



Wednesday Prayer

22nd Sunday after Pentecost – Strong and Suffering Servants

**Out of his anguish he shall see; he shall find satisfaction through his knowledge.
The righteous one, my servant, shall make many righteous,
and he shall bear their iniquities.**

Isaiah 53:11

This week I was so blessed to be in the company of three powerful leaders in the church. Three beloved leaders of color. Three strong and suffering servants. I attended a retreat “Beloved Community – Sharing the Stories of All God’s People” enjoying stories, song, nature, word and sacrament alongside other leaders in the church who gathered to get away, to be fed and renewed. We also signed up to learn and grow from the experiences of these wise leaders working to dismantle racism by way of sharing stories and common humanity.

[Rev. Dr. Kelly Sherman Conroy](#) asked us “What does it mean to be truly human in the world?” She shared a vivid story from her childhood that weaved together her grandparents, nature and the land, the sights, sounds, and smells of her home, and the resilience of her Oglala Sioux ancestors and other tribes that were displaced by white settlers. She encourages us all to learn how to craft our own stories in order to shape community and foster understanding with one another.

[Rev. Dr. Jia Starr Brown](#) used the analogy of attending a concert with her daughter – front row seats! – and her daughter’s post-concert story of all “I” statements: “I could see the sweat on their faces!”, “I’m sure they were looking right at me!” This, compared to when they’re in the nosebleed seats and the story is more like: “We had a great time!”, “We were all singing and cheering so loud!” She made the analogy of “front row” typically being where people with money, power, connections, and access are. Focus is on self over community. She drew correlations to how our anti-racism work in faith communities has often been developed by all front row folks and how we need to engage more deeply and inclusively.

[Joe Davis](#) led us in brave space exercises to get connected with compassionate curiosity and healing justice work. We created a poem from one word we selected – Grace – and seven descriptive words we chose about grace. We had just three minutes to create a poem with these words. Joe uses poetry to power possibility. I am thankful for these strong leaders supporting our journeys to strengthen and deepen our anti-racism work together.

Here's my poem, as today's prayer: I went in search of grace, and found I needed to lean in to deep acceptance of those unlike me, and live into forgiving those who have hurt others, being open to hearing their stories, seeing them in the light of Christ's love, bringing free movement and my love of water to bring grace. Amen.

Written by Joy McElroy, Cherish All Children Executive Director.