

Restorative Justice: Diversity and Inclusion

March 15, 2015

Lane Campbell,
Director of Religious Education

Opening *please rise in body or spirit*

Lane Campbell, David Krohn

We are here
In holy community
To offer honesty to one another,
To embrace the power of forgiveness,
And to create relationships of authenticity and integrity with our world,

And so, bearing witness *both* to our world as it is, *and* as Love can imagine it, we would claim that vision of a just world in our own lives. And because of a growing sense of kinship with all beings, inviting our compassion, we begin in this celebration to engage our mission with our whole lives: body, mind, and heart.

Praising **#1023 Building Bridges**

Ingathering **A Repair Job**
after which children and teachers leave for their activities, while Nathan plays.

Once upon a time, two sisters lived side by side. They both owned farms. One grew the sweetest grapes for miles around, the other raised vegetables. A small creek ran between the two farms. For decades, the sisters were as close as could be. Folks in town said if you ever saw one sister, the other was always nearby. They shared life together: meals, tools, and stories. Their children played together in the creek. Life was peaceful.

Then, one day, they had a disagreement. It wasn't about much, but they could not resolve it. Slowly, the disagreement became an argument, and bitterness set into each sister's heart. There was no more exchanging of meals, tools, or stories. They stopped communicating entirely.

One day, a sister answered a knock at her door. There stood a carpenter.

"Hello, ma'am, I'm looking for work. Do you have anything that needs building?"

"Yes, I do," replied the sister. She pointed to her sister's farm next door. "That farm belongs to my sister. We were best friends, but she has suddenly become unreasonable, and I can no longer stand the sight of her. I would like you to build a tall fence between our properties so I don't have to look at her."

The carpenter replied, "Okay, I understand your need. I think I know exactly what to do." And so he set to work. The sister decided to do her weekly shopping while he was working so she would not be in his way.

When she returned later that day, she was shocked to see that the carpenter had not built a fence, but had instead constructed a beautiful bridge across the creek. It was sturdy and wide, with gracefully

carved handrails and posts. Before she could object, her sister came out of her house and also saw the bridge. Her sister approached her side of the bridge and said, "I have been so foolish! How could I have forgotten: you are the most loving person in the world. I'm so lucky you are my sister!" and she started across the bridge. The sister rushed across her side of the bridge to meet her in the middle. Both sisters apologized, hugged, kissed, and maybe cried a little.

They turned to the carpenter, who HAD known exactly what to do. They wanted to do something nice for him.

They said, "We have other jobs you can do around the farm."

"Thanks, but I think I'll be moving on," he said. "I've got other fences to build."

Greeting news of the congregation

JAM Presentation

Alice Faryna

First of all, Ginnie Vogts and I wish to thank those of you who participated in our postcard campaign last month, which generated 46+ cards we delivered to Congressmen opposing cuts to Food Stamps (SNAP) and the growing wealth gap. Today we encourage you to continue your work in transformative justice.

Poverty and economic inequality were chosen by our congregation to be a major initiative for the Justice Action Ministry in 2014-2015. Most of the programs supported by JAM in fact address inequality in a variety of ways. My project (Single Payer Action Network) seeks to establish truly universal health care coverage at the state level, and ultimately the national level, by implementing a publicly funded, privately delivered health care system. To that end, activists in SPAN meet regularly with our state legislators keeping them apprised of the economic and public health benefits of such a system.

The mission statement of our church includes these words: "To relinquish the safety of our unexamined privilege for the freedom to engage in transforming justice." Transforming takes its energy from a vision of a society which recognizes the worth and dignity of every person. The proposed budget for the state of Ohio does not. Bowing to forces which demand less government and believe in the fiction that free-market forces are the pathway to greater prosperity, the proposed budget calls for an across-the-board income tax cut. This rewards mightily those who already have considerable wealth, while punishing those who struggle to manage on wages stagnant for decades. The tiny tax cut these folks will get cannot offset the rising cost of healthcare, food, housing, education etc. Wal-Mart has announced that it will increase hourly wages to \$9 per hour this year. That means a full-time employee will earn a little less than \$20,000 a year, exceeding the amount an individual can earn and qualify for Medicaid. Purchasing private insurance, even with the subsidies available under the Affordable Care Act, still leaves that individual unable to meet the co-pays and deductibles inherent in a for-profit system.

We have been visiting members of the Ohio House Finance Committee. We invite you to come and write a postcard about your values and what you want your state budget to support. We will deliver them to the chair of the Finance Committee. These elected officials need to hear from us before the budget is finalized in April. They need to know that we are aware and not happy. They can be influenced to make changes, but only if they hear from us.

We will have ideas for you to generate your messages at our table. Please come and advocate for a

moral state budget today. Thank you.

Devotion: <i>Welcoming Memory and Hope</i>

Affirming **#518 Grandfather, look at our brokenness.**
from The Ojibway Indians of North America

Singing **#86 Blessed Spirit of My Life**

Communing

Sequence

We each look deeply this morning, deep into the vast caverns of our own hearts, allowing the spirit of our lives to sing to us. We look deeply and honestly at who we are, at where we come from, at where we have arrived. Our hearts beating for peace, for life, for this early morning moment. Let us be the healers of our own stories. Let us face our brokenness with integrity. The brokenness no longer rules our days when we face it, when we are open to it. Our hearts open to where we have been kind and caring to those we love and to those we did not even know. Release that which is hooking into you, holding onto you and continue breathing, breathing, breathing in the cavern of your own heart.

Silence

We know the names of those who have loved us into being. We know the names of those whose forgiveness we need to ask.

We know the names of those who have so graciously forgiven us.

And we know the names of those closest to our hearts in this moment.

We take time now to speak those names aloud in this space, to speak those names and have them be heard by this beloved community. We speak those names now.

Naming

To grow, to feel, to love – that is where we are being called. Let the sweet voices and notes take us to that place.

Music

Presentation: <i>Opening to the World</i>
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Reading

1. *Uplifted* by Jean M. Olson, 2009

Our first reading this morning is a brief poem from Jean M. Olson, who is a Unitarian Universalist writer. She has had her works published in multiple UU meditation manuals. This reading comes from the book, "With or Without Candlelight." We will read the poem twice through.

UPLIFTED

I tried so hard to bring him up to my level.

I spoke eloquent words of encouragement
and he struggled but could not rise.
I pulled with one hand, and then two.
I tried to lift him, to pick him up and carry him.
All to no avail.
Hot and exhausted, I finally sat down next to him
and he gave me some cool water to drink.

Suddenly we were both there.

2. *The Journey of Forgiveness* by Rev. Dale Lang, 2005

I got to hear from Rev. Dale Lang this past week as I was putting this service together. He shared a difficult story of his teenage son being killed by a peer while he was at school, where his son was supposed to be safe. Rev. Lang spoke honestly about the pain this tragedy had caused his family. He spoke tearfully about the power of forgiveness as a mode of release from bitterness and pent up resentment, as he will in this reading. He and his family have generously shared their story time and time again to further the cause of Restorative Justice.

Before our son Jason was shot and killed in his high school in 1999 by a 14-year-old boy, I would have told you how important forgiveness is, because, as a Christian Pastor, I knew something about it. At the Memorial Service for Jason, I did offer forgiveness to the boy who killed our son.

It was not until three months later, when the angry mother of a daughter killed by a drunken driver said she could not understand our family's forgiveness, that I truly began to understand forgiveness. When Jesus gave me the grace to forgive the boy who had killed Jason, He set me free from being trapped in the place that angry Mom had lived in for several years.

When we stay angry at the people who have hurt us, we are trapped. For if we stay in the place of anger long, it becomes very much like a prison: a place that is difficult to leave, a place that continues to damage us. When I stay angry at being hurt, I build walls. I don't want anyone getting close because they may hurt me again, or try to convince me to give up my anger. When we choose to forgive those who have hurt us, the walls begin to come down. It is then, and only then, that it becomes possible for God to begin healing the wounds that we have received. Forgiveness is a place of healing and freedom. In the world we live in, we all get hurt and we will all need to forgive. Forgiveness is simple to define: when we can think about, or look at, someone who has hurt us, and still be at peace, we have arrived at the place of forgiveness.

Interlude: by Nathan Hamm

Preaching Restorative Justice: Diversity and Inclusion
Lane Campbell, DRE

This morning, I want to take a moment to wonder with you all, to remember actually. I want to take a moment to wonder with you, and I'm going to ask you to think back through your life a bit. I'm wondering if any of you here have ever been wronged in your life. I'm wondering if you have ever been harmed by another person. And I want to invite you back to that moment for just a bit. You are safe here. No one is going to ask you to share this experience out loud. But let's travel on back to that time when you were wronged. It may have been as recent as yesterday or it could have happened many years ago. We'll take a quiet moment to help you get there. (PAUSE) What I'm wondering about is, in the aftermath of that harm, what did you need? What were your needs in that moment?

And now I want you to switch gears with me in this moment of remembering. I wonder if you have ever harmed another person, if there was a situation where you were the person who caused harm. Each one of us here has done it – I am certainly no exception. So, I want to invite you back to a time when you caused harm to another person. It may have been as recent as yesterday, or it could have happened many years ago. Let's in our minds travel back to that time. (PAUSE) In the aftermath of causing another person harm, what did you need? What was it you needed to feel safe or okay following causing that person harm?

A few months ago, I took part in this same exercise with a room full of religious educators, high school students, and representatives from the John Marshall Law School in Chicago, IL. When I engaged with this exercise, it was a challenge. The first situation, where we had been wronged, came to mind easier. We were asked to share the situation we were thinking of, and to share our needs with a partner seated next to us. I was sitting next to a complete stranger, but I felt okay talking with her about a time when I had been harmed – plenty of examples came to mind. And I could easily access what I needed in those moments, mostly what I needed and did not get. The second question was much more difficult. It was difficult to share with another person and talk honestly about a time when I had caused harm to someone else. And considering my needs in those moments is not something that comes naturally. I got the sense that this was the case around the room as we were asked to share our needs with the larger group. There was a complete and awkward silence in the room at first. Folks seemed more hesitant this round.

Our wonderfully skilled facilitator recorded our needs from both rounds on large easel paper and then laid them down on the floor for us to compare and contrast. It was surprising to me how similar the needs were between the two situations. When we had been harmed, or had caused harm, each one of us needed to be seen and understood. Forgiveness was a common thread, whether it was being forgiven or offering forgiveness. And in both situations, we desired a venue to talk the incident of harm through, whether that was with trusted loved ones or with the person directly involved.

This morning, we heard from Alice Faryna, who graciously shared with us a pathway towards a vision of our society that honors the inherent worth and dignity of every person. I am here to share with you yet another pathway: restorative justice and circle process. Restorative justice is a method of addressing harm caused in our community through honest dialogue between a person who has been harmed, the person or people who caused that harm, their families and their broader community. All parties are brought together in a conversation circle, so that the people directly affected by the harm done are not isolated from each other, but rather brought together to repair relationship with one another and with the larger community. It is a process that values honesty and emotion. It is a process that is not easy and often requires much preparation in advance of everyone sitting around that circle to speak with one another. Restorative justice is now being used in schools, in the juvenile court system, and in our broader justice system. Currently, I am taking a look into what such a process could look like in our Sunday School and in our broader church as a whole.

I want to say a word about language here. In the restorative justice literature I have been reading, there is a tendency to use the term "victim" to identify a person who has been harmed, and to use the term "offender" to describe a person who has caused harm. Without going too far into it, I will use these terms this morning, but I honestly find them problematic. We cannot divide our world into one of victims and offenders as we have been in both positions at different times in all of our lives.

Restorative justice has its roots in indigenous traditions, like the Ojibway peoples whose words we spoke aloud earlier. In indigenous communities, when crime occurs or when one member of the community harms another, the focus is on repairing the harm, and repairing the rift that has been caused in one's community. Right now, our justice system and our punitive measures in our schooling systems separate and isolate victim from offender. In our court proceedings, both parties are encouraged not to speak to one another, and oftentimes not to speak for themselves. In our prison systems, people who have harmed others are isolated amongst others who have caused harm – away

from their families, away from communities who care about them. This alternative restorative justice model invites the stories and the voices of those who have experienced harm and those who have caused harm into a circle. It is a process of listening and inclusion, rather than isolation and separation. What people often find out is that the person who caused the harm is also a person who previously experienced harm in their own life. This is an opportunity to grapple with the larger systems in our world that lead to crime and violence.

I will share with you all that there have been times in my life when I was in need of forgiveness following harm I had caused. There was a time in my early teenage years, as my grandmother was growing sicker and sicker with an illness that would eventually claim her life. In those times, in my need for attention and in my grief, I turned to shoplifting – to stealing from stores. On the day my family was leaving for my grandmother's funeral, I was caught. I know this hurt my family deeply and I am aware of the impact theft has on the people who work in such stores, having been one of those people myself. I wonder now what a restorative justice process would have done to heal some of the situation – to face the harm I had caused, and to give me a chance to voice the grief and the pain I was feeling in response to my grandmother's death.

Each one of us here in this room has been harmed in our lives in one way or another. This is a part of the human condition. We cannot always be kind and loving to one another. It is just not our way. And each one of us here has caused harm to another human being, probably to people we love and care for deeply. What does it take to restore these relationships? I mean to really repair these relationships – not to just make things better for now. What does it take to repair relationships where relationships have been broken? And what about those relationships we'd rather leave behind? Those relationships that were bad from the beginning, those people we'd rather not see again.

First and foremost, restoring relationship takes willingness of both parties. Both the person who has caused harm and the person who has been harmed have to desire to come together and work towards reconciliation. As many of us learned in our childhoods, just because we are made to share does not always mean we want to share.

Next it takes a process that honors the people who were directly harmed and the people who have also been affected. This process is one where families of both victims and offenders are gathered, as well as community members. This brings important experience into the room. Someone who has been harmed may not see the ways they carry that story around with them. Someone who has caused harm may not be aware of the effect it has had on their relationships. And that circle must include people in their community, so that the question of how this incident of crime or violence or wrongdoing has affected the entire community.

I think this model has much to teach us about forgiveness and owning one's actions. As Archbishop Desmond Tutu so eloquently points out, forgiveness is not about forgetting. It is about remembering. Apologizing is about owning harm we have caused and being willing to change how we live in future moments to make sure the harm is not repeated. Apologizing comes from seeing the full impact of what we have done and being able to face this impact honestly. It is not a process that takes a couple of words – it is a process that takes time.

And I don't want to get too drawn into what an offender needs to do in a forgiveness process because forgiveness is also for the people who have been harmed, as we heard earlier from Rev. Dale Lang. Forgiveness, for those of us who have been able to give it, can be a huge release. To really forgive can release us from the bitterness and anger we carry around with us in those moments when we have refused to forgive. I know I am not alone in this room in holding onto those moments when I have been wronged. It can be the simplest thing – being cut off in traffic, someone says something insensitive (even if it is unknowingly), or a service worker or barrista making your food or beverage in the wrong way. In hanging onto that anger, I have been that person having imaginary conversations with the person who wronged me, trying to find a way to communicate the harm I have received, or even to make them pay. Holding onto this anger takes a toll on our hearts and on our emotional energy.

Imagine holding onto anger for even bigger offenses – and I’m sure you can – imagine the large toll it takes on one’s life.

This past week, I was watching a woman’s testimonial about the effectiveness of a restorative justice program based out of Alberta, up north in Canada. Restorative Justice efforts have increased in Canada due to the many First Nations peoples living there, and a desire to create a justice system that honors the circle process of those communities. This testimonial came from a woman whose father was killed by a neighbor when she was very young. She talked about how she held onto her anger towards this neighbor for years. She shared the ways it brought an edge to each interaction she had. Like the sisters in our story this morning who refused to forgive, this woman was angry at every turn and forgiveness was not her first instinct. She socially isolated herself, making it difficult for people to relate to her because, every time someone confided in her, she would bring the conversation back to the trauma she had endured, minimizing the experiences of others. At least they didn’t have a father who was killed when they were a teenager – anyone know someone who carries around their trauma like this? After 20-something years, this woman was reunited with the neighbor who had killed her father. She had a plan to go into that room and to make that man pay. When she got there, she came face-to-face with this man, and it turned out he was not the monster she remembered. When she learned that he had a mental illness that was going untreated at the time of her father's death, and when she learned about the way this man had carried around the burden of killing her father so long ago, she shared her experience of needing to forgive him. In her words, he became a human being to her, and her heart melted. In the days, months, and years ahead, she felt a lightness and felt an ending to the bitterness she had been carried around. The experience actually gave her the permission and the room to grieve the death of her father, rather than staying focused on the harm that had been done to her and to her family. Forgiving allowed her to be sad and allowed her to become unstuck from that place in time she had felt she could never leave. So forgiveness is not just for the offender, it is for the victim as well.

May we embrace processes with deep roots and freeing wings that allow us to be forgiven and to be heard. May we seek to bring the principles of restorative justice to the many communities of which we are all a part. May our relationships work towards restoration where healing and restoration are possible. Amen.

Integration: <i>Recommitting to Our Mission</i>
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Offering

We give this morning, not to keep the lights in this church on, rather we give to the relationships we build when we come to this church. We give this morning, not to pay the salaries of our ministers and staff, rather we give to the direction this church is being led in; we give to the care our church provides to people within and beyond our gathered community. We give this morning because this is a congregation that is important to us, or even becoming important to us. Our offering will now be generously given and gratefully received.

Returning

Singing #140 Hail the Glorious Golden City

Blessing