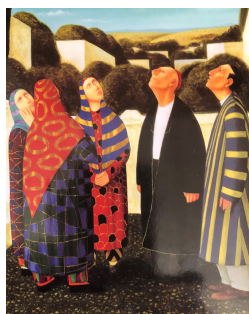

HOPE HEADLINES

A PUBLICATION OF HOPE MENNONITE CHURCH

Volume 37 Number 10

October 2022



The Long Trajectory of Healing and Peace

Romans 8:22-27

Isaiah 43:18-19

Psalms 85: 7-8, 10-11

This is the sermon that Susan Jantzen had planned to preach on

her last Sunday at Hope, long before Dave's death. It seemed appropriate to hear her words.

Romans 8:22-27

²²We know that the whole creation has been groaning together as it suffers together the pains of labor, ²³and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴For in^[a] hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope, for who hopes for what one already sees? ²⁵But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

²⁶Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes^[a] with groanings too deep for words. ²⁷And God,^[a] who searches hearts, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit^[a] intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Isaiah 43:18-19

Do not remember the former things or consider the things of old.¹⁹ I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth; do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.

Psalms 85: 7-8, 10-11

Show us your steadfast love, O LORD,
and grant us your salvation.⁸ Let me hear what God
the LORD will speak, for he will speak peace to his people,
to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts.^[a]

¹⁰Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness
and peace will kiss each other. ¹¹Faithfulness will spring
up from the ground, and righteousness will look down
from the sky.

This painting on our bulletin and on the screen
was created in the year following September 11, 2001.
The artist, Akmal Mizshakarol, lives in Tajikistan the

country just north of Afghanistan, which received severe military lashing from our country following the NYC events of September 11. “. . . We see five people circle in a courtyard, three women and two men looking upward, watching for what might be coming. One is perplexed. Several are wide-eyes with wonder, one has his mouth a bit open. It is as if they are looking up at what happened, and also looking up to ask *what else* might happen.” * One writer sees in this painting that the group is looking beyond what has happened. We see concern, even some anxiety as they seem to have stopped whatever it was they were doing. Their dress anchors them in tradition, their grouping roots them in community. The trees and bushes are planted among the stone that seems to protect them. But there they are, fragile, human beings, trying to understand something that has never happened before. Fragile human beings half a world away from us, but deeply tied into what happened to our country.

This intriguing painting is the cover of John Paul Lederach's book called *Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace*. Pastor Dave and I had talked about the ideas in this book, so it could be that he has spoken with you about John's basic bold idea: we are called to imagine a future that is rooted in realism, but open to an imagination beyond what has already happened. In the words of the artist of this painting, September 11 it was like during their own country's civil war. “Every day, we would look toward the sky and wonder what was coming next. And hoping that we could find something better, something to stop it, something to end the bad dream.”

John Paul, who is a Bethel College graduate with advanced training in social conflict, has given decades to work as a mediator, negotiator, peacebuilding trainer and consultant in the most heated moments of conflict in Colombia, Central America, Somalia and Northern Ireland, to mention a few. Like the prophet Isaiah who lived in wildly unpredictable times, John Paul insists that there is at all times *a new thing springing forth*. Not in the future, but in the same moment, the same present moment that, as the Apostle Paul writes so movingly, “all creation is groaning, the whole creation in labor pains.” John Paul calls us to learn about the spirit of imagination that wafts through our human lives offering us a future at

the same moments that we, our enemies and all creation are groaning in pain.

We in the church are not new to imagining guidelines for a better future. Spurred on by the Bible's account of God-given direction, the church has from the beginning taken the burden, setting up guardrails for human behavior, in the hopes of securing peace. But the church of its own will always fall short!

I have this thick little book called *Creeds of the Churches*, evidence of our human attempt, time after time, to capture the movement and essence of God toward peace. We as the historical church have worked so hard to build a world of faith in so far as we can imagine it. On our own, though, we fall short.

Parts of this book were assigned at seminary. I was curious to explore these pages, since creeds were a part of early Anabaptist thinking, coming as they did from the tradition of creeds in the Catholic church. As we all know, at the time of Anabaptist beginnings the whole church was indeed groaning in pain as Lutherans and other new protestant groups tried to sort out what was germane to belief. I looked at the section of creeds from the 1500's hoping to find seeds of church wisdom during this time of great change. Following the traditional structure of creedal writing, there are lists of declarations of what is true, then lists of declarations about what is not true. So imagine my shock when a number of creeds in this book contained something unexpected – proclamations *against* Anabaptists. These bookmarks tag each time the Anabaptists are decried, but I will read just one. "We condemn the Anabaptists, who deny that young infants, born of faithful parents, are to be baptized. . . . We condemn also the Anabaptists in the rest of those particular opinions which they hold against the Word of God. We therefore are not Anabaptists, neither do we agree with them in any point that is theirs." *Creeds of the Churches*, ed. By John H. Leith, Pg 169 and other pages]

All the church's horses and all the church's men and women could not capture a future that included all of us. Imagination for *what could be*, especially imagination that would *include the enemy*, was beyond them.

Tuned into the January 6th hearings early this past summer, I listened for ideas that are germane to *our* country, ideas we can rest an entire society on, ideas that could bring a country back into its own guardrails, safe once more from a swirling sea of events unfolding quickly.

During testimonies, again and again we heard statements like these: "our nation is preserved by those who abide by their oaths to our constitution." "Our nation

is preserved by those who know the fundamental different between right and wrong."

These statements brought relief to many of us who have wondered, in this time, what oaths of office mean, and where **is** agreement about what is right and wrong. But for us as Jesus followers, we realize that even the United States constitution is limited in its imagination of what brings peace to this groaning world. I am thankful for the US constitution. It must be defended. It also, however, is limited. Our nations many laws are limited. We as citizens have to keep lifting the constitution to higher levels of equity and peace for all.

In all our work for peace, in the church and in as citizens of our own countries, what John Paul Lederach invites us to do is to imagine that there is in our midst a *presence of the way forward*, if we can learn to watch and wait for it. It is an otherworldly impulse toward peace. This presence, this way forward is not of human manufacturing, but does requires human involvement. In Lederach's writing, he gives names to things present when he is in the thick of working at peace in high stakes, militarized settings. He speaks of them as Sister Truth, Brother Mercy, Brother Justice and Sister Peace. In his work, over and over he has witnessed the miracle of a way forward for all sides weaving its way into hard conversation, a way that addresses the deepest of relational wounds, a way that tapes into **God's imagination** for what is possible for human life, now.

¹⁰ Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other. ¹¹ Faithfulness will spring up from the ground, and righteousness will look down from the sky. Psalm 85:10-11

I would like to share two stories, each of which have one foot in the travail, the pain and work of our present world, and the other foot in God's imagination.

Some of you may recall the 2013 violent taking of life in a Nairobi Kenya shopping mall. We were all faced with this tragic groaning of our world yet again. So, I took note when several months later, one of our Mennonite journals covered a response to those horrifying events. Through Mennonite Central Committee, first responders and caregivers were gathered together for a four-day learning retreat and given handholds for understanding human trauma and cycles of violence. Soldiers and media people who had responded to the four-day long mall violence learned more about the complex process of healing. This training is not pie in the sky "when life gives you lemons, make lemonade". This is trusting that in the very midst of human horror, a way of peace is present, working to grow in the harsh ground. This imagination for

such training is trusting that righteousness and peace **will** kiss each other, is trusting that a better way of righteousness **is** looking down from the sky opening a way to peace. God, Godself, drops whatever else was on God's "schedule" and God dwells with us, expanding our imagination toward peace, even peace for the enemy. This is God's deepest longing for all creation. This is God's most daring work. As Christians we must not turn a blind eye from the disheartening violent and unpredictable world around us, but we must also not give it *exclusive* press in our lives. We must not believe that violence is the only real thing. We must not shut down our capacity, our imagination, to see peace wanting to take root in the worst of times and worst of places. As a matter of spiritual discipline, we must watch and wait and anticipate streams of mercy never ceasing in all the depths of human pain, all the depths of the pain of our natural world. God is at work opening ways of peace. We must build our lives on this work of God. We must give witness to each other as we see this work of God.

This final story is a personal witness to this peacebuilding work of God. It starts in 1994, in Rwanda and Burundi where human impulse of tribal hate collapsed relationships of peaceful co-existence between tribes. In my study of this tragedy and learned that instigators, stepped over the line several times with smaller acts of violence, testing the global response. Finding that the international community did not condemn it, the full force of tribal hatred was opened, resulting in deliberate loss of human lives in numbers of over 500,000 in less than three months.

As in the Kenyan incident, groups stepped into the aftermath over the next months and years. Among others, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) set up an education experience about conflict, peace and healing in the areas where violence had broken out. A young teen-aged boy attended those and was transfixed that an imagination of peace could be strengthened, an imagination other than clan loyalty which was at the root of such unbelievable human behavior. Over the years this young boy continued his interest. He eventually attended the Eastern Mennonite University's Summer Peacebuilding Institute. To make a long and amazing story short, Jim and I met this man, now an adult, bearing the name of Jean Claude. Of all things, he had become MCC's Country representative for Chad, the place where Jim and I were making a return trip to after 30 years! Muslim/Christian conflict had resulted in the deaths of 30 or 40 of our friends in the 1980's. Jim and I were returning to find family members who remained, who had

survived that violent time. Jean Claude supported us in our desire to create times of eating together with these friends from 30 years prior, speaking together, listening to the memories of the unimaginably destructive events. Trusting in the power of peace, we sat with each other as old photos of departed loved ones were shared, as recordings of voices silenced 30 years ago could be heard together. Because we imagined and anticipated that peace would be at work among us, we watched and witnessed God knitting circumstances together to make our meeting even possible, to make our words deep, sincere, and healing. Honoring our lost friends and family members, we reconstructed important things that were knocked away due to lack of loyalty to God's imagination for humankind.

Creeds of belief. A republic's constitution. Learning the ways of peace after things gone horribly wrong in a Nairobi mall. Human honor restored for a young boy in Rwanda who grew up to help Jim's and my friends in Chad. We can walk toward the worst of human life, believing in the presence and power of God's imagination.

Now the new thing springs forth, Isaiah tells us 3,000 years ago. "Do you not perceive it?" he asks with an instructive rhetorical question. Peace is not a heavy burden that we as Mennonites are asked to carry. Peace is the nimble unstoppable movement of the God. Our work is to tending our imagination so we wait and listen for something in our midst that is beyond any one of us, beyond any one congregation, beyond our denomination. Being a brother and sisterhood where imagination can take root and strengthen is worth giving our lives to.

The day John Paul Lederach visited Akmal (he artist of the image above) on his porch in Tajikistan was a hot day. The late afternoon breeze had picked up and John Paul was served fruits and a cool drink as they sat and visited. Akmal's daughters, now young women in university, listened carefully, respectfully from a distance as that culture prescribes. John Paul saw their eyes full of the future, full of imagination. Let us join them. Let us join with people everywhere. Let us be a people who learn of peace for friends and peace for foes. Let us be stubborn in our faith that peace is in the air, in our hearts, leading the way. Knowing you, Hope Mennonite, as I do after three months, I am honored to have been in brother and sisterhood together with you, living toward the end of hearing God's imagination come to be. AMEN.

*Lederach, John Paul. The Moral Imagination. Oxford University Press, page 4



"We Own This Now" Play about the Doctrine of Discovery

"We Own This Now" is coming to Wichita, KS! This Ted & Company play will be performed at Hope Mennonite Church, 868 N. Maize Road in Wichita, on Saturday, **November 5** at 3:00 pm. Regular tickets are \$20 or pay what you can. Student tickets are \$10 or pay what you can. Indigenous people are free. Buy online at <https://first-church-of-the-brethren.square.site/>. Created in partnership with the Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery Coalition, "We Own This Now" is a benefit for the Kanza Heritage Society. This play looks at love of land and loss of land. "We Own This Now" provides a starting point for further conversation: What does it mean to "own" something? What is the relationship between "owning" and "taking" — and what is the relationship between "ownership" and (taking) responsibility?



Directory Update...

There are still a few I need pictures from, and I will try to get those on Sunday mornings in the next several weeks. Thank you to all of you who have had their pictures taken. ~~Kim Voth



October Reminders...

October 2-Jim Voth Communion

Worship L-Renetta
Scripture-Greg
Pianist-Cynthia
Song L-Lowell
Tech-Scott

October 9-TBA

Worship L- Renetta
Scripture-Jim V.
Pianist-Vicki
Song L-Galen
Tech-Mike V

October 16-Dawn Yoder Harms

Worship-TBD
Scripture-Connie
Pianist-Laurie
Song L-Lowell
Tech-Randy

October 23-Church retreat at Camp Mennoscah

October 30

Worship L-Jim V.
Scripture-Joanna
Pianist-Cynthia
Song L.-Trae
Tech-Michelle J.

Sanctuary Prep

Oct 2-Lori M.
Oct 9-Ruthie
Oct 16-Russ G.
Oct 23-church retreat
Oct 30-Joanna

Nursery

Oct 2-Mike & Val
Oct 9-Jordon & Emily
Oct 16-Annette & Eldon
Oct 23-church retreat
Oct 30-Alison, Kloie, Hailey



Coffee

Oct 2-Eldon & Annette
Oct 9-Travis & Charity
Oct 16-Randy & Joanna
Oct 23-church retreat
Oct 30-Marcus/Cynthia

Sunday school helpers

Oct 2-Alison
Oct 9-Cindy
Oct 16-Renetta
Oct 23-church retreat
Oct 30-Cindy

S.S. Superintendent

Oct 2-Delaine
Oct 9-Cynthia
Oct 16-Cindy
Oct 23-church retreat
Oct 30-Justin

Memorial Garden

Oct 2-15-Connie

Mowers

Oct 2-Grant
Oct 9-Scott
Oct 16-Jerold
Oct 23-Randy P.
Oct 30 Randy G.

Worship Comm. Coord

Oct 2,9- Lori M.
Oct 16-Galen
Oct 23-church retreat
Oct 30-Galen