



all anew

READY OR NOT

by Kelly Fryer 

SESSION ONE SAY GOODBYE TO NICE

OVERVIEW

Giving birth is a beautiful thing and essential to life, but there is nothing nice about it. Birthing new life is a violent process that produces pain, requires sacrifice and makes a really big mess. That's what we are asking for when we plead with God for renewal. Are you ready?

GETTING READY

Centering questions

For the heroes and sheroes of the biblical story, being part of the “new” thing God was doing often meant having to do and say things that were unpopular with family, friends and neighbors. What if being part of God's renewal today means not just wading into the messiness yourself, but being willing to create discomfort for those you love? What truths need to be told in the places you live, work, worship and play? Are you ready?

Take a minute to center yourself and open your heart and mind to hear God speaking to you through the words and stories in the Bible.

OPENING PRAYER

God, help us hear your word to us through the biblical story and through the words we speak to each other today. Give us wisdom to hear your call to be a part of what you are doing in this world as an overflowing gift of love and grace. Give us courage to answer that call with joy. Amen.

GETTING REAL

In this section of the study, Scripture holds up a mirror, helping us to think about things a little differently and question what we see in ourselves, in our congregations and in our world.

Our text

“And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the origin of God's creation: I know your works; you are neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were either cold or hot. So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spit you out of my mouth. For you say, ‘I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing’” (Revelation 3:14–17a).

A reflection

Lots of us grew up with pastoral images of Jesus and his followers. Dressed in long flowing robes and sandals (not exactly ready for an action scene in the next Jason Bourne film), he was pictured sitting in the shade of a tree, surrounded by smiling people enraptured by his stories. Children and sheep snuggled in his lap.

He was so—nice.

We named our churches after this “Good Shepherd,” our “Redeemer” and “Messiah,” or in honor of the “Grace,” “Faith,” “Hope” and “Peace” he brings. Names like “Church of Tax Collectors and Prostitutes” (Matthew 21:31), “Eye of the Needle Church” (Luke 18:25) and other provocative possibilities didn't make the cut. OK,

so maybe they aren't very poetic, nor do they roll off the tongue with ease, but also, they're just not very nice. And a lot of us have always expected our churches—and our church leaders—to be just as nice as we believed our Lord to be.

So what's wrong with nice?

First of all let's be clear: Nice is not the same as good.

Making nice is what you do to avoid upsetting people. Nice avoids conflict, runs from controversy. Nice tries to summon a half-hearted smile saying, "That's OK," even when everything clearly is not. Nice doesn't dare risk upsetting the status quo, worries about "what the neighbors might say" and fears losing face. Nice lets you walk all over her. But Good knows there are more important things than your reputation, your balance sheet and whatever else it is you count on to make you comfortable. Good will walk with you into the center of a storm, face scrunched up with fear, stomach in a knot, praying that you'll get out alive—for the sake of what is right and what is true.

Good does what matters.

Good is anything but nice.

Just ask a Laodicean.

In those first chapters of Revelation, speaking through a messenger known by the name of John at the end of the first century, Jesus had some hard words for all seven of the churches in Asia. He called out the church in Ephesus for being all talk and too little action. Smyrna was warned that church members would end up in prison for their faith; they were encouraged to hold fast. Church members in Pergamum had allowed themselves and their teachings to be diluted by self-centered values. But Jesus began each reproach with generous words of appreciation. To Ephesus, Jesus said, "I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for the sake of my name." To Philadelphia, he began, "I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word."

The message to the Christians in Laodicea was different. There were no words of praise, no thanks given.

"I know your works," Jesus said to the church in Laodicea. "You are neither cold nor hot."

The church in Laodicea couldn't afford to be good,

literally. "I am rich," they said to themselves. "I have prospered." They had want of nothing and everything to lose. The last thing they dared to do was stand out by taking a stand.

You taste like nothing, Jesus might as well have said. You have put your own needs, position and comfort ahead of everything else. You stand for nothing. You are nothing. I spit you out.

"Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches" (Revelation 3:22).

WHAT ARE YOU HEARING?

1. What are your earliest memories of Jesus? What images of him do you remember from your childhood? How have those images helped or hindered you in your life of faith?
2. Have you ever experienced "niceness" getting in the way of "doing good" in your own life and/or within your faith community?
3. The Book of Revelation has been controversial in the history of the church and can be confusing to readers today. It helps to remember that it was written at a very particular point in history, at least 100 years after Jesus' death and resurrection, to real congregations who were trying to figure out how to "be church" and live their faith in a world that did not appreciate, understand or even like them. Some of these Christians were facing real persecution. All of these churches faced challenges from both within and without. Some scholars believe the author of this book used images and symbols to disguise the real meaning of his words, so that it could not be used against the churches if it were intercepted by the antagonistic authorities. Read Revelation 3:7–13, 3:14–22, which contains letters written to two different churches. Discuss:
 - a. How are these two letters the same? How are they different?
 - b. What is the call to action God has for each of these two churches?
 - c. What is the good news God has for each of these two churches?
 - d. Which of these two churches is more like the faith community of which you are a member? What makes you say that?
 - e. What message do you think God has for your faith community today?

GETTING RENEWED

In this section, we go deep and spend time really listening for what God might be saying to us through a particular story we read in the Bible.

READ 1 SAMUEL 17:1—18:9 AND THEN DISCUSS:

1. What jumps out at you in this story?
2. What do you hear God saying to you, personally, through this story?
3. What do you hear God saying to your community (for example, your town, your congregation, your denomination, your Bible study group) through this story?

A reflection

Here's another image imprinted on our minds and hearts from our Sunday school days: The little shepherd boy, David, using five smooth stones and a wagon full of spunk to take down a giant warrior named Goliath. This is one of the most beloved stories of our faith.

“When the words that David spoke were heard, they repeated them before Saul; and he sent for him. David said to Saul, ‘Let no one’s heart fail because of [Goliath]; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine.’ Saul said to David, ‘You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are just a boy, and he has been a warrior from his youth’...David said, ‘The Lord, who saved me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, will save me from the hand of this Philistine.’ So Saul said to David, ‘Go, and may the Lord be with you’” (1 Samuel 17:31–33, 37).

This idea that you can't be too small to win, even against the fiercest opponents, has shaped many of our lives. For sure, it has animated children's books for generations. The three little pigs defeat the big, bad wolf. Frodo and Sam fling themselves against the gates of Mordor and, beyond all odds, make Middle Earth safe for every creature, great and small, again. Harry Potter and friends take down He-Who-Shall-Not-Be-Named.

But there is another lesson to be learned in David's tale, another truth to be told.

When David picked up those stones and hurled his

answer to the Philistine's challenge—“You come to me with sword and spear and javelin; but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts!”—it wasn't just the giant he threatened. That young man, that nobody shepherd who hadn't yet learned to shave, was challenging everyone and everything that had ever been important to him.

David was never even supposed to be there. He was just a courier, charged with bringing cheese and bread from home to feed the soldiers and then scurrying back to give his elderly father news about how his older brothers on the front line were doing. Three of them had followed King Saul into battle, including the eldest son, Eliab.

When Eliab heard his youngest brother talking to some of the other men in the camp, asking questions that challenged the idea that “this uncircumcised Philistine should defy the armies of the living God,” Eliab was furious.

“What have I done now?” David asked, pouting. Apparently this wasn't the first time Eliab was annoyed by the boy's insolence. But these words really stung. “What are you all afraid of?” David seemed to be saying. “Don't you know our God is bigger than a giant?”

Eliab snarled at him: “Why are you here, anyway? And who do you think you are, presuming to know more than your brothers, our King and his whole army? Go back home and watch the sheep.”

But David did not go home. Word got to King Saul that some kid in the camp was talking trash, saying the giant should not be feared. Surely Saul had started to feel foolish, sitting in his tent wondering how he might get out of this mess, every day, all day long, hearing the taunts of the Philistines and their ridiculous, terrifying giant.

Saul was never supposed to be king of Israel, any more than David was supposed to go into battle. It's not that he was such a bad guy, although he certainly had his faults; it's just that God kept telling the people they didn't need a king. Kings are nothing but trouble. They take your stuff. They send you into battle. They make you do all the work, and, in the end, you hate them for it. “But the people refused to listen” (1 Samuel 8:19). “We want a king,” they cried, “so that we can be like other nations. We want a king to govern us and go out before us to fight our battles!”

The king they got was Saul, and now here he was, a giant on one side of him and an impertinent little boy questioning his faith on the other.

“Go ahead. Fight the giant,” Saul said.

It wouldn’t have looked good for Saul if the giant had mauled the boy, sending his broken body hurtling down the mountain to his king’s feet. But it looked even worse when David won.

“Whose son are you, anyway?” Saul asked when David returned from battle carrying the giant’s head in his hands, beginning a rivalry between the two that would last until one of them was dead.

The “David and Goliath” story we learned in Sunday school isn’t wrong, exactly, but it is incomplete. This is more than a story about how the littlest, most ordinary person can overcome any challenge. This is also a story about how words of faith and hope and truth create upset and about how that trouble often starts at home.

David didn’t just challenge a giant on that mountain-side. He challenged his family, his nation, his king. He dared them to believe their own songs and scriptures, and he was adamant that their prayers should lead to action. That little boy was a holy troublemaker.

The biblical story is full of them.

WHAT ARE YOU HEARING?

1. Can you think of someone you admire who had to deliver a difficult or unpopular message to their family, church or community? Have you ever been in a position like that? What happened?
2. How do you know when the message you feel called to deliver is actually of God? What steps do you—or can you—take to make sure you are answering God’s call to speak out or act up—and not just going rogue? How can Scripture, the faith community and your conscience all work together to help you discern what to say and do in a situation?
3. Think back through your life. Whose voice has challenged you and helped you grow in faith? How can you honor and/or thank that person?



GETTING RILED UP

This section raises a contemporary issue and challenges us to see it within the context of what God is saying to us through the biblical story.

Our text

“When David’s time to die drew near, he charged his son, Solomon, saying: I am about to go the way of all the earth. Be strong, be courageous, and keep the charge of the Lord your God, walking in his ways and keeping his statutes, his commandments, his ordinances, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, so that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn” (1 Kings 2:1–3).

A reflection

Something appears to be seriously wrong in our congregations. It’s not the fact that we’re getting smaller and older. That’s the least of our worries. If anything, it is just a symptom of the problem.

David wasn't perfect by any stretch of the imagination, and he made a lot of mistakes between that day he let those five stones fly and the day he gave his son, Solomon, a final blessing. But he was clear on one thing: The only way to walk with joy, strength and prosperity in this world is on the path set by the Lord.

This is a truth lots of church folks seem to have forgotten or maybe never heard.

Take, for example, what our Scriptures say about those in poverty and our responsibility to care for them. It doesn't matter what part of the Bible you open and read. From the front to the back of the book, God's word is clear:

"Since there will never cease to be some in need on the earth, I therefore command you, 'Open your hand to the poor and needy neighbor in your land'" (Deuteronomy 15:11).

"Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and will be repaid in full" (Proverbs 19:17).

"Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you" (Matthew 5:42).

"...truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these, you did it to me" (Matthew 25:40b).

"Sell your possessions, and give [to the poor]" (Luke 12:33b).

"As for those who in the present age are rich, command them...to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share..." (1 Timothy 6:17-18).

Yet according to the most recent Pew "Religious Landscape Study,"¹ 69 percent of Americans who describe themselves as "certain" in their belief about God (including 44 percent of mainline Protestants, which includes the ELCA) say they think government aid to the poor does "more harm than good." That's nearly 20 percent more than the U.S. population overall.

In other words, the more religious you are in America, the less likely you are to support programs that give assistance to needy families.

As another example, let's look at support for the death penalty in the United States, a barbaric practice that

has been outlawed by two-thirds of the world's nations but which we continue to share with countries such as China, Iran and North Korea. A majority of Americans (56 percent), according to Pew², still favor the death penalty, although support is declining.

But this practice took the life of our Lord. The racial bias that infuses the use of the practice in the United States has been proven beyond a shadow of a doubt. And there is zero evidence that it is effective in reducing violent crime.

In 1991 the ELCA adopted a statement opposing the death penalty.

Yet two-thirds (66 percent) of white mainline Protestants (including the ELCA) support its use, compared to 48 percent of religiously unaffiliated people. Again, the folks in our pews are more likely to be for the death penalty than anybody else.

It is enough to make one wonder: Do we not believe our own Scriptures and songs?

Whose will be the voice that dares to challenge us?

WHAT ARE YOU HEARING?

1. **Where else do you see gaps like this between what Scripture seems to say and what our church teaches, on the one hand, and what our congregational members seem to believe, say and do? How do you explain this?**
2. **David believes that the outcome of walking in the way of the Lord and keeping God's ordinances and statutes is that we will prosper. When have you (or your faith community) taken action or spoken up in a way that you believed was faithful to God and "prospered"? Is there a time when you (or your faith community) did not faithfully answer God's call to speak up or take action? What happened as a result?**
3. **David tells Solomon to be "strong and courageous." Is there something you are feeling called to say or do? What scares you about that? What motivates you?**

1 www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/views-about-government-aid-to-the-poor/

2 www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/07/13/some-major-u-s-religious-groups-differ-from-their-members-on-the-death-penalty/

What help do you need in order to do what you're hearing God call you to do?

GETTING RELEASED

This year, as we celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, we remember that we have been part of God's work to make all things new for a very, very long time.

Our text

"...we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us" (2 Corinthians 4:7).

A reflection

Lutherans celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation this year. By most accounts, Martin Luther wanted to fix the church; he never intended for the church to split. The church was his family, his home. Later, after it was all over, he explained: "I opposed indulgences...but never with force. I simply taught, preached and wrote God's Word; otherwise I did nothing. I did nothing; the Word did everything."

As we know, in part because of Luther's words and actions, the church did split, and then, like a clay pot, splintered into hundreds of different shards. Speaking out and acting up is risky business.

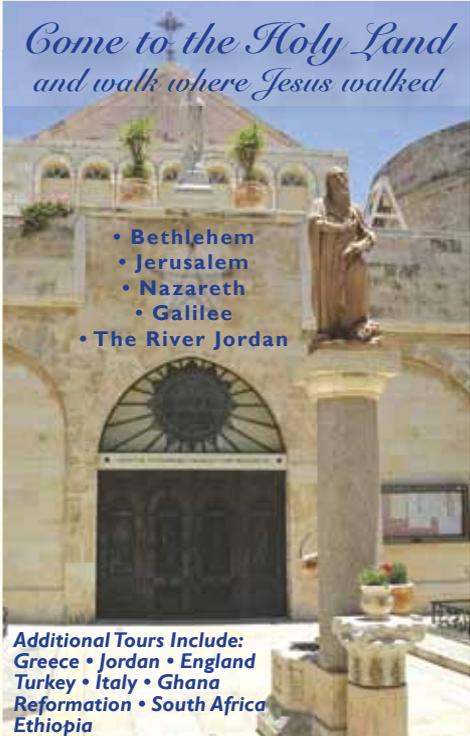
But the pot was never the point, now, was it?

WHAT NOW?

1. The reformer Martin Luther took a big risk when he decided to speak up 500 years ago. What are some of the things Christians risk today? In other words what do we "have to lose" if we dare to speak out and act up about things that are important?
2. In what ways do you see the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Women of the ELCA and your faith community carrying forward the legacy of the Reformation today?
3. Imagine Lutherans 500 years from now looking back at our time. For what do you hope we will be remembered?

4. What is one thing you are going to do as a result of hearing God speak to you through this time we have spent together in Scripture?

Kelly Fryer has more than 20 years of experience leading organizations and ministries, including as a pastor, teacher, entrepreneur and communicator. Previously, Kelly taught leadership at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota, and co-founded A Renewal Enterprise, a national firm that helps values-based organizations work more effectively. Many key concerns for Women of the ELCA (women's health, ending human trafficking, working toward gender equity, racial justice, poverty, education) are part of Kelly's current work as the executive director of the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) in southern Arizona. She is the author of *Reclaiming the "L" Word: Renewing the Church from its Lutheran Core*.



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READY OR NOT

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SESSION TWO **STAND WITH THE LEAST OF THESE**

OVERVIEW

Giving birth is a beautiful thing and essential to life, but there is nothing nice about it. It is a violent process that produces pain, requires sacrifice and makes a really big mess. That's what we are asking for when we plead with God for renewal. Are you ready?

GETTING READY

Centering questions

The biblical story tells us that whenever God does a new thing, it happens in, through and with people who live on the margins. With whom is God asking you to align yourself? In whose corner are you being called to stand? Are you ready?

Take a minute to center yourself and open your heart and mind to hear God speaking to you through the words and stories in the Bible.

OPENING PRAYER

God, help us hear your Word to us through the biblical story and through the words we speak to each other today. Give us wisdom to hear your call to be a part of what you are doing in this world as an overflowing gift of love and grace. Give us courage to answer that call with joy. Amen.

GETTING REAL

In this section of the study, Scripture holds up a mirror, helping us think about things a little differently and empowering us to question what we see in ourselves, our congregations and our world.

Our text

“The word of the Lord that came to Micah of Moresheth in the days of Kings Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem. Hear, you peoples, all of you: listen, O earth, and all that is in it...” (Micah 1:1–2a).

A reflection

What's that, you say? Where's Moresheth? That's a good question. Moresheth doesn't exist anymore. Even back in the day, few people would have heard of it. And yet it was from this one-camel town that the Lord God plucked a guy named Micah to deliver a message—not just to the kings of Samaria and Judah but to all the peoples of the earth.

Notice (and this is really important): God didn't choose kings to deliver a message. God chose a nobody to deliver a message to the kings.

Are you having trouble picturing this? OK, just imagine if in your congregation next Sunday, the pastor and your congregation council members sat in the front pew, ready to hear what God had to say to them through the undocumented immigrant whose name you don't know and who works on the landscaping crew that takes care of your church yard.

In the biblical story, God almost always looks to the margins of society when there is an important message to deliver or a big job to do. Moses was a refugee with a criminal past. Ruth was an immigrant and a widow. Elizabeth was an old woman whose barrenness made her a failure at the one and only thing women in those days were expected to do. Matthew collected taxes for an

occupying army.

Again and again throughout the biblical story, God chooses to work in, with and through the marginalized. God identifies with them. Of all the people on earth, they seem to matter most to God.

Jesus couldn't have made this any plainer. "...Blessed are you who are poor," he said, "for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. Blessed are you who weep..." (Luke 6:20-21). There is a particularity here that cannot be ignored, a singling out of those who are marginalized, for God's special attention and concern.

On the other hand, the rest of us are in a whole lot of trouble. With a frightening level of specificity, Jesus calls out everyone who is rich and full and laughs their way through this life (Luke 6:24-25). To those who have been born into privilege, who live in comfort, who have enough and more, Jesus says: Woe. So what is a person of privilege and comfort supposed to do?

"With what shall I come before the Lord...shall I come before him with burnt offerings...with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn...?" No, Micah said. The Lord has told us what is good and what is required of us: "to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" (6:6-8).

Micah doesn't give a dictionary-like definition for what "justice" is, but he does paint a clear picture of what it looks like to be unjust: You steal people's lands and property (2:2). You chase women and children from their homes (2:9). You declare war on the hungry (3:5). Your rulers accept bribes (3:11). You cheat people out of what is rightfully theirs (6:11).

Now to figure out what justice looks like, flip each of those "unjust" things around, and here's what you get. Justice is:

...working to ensure that displaced people have homes and those who are hungry have enough to eat.

...treating those whom it would be easy to cheat and take advantage of—like immigrants and those who are poor—with the utmost respect and fairness.

...holding leaders accountable and replacing those who put their own interests ahead of those in need.

This is what God requires of those who live in privilege and comfort:

...recognize what God is up to and join in.

...exercise the same level of care and concern as God has done for those in need and those who have been cast aside.

...stand beside and work together with those who are on the margins of society and advocate for and with them to change unjust systems.

God is on a mission to love, bless and save the world. If we are going to be a part of that mission, here is where it begins: Among the poor and those who have been displaced and disenfranchised.

WHAT ARE YOU HEARING?

- 1. Why do you think God chose a nobody like Micah to deliver this message to the privileged and the powerful?**
- 2. Who is the most surprising messenger God has used to speak to you? How did you know the message was from God?**

Micah's is not the only biblical voice telling us that God stands with the poor and that God can be found in the midst of those who live on the margins of society. This refrain is heard throughout Scripture from Old Testament prophets and in the words of Jesus himself. But Micah seems especially clear about the responsibility those with privilege have. Look again at how Micah describes "doing justice" (chapters 2-6) and discuss:

- 3. How good is your faith community at "doing justice"? How could you (plural) be doing better?**
- 4. How are well are you, personally, doing? What are you hearing God call you to do as a result of this encounter with the prophet Micah?**

GETTING RENEWED

In this section, we spend time really listening for what God might be saying to us through a particular story from the Bible. Read Paul's letter to Philemon and spend time listening to what God is saying in and through these words:

- 1. What jumps out at you in the words Paul has written?**

2. What do you hear God saying to you, personally, through this letter?
3. What do you hear God saying to your community (for example, your town, your congregation, your denomination, your Bible study group) through this letter?

A reflection

Did you notice something interesting in the first few sentences of what is known as “The Letter of Paul to Philemon”? It actually isn’t a letter just to Philemon.

From his prison cell, Paul wrote this letter to three people, one of whom was named Apphia.

“Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our dear friend and co-worker, to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philemon 1:1–3).

We don’t know much about Apphia. We do know that she was a leader in the early church, and her home was likely one of the places where Christians in Colossae gathered. But we don’t know much else. Was Philemon her husband or brother? What was her relationship to Archippus, who was doing ministry in Colossae and who Paul singled out as needing special encouragement? (Colossians 4:17) Perhaps Archippus was her brother or her son.

It is not surprising that we know so little about Apphia. Paul was a Roman (Acts 22:25–29) and a man of his time. In ancient Rome, women rarely appear in literature. Histories, poems, biographies and political speeches were written by and for powerful men. When they do appear, it is to support the agenda of the writer, to make a point about what a moral life should look like, for example, or to celebrate the virtues of home life. By the first century A.D., women (especially wealthy widows) had some independence, but they had no political power. They could not vote or hold public office. Most had little or no formal education.¹

So what is surprising, revolutionary even, is that we even know there was a woman named Apphia, who Paul called her “our sister.” Paul’s opening words made it clear that Apphia mattered to him.

“Apphia,” Paul was saying, “you may not be important to anybody else in this patriarchal society, but I want you to know this: You matter to God.”

And because she mattered, the request Paul makes in this letter, the singular reason for his writing, certainly would not have been lost on her.

Paul had sent a man named Onesimus to hand deliver this letter. Apphia recognized him immediately because Onesimus was, quite literally, the property of her husband, Philemon. (All joint property would have belonged to her husband by law.) He was their slave, but it seems Onesimus had run away. Now he was coming back to accept the consequences. But he was not the same man he was when he left.

Paul wrote: “I am appealing to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I have become during my imprisonment.” Take him back, Paul pleaded, “no longer as a slave but more than a slave, a beloved brother—especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord” (Philemon 1:10–16).

Paul punctuates this request with a startling declaration: Onesimus is no less a servant of the Lord than I am. “Welcome him as you would welcome me,” Paul said (Philemon 1:17).

Onesimus, you see, mattered.

We are not told how this story ends. There is no indication of how Philemon responded to Paul’s request. We do not know for sure whether Philemon’s heart was moved by Paul’s plea to embrace Onesimus as a fellow worker in the Lord and to set him free. But it’s not hard to imagine what Apphia thought or said or did.

When you see yourself for the first time, really see yourself as you are seen by God, as someone whose life matters, however impossible or outrageous or even how dangerous that might seem within the context of your

¹ For additional, accessible information and background on the lives of women in ancient Rome, see the PBS production “The Roman Empire in the First Century” and online resources at pbs.org/empires/romans/empire/women.html

culture, your time, your place—it is impossible not to see the same thing in others.

“Onesimus, my brother,” Apphia surely said, “welcome home.”

WHAT ARE YOU HEARING?

Put yourself in the story:

1. **Imagine that you are Onesimus. What are you thinking or feeling as you walk up to the home of Philemon and Apphia, holding Paul’s letter?**
2. **Imagine that you are Apphia. What are you thinking or feeling as you hear Paul’s letter being read?**
3. **Imagine that you are Paul. What are you thinking or feeling as you give that letter to Onesimus and send him off to deliver it?**
4. **Apphia and Onesimus had something in common: Both were seen as “less than” within the context of their society. Have you ever been made to feel “less than” because of your gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity, race, physical or mental disability, economic class, age or something else? When? What happened? How has that experience made you more sympathetic to the experiences of people who are different from you?**

GETTING RILED UP

This section challenges us to see a contemporary issue within the context of what God is saying to us through the biblical story.

Our text

“Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of your possession? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in showing clemency. He will again have compassion upon us; he will tread our iniquities under foot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. You will show faithfulness to Jacob and unswerving loyalty to Abraham, as you have sworn to our ancestors from the days of old” (Micah 7:18–20).

A reflection

Probably nobody hearing Micah’s words when he first spoke them was very happy about what he had to say. It’s not much easier for us to hear his words today. It is tempting, especially for those of us who live in privilege and comfort, to want to jump right to the end of Micah’s message, to the part about how God redeems all of us and restores all creation.

In fact, many of us may bristle at the idea that infuses the biblical story, that what God is up to always seems to begin in the midst of those who are poor and marginalized. It may be a little irritating to think God has a special place and purpose for those who have been left out and outcast. A shout rises onto our lips: “Hey, wait a minute. All lives matter!”

Well, yes. God has promised to save us all, even though we do not deserve it and have not earned it. Nobody is a better promise keeper, Micah says, than our God, who “delights in showing clemency” (7:18). God is on a mission to save and redeem the whole world. So, sure, everyone matters to God.

But God also sees what’s going on right here, right now, in the United States of America. In our society today, all lives clearly do not matter. And that is exactly the kind of thing that makes God say through Micah, “Hear, you peoples, all of you; listen, O earth, and all that is in it; and let the Lord God be a witness against you...” (Micah 1:2).

In recent years, the anger felt by black Americans and other communities of color as a result of police-involved fatalities has filled our streets, news and social media feeds. But the frustrations go way back and much deeper and are directly related to the racial bias that infects every aspect of our society, including education, health care, food systems, business, politics, housing and even our faith communities.

Our nation has an ugly problem with racism. It was founded on land that was, literally, stolen the indigenous people who lived here. Our U.S. Constitution was forged in a compromise that counted a black American as three fifths of a person. Racism and racial bias is the thread that stitches together the story of our nation, from slavery to

Jim Crow to our current age of mass incarceration. The persistent reality of racism and racial bias has created huge gaps in wealth, education, business and political power today. Here are a few facts and statistics that just begin to tell this story:

- Just 1.2 percent of all Fortune 500 CEOs are black.
- There have been just two African American governors elected since Reconstruction.
- In 2015 and 2016 there were no African Americans elected to statewide office west of the Mississippi.
- Nearly half of U.S. states have never elected an African American to Congress.
- There is an enormous wealth gap between black and white households that even education cannot erase.
- The wealth gap between black and white families has tripled since the 1980's.
- Black Americans with Bachelor's degrees earn 20 percent less than whites.
- People of color begin experiencing the negative effects of racial bias from a very early age.
- Black girls are suspended at higher rates (12 percent more) than girls of any other race or ethnicity.
- 42 percent of black preschool children are suspended, even though they represent just 18 percent of the preschool enrollment.

Clearly, some lives in our nation do not matter as much as others. (Imagine the outcry, the legislative initiatives and the money that would be poured into finding solutions if any one of those statistics was true for young white men.) They should matter to us because they matter to God.

People of privilege (and white people, in particular) have a responsibility to acknowledge that racism is still and has always been a real problem in our nation. People of color are only too aware of its reality. Everyone else must educate themselves and their families, coworkers and elected leaders. Those who have benefited from this system have a special duty to help change it, to speak out and act up when they see racial bias in their workplaces and communities and to stand with people of color to create a world that is more fair and just for all.

Our salvation and the redemption of the earth is not what's at stake here. God will keep every promise made. But the assurance of salvation is not and has never been an excuse to choose ignorance, blindness or lethargy in the face of injustice.

"Hear what the Lord says," Micah declares, "...the Lord has a controversy with his people" (6:1-2).

WHAT ARE YOU HEARING?

1. **Imagine that Micah were here among us today? How would he complete these sentences:**
 - a. **Hear what the Lord says, the Lord has a controversy with America...**
 - b. **Hear what the Lord says, the Lord has a controversy with (name of your faith community here)...**

Micah did not pull punches. His words are a sharp critique of his society. He seems to be saying that problems cannot be fixed unless people acknowledge that those problems exist.

2. **How hard is it, do you think, for people in our nation (particularly white Americans) to acknowledge the ugly reality of racism in our history and the way it continues to hurt not just people of color but all of us today?**
3. **Have people in your faith community wrestled with this issue? If so, how is it going? If not, why not?**

The biblical story is, at its core, a good news story. But the good news of God's saving love is never allowed to excuse us from the call to do justice and stand with those who are persecuted and outcast. In fact, God's love and grace are meant to set us free to do what is right and just.

4. **What makes the work of justice (especially racial justice) scary in the world in which you live and work?**
5. **What do you have to lose by speaking up and acting out to make your workplace, neighborhood, faith community and world a more just place? What gives you the strength and courage to do it anyway?**

GETTING RELEASED

This year, as we celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, we remember that we have been part of God's work to make all things new for a very, very long time.

Our text

The reformer Martin Luther is well known for having a sharp tongue. He did not hesitate to call a toad “a toad,” and he used the most colorful language to make his point.

In 1529 Luther published *The Large Catechism*, which he wrote for use by clergy, whom he discovered were poorly trained and woefully uneducated. In this document Luther explains the meaning of the Ten Commandments, the Creed and the Sacraments. It is in writing about the Seventh Commandment, Thou Shalt Not Steal, that Luther explains our responsibility to those who have been disenfranchised is more than just “not stealing” from them.

What God requires of us is a proactive stance, doing everything we can to ensure others are treated fairly and have enough. To those who fail, who “turn the free public market into nothing but a carrion pit and a robber’s den,” where “the poor are defrauded every day, and new burdens and higher prices are imposed,” Luther says (as only he can), “May your grain spoil in the barn, your beer in the cellar, your cattle perish in the stall. Yes, where you have cheated and defrauded anyone out of a gulden, your entire hoard ought to be consumed by rust so that you will never enjoy it.”

“In short,” he says, “no matter how much you steal, be certain that twice as much will be stolen from you” (*The Book of Concord*, Augsburg Fortress, 2000, p. 418).

God, it seems, is pretty serious about this whole doing justice thing.

WHAT NOW?

1. In what way is the legacy of Martin Luther’s truth-telling being carried forward (or not) in today’s ELCA? Within Women of the ELCA? In your local faith community?

In both his Small and Large Catechisms, Luther’s explanation of the Ten Commandments shift the focus from what we “shall not” do toward positive actions we ought to take. Thou shalt not kill also means showing love and kindness to others, even our enemies. Thou shalt not steal means also to “advance and improve [our neighbor’s] possessions, and in case he suffers want, that we help, communicate, and lend both to friends and foes.” It is not sufficient to do no harm. God’s commandment is to be proactive in the work of love and justice.

2. What are you hearing God call your faith community to do as a result of spending this time together in Scripture today?
3. What is God’s call to you?

For many, especially white Americans, being confronted by the reality of racism in our world leads to guilt and shame. It can be immobilizing.

As Christians who happen to be Lutheran, we understand this. We know that being confronted with God’s law always drives us to our knees. No one can keep God’s commandments perfectly. We all sin and fall short. We are saved by grace alone through Jesus Christ. The assurance of God’s love can give us courage to keep fighting the good fight of justice. What can you do to stay grounded in the good news of God’s love for you, especially as you speak out, act up and stand with those who are oppressed and marginalized? 🌸

Kelly Fryer has more than 20 years of experience leading organizations and ministries, including as a pastor, teacher, entrepreneur and communicator. Previously, Kelly taught leadership at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota, and co-founded A Renewal Enterprise, a national firm that helps values-based organizations work more effectively. Currently she serves as the executive director of the Young Women’s Christian Associations (YWCA) in southern Arizona. Kelly is the author of several books including *Reclaiming the “L” Word: Renewing the Church from its Lutheran Core*.



all anew

READY OR NOT

by Kelly Fryer 

SESSION THREE UPEND THE TABLES

OVERVIEW

Giving birth is a beautiful thing and essential to life, but there is nothing nice about it. It is a violent process that produces pain, requires sacrifice and makes a really big mess. That's what we are asking for when we plead with God for renewal. Are you ready?

GETTING READY

Centering questions

The biblical story is filled with characters who challenged unjust systems, took action that turned societal norms upside down and spoke truth to power. What systems are you a part of that need to be challenged? What counter-cultural, justice-making actions are you being called to take? Are you ready?

Take a minute to center yourself and open your heart and mind to hear God speaking to you through the words and stories in the Bible.

OPENING PRAYER

God, help us hear your Word to us through the biblical story and through the words we speak to each other today. Give us wisdom to hear your call to be a part of what you are doing in this world as an overflowing gift of love and grace. Give us courage to answer that call with joy. Amen.

GETTING REAL

In this section of the study, Scripture holds up a mirror, helping us think about things a little differently and empowering us to ques-

tion what we see in ourselves, our congregations and our world.

Our text

“Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God ...you also pay taxes, for the authorities are God’s servants, busy with this very thing. Pay to all what is due them—taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due” (Romans 13:1, 6–7).

A reflection

Can you imagine being a Christian living in Rome and hearing Paul’s words telling you to pay your taxes and respect the government?

Although it might have happened before you were born, as a Christian and a Roman, you have heard all the stories. This is the same government whose agent presided over Jesus’ trial and had him put to death. This was the same government that banished your Jewish relatives not all that long ago and now sees your little church as a threat. It is the same government that will eventually arrest and kill some of your friends.

What would compel Paul to write these words to the church in Rome? Paul himself suffered flogging, stoning and imprisonment during his ministry, and the Book of Acts ends with Paul under house arrest in Rome (Acts 28:16). He was painfully aware that governments are not always good or just.

But Paul’s argument is not based on the intrinsic characteristics of governing authorities. It is based,

rather, on the power of God, without whom there is no authority at all. There is no real authority that does not come from God. All authorities have “been instituted by God,” which means that God is the boss of everyone who governs. Earlier in Romans, Paul shows how God is the boss of *everything*, even sin (3:23–24) and death (6:9). It follows, therefore, that God is the authority over every authority, including the systems of government and all those who govern.

Government, Paul tells the Romans, was created by God (13:1) and is one of the ways God is at work in the world today, giving order to our lives and making sure justice gets done. And make no mistake about it: God’s *intention* for government is that it should do good. Paul puts it this way, “For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Do you wish to have no fear of the authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive its approval, for it is God’s servant for your good” (13:3–4a).

The government is “God’s servant for...good.”

So what happens when governing authorities do not do good, when they do not help those in need, when they act with vengeance, when they return evil with evil, when they attempt to impose one religion on everyone? What is our responsibility when government—or parts of government—are broken? What are we to do when the very systems that have been put in place to protect people and make sure justice is done become tools to oppress?

Are we under some kind of obligation to let the governing authorities do whatever they want? Do we just stand by and allow injustice to continue?

Unfortunately, Paul does not answer these questions directly in his letter to the Romans. That would have been a helpful thing for him to do. But Paul does say two things to help us answer the question for ourselves.

First, however much you might want to, you can’t run away from government. You can’t just change the channel. You are bound by your conscience to stay engaged. For example, you pay your taxes (13:6). You act like a citizen.

Second, in your role as a citizen (as in every other aspect of your life), there is a particular way God wants you to act. That’s actually what this whole second half of Paul’s letter is all about. In chapters 1–11 Paul describes God’s work to set us free from sin and death. Then, starting in chapter 12, Paul says that this freedom from sin and death produces the freedom to live a new life. This new life is the “will of God” for us (12:2). Here’s what it looks like: We are to be humble (12:3), use sober judgment (12:3), use our gifts for the good of the community (12:6–8), love one another (12:10), give to those in need (12:13), live in harmony (12:16), leave vengeance to the Lord (12:19), return evil with good (12:21), avoid laziness (13:13), welcome those who are different from you (14:1–6), make peace (14:19) and don’t impose your way of being religious on others (14:1–23).

These are the kinds of behaviors God expects from us all—including, we can conclude, all those who are under God’s authority. In other words, this is how God expects those who govern to act too.

So *what* do we do when those in authority are not good and government is not acting for justice?

Two words: Fix it.

WHAT ARE YOU HEARING?

1. **The government, Paul seems to say, is to be honored and respected. But just like everything else that God has made, the government must be held accountable to act in a way that is in alignment with God’s will. In other words, you can’t support the government unconditionally and neither can you just bash it. Is this a message that needs to be heard today? Why or why not?**
2. **Have you ever been part of an effort to challenge, influence or change something the government was doing (or not doing)? If so, how did your faith inform your actions? If not, why not?**
3. **In chapters 12–14 Paul describes what God expects of those who live under God’s authority. Quickly review those chapters now. It’s a long list and, odds are, our governing authorities are not going to get it right all the time.**

That means we need to be diligent in making sure our government is acting in a way that is right and just.

- a. How do you respond to the idea that we must stay in a mutually accountable relationship with our government?
- b. Does this idea challenge, encourage, excite or exhaust you? Why?

GETTING RENEWED

In this section, we go deep and spend time really listening for what God might be saying to us through a particular story in the Bible.

Read Matthew 12:1–14. Discuss:

1. What jumps out at you in these stories?
2. What do you hear God saying to you, personally, through these stories?
3. What do you hear God saying to your community (your town, your congregation, your denomination, your Bible study group) through these stories?

A reflection

When Paul wrote to the Romans that God is the boss of every single thing, even “governing authorities,” he was taking a page out of Jesus’ own playbook.

There were so many stories being told about Jesus in Paul’s day, stories about how Jesus challenged the authorities. Many of those stories were eventually captured in writing and included in the canon of Scripture that we read today. Two of those stories are told in the 12th chapter of Matthew, in quick succession. They are also told, in a strikingly similar way, by both Mark and Luke.

First, we’re told about the day Jesus and his disciples were out walking. “At that time Jesus went through the grain fields on the sabbath; his disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. When the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, ‘Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the sabbath’” (12:1–2).

Now, the Pharisees didn’t have any official power,

and they certainly were not what you would call a governing authority. They were members of a movement made up of lay people who were passionate about studying and interpreting the Torah and dedicated to reviving Judaism through strict obedience to God’s Law. They had no official authority, but they were powerful because they had influence in the community and among religious leaders.

In some ways, Jesus could have been the Pharisees’ natural ally. He was also a layperson who was passionate about what God is doing in the world, and he called people to follow God’s path. He could also go toe-to-toe with them on the Law. In fact, that’s what he did when he challenged their interpretation of the rules about picking grain on the Sabbath.

But Jesus didn’t stop there.

“He said to them, ‘Have you not read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? He entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him or his companions to eat, but only for the priests. Or have you not read in the law that on the sabbath the priests in the temple break the sabbath and yet are guiltless? I tell you, something greater than the temple is here’” (12:3–6). According to Mark and Luke, he even more boldly proclaimed, the Son of Man is lord even “of the sabbath” (Mark 6:5 & Luke 6:5).

Jesus wasn’t just challenging the Pharisees or their interpretation of the Law. If that was all he was doing, things might have turned out differently. They might have just found a shady tree to sit under where they could spend hours pouring over every dash and dot in the Torah, debating until the sun went down. But Jesus did more than that. He was challenging their whole worldview. Jesus is making the point here that what God is doing is bigger than the temple. It is bigger than the Sabbath. It is bigger than any and every political or religious authority on this earth.

Immediately following their showdown in the grain field, the writers tell us Jesus went to the synagogue. There he saw a man who had a withered hand, a disability that surely would have made it difficult for him

to work and care for himself. Jesus called the man to come forward, and then he turned and asked the Pharisees, who were there watching him and waiting to catch him doing something unlawful, “Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or kill?” They were silent. Mark says Jesus was angry and “grieved at their hardness of heart.” He told the man to stretch out his hand, and immediately the hand was restored.

Jesus didn’t even have to say anything this time. His actions spoke loud and clear. God is on a mission to heal and save. And God is the boss of everything. All laws—even The Law—are meant to be for our good. They are meant to save and protect us, to ensure our good health. They are not meant to harm us. And when they do, they must be challenged.

By the way, as they tell the story, all three evangelists agree: This was Jesus’ undoing. He had brought a challenge the Pharisees could not, would not tolerate. They “were filled with fury and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus” (Luke 6:11). They “went out and immediately conspired against him, how to destroy him” (Matthew 12:14).

WHAT ARE YOU HEARING?

1. **This story is told from Jesus’ perspective. Imagine that you are a Pharisee, and you have devoted your life to teaching God’s law and urging others to follow it. Then you see Jesus and his disciples doing something that you believe flagrantly breaks that law. How would you respond? Why?**
2. **What has your experience with “authority” been? Have those experiences led you to automatically trust those in authority or distrust them? How can these biblical stories help each of us move beyond our own experience to a more nuanced relationship with “the law” and authorities?**
3. **Laws are meant to protect us and ensure our good health whether they are made by civil government or the church. Can you think of laws or rules that have needed to be challenged in the past? What happened? What laws or rules need to be challenged today?**

4. **It can be especially difficult to protest, challenge and work to change unjust laws or rules when our protests produce a negative reaction (even “fury,” as in the case of the Pharisees). Who are the courageous changemakers that you admire, past or present? What can we learn from them?**

GETTING RILED UP

This section lifts up a contemporary issue and challenges us to see it within the context of what God is saying to us through the biblical story.

Our text

“Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light...” (Romans 13:11–12).

A reflection

It is standard fare at political rallies these days to hear chants of “USA! USA!” and for political speeches from leaders in both major parties to claim that America is “number one!” and/or to call for changes that will make us “number one” again.

To be sure, the United States of America is a great nation in many ways. But there are some ways in which we lead the world that should not make us feel proud.

For example, the USA has more “crimes” on the books than any other country of similar economic and political influence. California created 1,000 new ones in the past 25 years. New York has more than 10,000. Most of them, like panhandling or having a broken tail-light, aren’t actually “crimes” at all.

In order to enforce all of these crimes, a huge army of law enforcement officers has been assembled, 24 percent more per capita than Germany, 66 percent more than England and Wales, 82 percent more than Canada. They are armed like they’re headed to war, using free equipment from the Pentagon’s overstock, and sent out to arrest people who are then fined and charged court fees, who literally pay for their time in

jail, who get hired out like slaves to private clothing manufacturers, call centers and other companies to work for 35 cents an hour, and who are unemployed when they get released due to legal discrimination against people who are convicted of a crime, meaning the odds are good they'll be back in jail again soon and stuck in the system for a lifetime.

This proliferation of newly made-up crimes, the militarization of law enforcement and the privatization of the prison system have produced mass incarceration in this country. More than 25 percent of the world's prisoners are in the United States, even though we make up just 5 percent of the world's population. In fact, 35 *states* in this country have a higher incarceration rate than any other *nation* in the world.

A disproportionate number of the people who have been ensnared in the criminal justice system are women and men of color, the majority of whom are there for nonviolent offenses and/or as a result of the "War on Drugs" (even though people of color are no more likely to be guilty of drug offenses than whites). And in the course of business some of them die.

In fact, America is in a class of its own when it comes to fatal police shootings. There have been 55 fatal police shootings in England and Wales during the last 24 years; we had 59 in this country during the first 24 days of 2015 alone. California has a population 10 percent larger than Canada but 200 percent more fatal police shootings every year. People of color are not more likely to break the law than white people, but people of color are far more likely to be stopped, detained, arrested, convicted, jailed and/or killed by police than whites. Of the 567 people killed by police officers in the first five months of 2016, 51 percent were people of color, a group that makes up just 38 percent of the population. Blacks, who make up 12 percent of the population, represent 25 percent of all those killed.¹

It doesn't have to be this way. We can do something about it. We can begin by acknowledging that our

criminal justice system is broken and then take concrete action steps like these:

- Stop criminalizing everything.
- Replace the "war on drugs" with drug treatment programs.
- Empty the jails of everyone who is there for a nonviolent offense.
- End privatization of the criminal justice system.
- Cap the amount municipalities can earn from fines and court fees.
- Give the grenade launchers and tanks back to the Pentagon.
- Train police officers to de-escalate, recognize and deal with mental illness and build relationships with community members.
- Don't put the police in charge of investigating officers suspected of wrongdoing, and don't let their friends, like the district attorneys they work with every day, take them to trial; give that job to an independent prosecutor.
- Put an end to racial profiling once and for all, even for the U.S. Border Patrol.
- Don't let our elected leaders in the United States capitol give money to any city, county, state or agency that fails to make these changes.

Our political and religious systems only exist by the authority given to them by God. They have been created to do good. We are bound by conscience to be engaged, to hold them accountable. That requires, in a phrase used by activists who are working to change this system, being "woke."

It means answering the call we hear in Paul's letter to the Romans to "wake up from sleep," for the night is far gone and the day is near.

Do we dare?

WHAT ARE YOU HEARING?

1. **Is this data something you already knew or is it new**

¹ For more information about racial bias in our criminal justice system and for resources to help you take a stand against racism, read *The New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander or visit naacp.org/pages/criminal-justice-fact-sheet, pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/07/18/chart-of-the-week-the-black-white-gap-in-incarceration-rates/ and ywcatucson.org

information? What is your response to it?

2. How does this data change (or not) your view of those who have been protesting police violence over the past few years?
3. At the end of his life, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., said he believed it was time to work together for “human rights” for all, not just civil rights. All these years later, our government has incarcerated an untenable number of black and brown people, most for nonviolent crimes. The U.N. Human Rights Committee has expressed ongoing concern about the racial disparities in our criminal justice system and called for reform, especially in regards to mandatory sentencing laws. The U.N. Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination has criticized the U.S. for having a “school-to-prison pipeline” created, in part, by zero-tolerance discipline policies.²
 - a. Why are we allowing these policies to continue? Why do we, as a nation, seem to accept a situation the world thinks is abominable?
 - b. What is your faith community doing about this?
4. Paul calls us to “wake up” and put on the “armor of light.” What would that look like for you? What would that look like for your faith community?

GETTING RELEASED

This year, as we celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, we remember that we have been part of God’s work to make all things new for a very, very long time.

One of the things everyone is celebrating this year is how many of the divisions, which can be traced back to the Reformation, have been healed. But we also honor the courage of those 16th century reformers to challenge the religious authorities of their day.

People, especially the poor, were being taken advantage of by church authorities. Indulgences, or as

the reformers called them, “unadulterated lies concocted for profit,” were being sold to unknowing, simple folk who just wanted some assurance that they and their loved ones would get to heaven.

“These errors are not to be taken lightly,” declared the *Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope*, one of the most radical documents of the Reformation (ironically written by Philip Melancthon, one of the more mild-mannered reformers). “Truly they do harm to the glory of Christ and bring souls to ruin. They cannot be ignored.”³

Standing up to authority and challenging oppressive systems: It’s in our blood.

What now?

1. As we celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, we honor the work of reform at the same time that we work to overcome the divisions it created. How can this be an example to others in our nation and our world?
2. God is making all anew. That’s what God has always done. In what ways are you being called to participate in the new things God is doing today to bring peace, justice, freedom and dignity to all?
3. Who do you know who needs to be in this conversation? What will you do to invite them in?
4. What are you going to do now?

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² Learn more from Amnesty International. [amnestyusa.org/our-work/issues/military-police-and-arms/police-and-human-rights/mass-incarceration-in-the-usa](https://www.amnestyusa.org/our-work/issues/military-police-and-arms/police-and-human-rights/mass-incarceration-in-the-usa)

³ *The Book of Concord*, Augsburg Fortress, 2000, p. 338