can sing to the world.

February 3, 2019
Hillcrest Services—“Loving Idols”
Steve Carmody, Intern Minister

South Bay Service—“Owning Our Past / Reconocer nuestro pasado”
Rev. Tania Márquez, Assistant Minister

February 10, 2019
Hillcrest Services—“Somethin’s Got a Hold on Me”
Rev. Ian W. Riddell, Minister of Music & Worship Arts

South Bay Service—“Generous Love”
Steve Carmody, Intern Minister

February 17, 2019
Hillcrest Services—“Called to Beloved Community”
Rev. Susan Frederik Grey

South Bay Service—“Somethin’s Got a Hold on Me”
Rev. Ian W. Riddell, Minister of Music & Worship Arts

February 24, 2019
Hillcrest Services—“Training To Be An Awesome Human Being”
Rev. Arvid Straube

South Bay Service—
Rev. Tania Márquez, Assistant Minister

Worship Times:

Hillcrest Campus: Sunday, 9:30 am and 11:30 am (ASL Interpretation)
South Bay Campus: Sunday, 9:30 am (Intergenerational, Bilingual)

February’s Transformational Theme is “Just Love”

February 2019; Vol 13 No. 2

A Poem

By Alex Mack

I speak these words with blood on my lips
And wounds on the souls of my feet.
I, have come here to fight.

But this woman, this white, told me no
“We do not want a revolution”
Broken down I begged “why?” smothering over parched rasp lung.

“Because people will die!” She raised her hands to the air.
It was almost as if I could see her hands lift the shroud between our two worlds.

For her, there was something to loose.
For me, to get down from this noose.

I’m almost completely consumed with the illness of trauma passed down through my family.

Through back breaking desperation
Constantly holding up structures that serve someone else.

This isn’t my world.
This isn’t my turf.
This isn’t my house.
But I built it.

And I buried my hopes beneath the foundation where snakes and rodents live.

You stand on my porch
Telling me to stand down
You eat my food with my silver
You say, even hunger can be conquered
You cover yourself with my blankets, in my bed, and tell me the cold is only worsened with dread.
You have taken my wealth, my health and my dollar but when I holler in agony, you whisper sweetly, “ssshhhhh, more quietly”

When I look in the mirror I see faulty shame, porous guilt for wanting back what should be in my name.
Sure I can ask nicely, and I have.
Sure I can write letters and requests.
Fill out forms at my desk.
I can take questions and write answers.
Now I can vote and pick my masters.

So now what,
I’m supposed to just sit here, and wait?
I hear the complaints
But I’m not here to debate.
My right to life is moral obligation
Not a platform for negation
We seem to think we can just converse ourselves out of this mess.

That some how, despite all the evidence against it, our situation is somehow “workable” white people, you have our money, you have our lively hoods in the palm of your hands and you seem to think this is our issue.

We need to fight along with you
Revolution has no right time
It has no clear rhythm or rhyme
It is chaos
The unraveling of the world that we know
The building of a structure that has never left the blueprints,
A mismatch sequence of strength and resistance.

And it’s scary
And it’s raw and its real
But for us it is hope, its is the prospect of freedom and safety
The quieting of sirens and waking
One page fewer in the morning obituary
One page fewer of ‘could have been’
One year fewer of me or them.

It’s no more needing, no more begging, no more praying to the god of our oppressors
It’s a warm home, in a safe city, in a soft bed with food for the taking.
It’s love and vision and it all starts with one, real decision.
Will you stand with us, or bail.
it’s our people in jail
and these guys in their ties are wagging their tales
and with action they win
with inaction we fail.
Beloved Conversations Coming to First UU!

By Jan Garbosky for Journey Toward Wholeness (JTW)

Beginning in April and for the following 18 months, 120 of us will have the opportunity to participate in Beloved Conversations: Meditations on Race and Ethnicity. The program—developed by Dr. Mark Hicks of the Fabs Collaborative at Meadville Lombard Theological School—is a teaching and learning curriculum and spiritual journey designed to help us understand institutional racism, challenge our own beliefs, and help us to become accomplices working for a racially just world, both within and beyond First UU.

Beloved Conversations asserts that:

- dismantling white supremacy is, first and foremost, a spiritual work—on the individual, interpersonal, institutional, and systemic levels for both people of color and [non-people of color].
- in order to loosen the stronghold of racism, we must learn to nurture relationships of resilience, courage, skill, and radical imagination to help build a world for which our hearts yearn, but our eyes have not yet seen.

To develop this "spiritual musculature," Beloved Conversations makes space for individuals to understand how harmful narratives about race live with and among us and shape our actions and our worldviews. The program also pushes us to understand racism as much more than individual prejudice or bad intent, helping congregations to look critically and compassionately at the ways in which the congregation’s culture, practices, and norms support and perpetuate white supremacy culture. And, because this is spiritual work, Beloved Conversations also attempts to help congregations move from critique of what is, into creation of what could be—the Beloved Community in which all of us are free, whole, and flourishing.

Opening with a 1.5 day immersive retreat, participants are encouraged to go deep quickly and form a learning community together. Following the retreat, groups of 10-15 meet for eight 2-hour sessions. Each session is designed to help the group examine their assumptions about race and to develop skills to build racial justice as individuals, as a faith community, and in partnership with others beyond the walls of the congregation.

Learn more about Beloved Conversations and its impact from the following videos:

- Why Beloved Conversations: https://vimeo.com/162354100 (10:22)
- Bearing Witness Part 2: https://vimeo.com/173614466 (12:44)

In deep gratitude, the Journey Toward Wholeness team thanks the following Advance Givers who pledged more than $8,500 toward our goal of raising $10,000 needed to fund 3 cohorts of Beloved Conversations:

Rev. Lexi Brownard
Rev. Stevie Carmody, Intern Minister
Rev. Julie Forest
Rev. Tania Marquez
Anna Colleen and Tamar Fierke
Rev. Katy Swanison
Rev. Jake Backus
Rev. Carolyn & Tom Owen-Towle
Rev. Steve Howard

The Generosity Offerings at the Martin Luther King, Jr. services at our South Bay and Hillcrest campuses raised almost $3,000 more—allowing us to surpass our goal. Thank you to all who helped ensure this program can be funded.

Also in this issue:

- Justice In Light by Tony Bianca
- Brick Stamping by Robie Evans
- Reflection: “Go Back and Get it” by Kendric Hornsby
- A Poem by Alex Mack