

Stewardship Leaders Newsletter

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Welcome to the Stewardship Leaders Newsletter

To me, the murder of George Floyd and the events that followed aren't a news story. It's my neighbors, my neighborhood, and my city. The picture you see below is the view right outside my apartment building on Sunday, May 31st as thousands of protesters streamed down the street to kneel on the bridge in honor of George Floyd. My heart breaks for the murder of George Floyd and so many others at the hands of those who were called to serve and protect them. I lament the systematic oppression of black, indigenous, and people of color in my city and around the world as well as the ways I, as a white woman, have implicitly or complicity contributed to this injustice.

It would be easy to stop here to stew in grief, lament the injustice, and send my thoughts and prayers to the suffering, but I believe we are called to do more. This is a key stewardship moment. As Rev. Brian Herron said during last week's clergy march in Minneapolis: "It's going to take more than prayer, we're going to have to put feet to our faith." Stewardship is the way in which we use ALL of the resources that God has entrusted to our care to love God and neighbor. This is a task that requires not only our words but our time, our talents, our treasure, and so much more.

So, how can we use all the resources that God has entrusted to us to love our neighbor both now and in the days and years to come? That's what this week's article is all about.

What tools have you used to combat racism and uproot white privilege in your congregation? Let us know in [the Faith+Lead Learning Lab](#).

In gratitude,
Grace Duddy Pomroy
Director
Stewardship Leaders program



Putting Feet to Our Faith

by Grace Duddy Pomroy

Over the last two weeks I have watched and joined in as countless people put “feet to their faith” by crying out in protest, cleaning up the streets, offering free food and drink, staying up all night to watch over homes and businesses, donating supplies to neighborhoods who have lost grocery stores and pharmacies, and giving away money freely to causes they never knew existed until two weeks ago. This is all important work, but I pray that in the midst of it we don’t miss out on the longer road that lies ahead to make our way to true systemic change.

Once the streets are cleaned, buildings are resurrected, voices have died down, and the media moves on to bigger news, we will still have much work left to do. As we stewardship leaders know so well, our work must be diligent, faithful, and on-going if it will ever be effective. For those of you who are white, like me, I think one of the most important steps we can take in the coming days and weeks is to stop and listen to black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC). Listen deeply to the BIPOC leaders in your community and follow their lead. Be willing to dwell in your discomfort as you gain a deeper empathy for the experience of life as a person who is consistently marginalized due to the color of their skin. Listen to the voices that are already speaking, rather than pressure BIPOC leaders who are already exhausted and grieving to educate you. Those of us who are white leaders have the ability to educate ourselves by listening and by seeking out the many resources that are already available to us.

Here are a few places to start:

1. An article by Tiffany Chaney reflecting on the murder of George Floyd: [Sick and Tired of Being Sick and Tired](#)
2. Another article from Chaney where she reflects on the role of “respectability advocacy”: [Remarks from “Becoming the body of Christ where all bodies are valued: A conversation around the ELCA’s resolution to condemn White Supremacy”](#)

3. A Christian Century article from Drew Hart unpacking “white privilege” and outlining the perils in the ways we might steward it: [Beyond a White Privilege Model](#)
4. Hart’s book designed to help the church better understand racism practically and theologically: [Trouble I’ve Seen: Changing the Way the Church Views Racism](#)
5. Black preachers speaking out following the murder of George Floyd: [Who I am Listening to Now: 5 Sermons by Black Preachers This Week](#)
6. Retired Pastor Ken Wheeler’s reflections following the death of Mike Brown in Ferguson nearly six years ago: [The Disease of Racism](#)
7. Edgar Villanueva’s book diagnoses the fatal flaws in philanthropy and provides thoughtful solutions to these systemic imbalances: [Decolonizing Wealth: Indigenous Wisdom to Heal Divides and Restore Balance](#)

Have you found resources by BIPOC leaders that you’ve found particularly helpful? Let us know at stewardship@luthersem.edu. We’ll continue to share these resources each week in the “Stewardship Curated” section below.

After a period of deep listening and affirmation, we can discern how God is calling us to act. Here are some questions to get the conversation started in your community, clustered around four commonly held stewardship concepts: time, talent, treasure, and relationships:

1. Time: Will you listen when BIPOC voices in your community speak up and affirm them? How will you continue to invest in your education and deep listening as you do this justice work? Will you commit to [reading books](#) on anti-racism, books by black authors, and explaining racism to kids with children’s books? Will you listen to [podcasts by black leaders](#) and [attend anti-racism training](#)? Will you get to know your cultural lens and improve your intercultural competency using a tool like the [IDI \(Intercultural Development Inventory\)](#)? Again, this is not the time to make BIPOC leaders give up their time to educate you, instead use the resources that are already available.

2. Talents: Will you value the talent of [black artists](#) by purchasing physical art for your church, purchasing their music, and/or co-sponsoring live events? Will you patron BIPOC-owned businesses? Will you make a pattern of bringing BIPOC voices into your preaching, studies, and congregations as experts? Will you invite persons of color already present in your community to serve in positions of leadership? Will you find appropriate ways to volunteer with BIPOC-led non-profits that continue to dismantle racism and white saviorism?

3. Treasure: Where you spend, give, and invest your money matters. As you do your reading, are you intentionally buying books by black authors through [black-owned bookstores](#)? Remember, even if there aren’t any in your community there may be opportunities to purchase online. Are you donating to BIPOC-led non-profits who are fighting for justice? Have you looked at how much of your congregation’s benevolence and endowment gifts go towards communities of color? What good work are BIPOC leaders already doing—how can you join them in that work rather than creating your own cause? Have you considered allocating some of your budget toward reparations and advocacy, not just charity work?

4. Relationships: Too many congregations fall into the trap of making justice work a one-sided relationship where white, rich congregations only give and communities of color only receive. The truth is we need each other and things will only change as a result of transformative relationships. Angela Denker puts this well in her recent blog post: [“Paternalistic Racism of Nice White People.”](#) Are you creating lasting, transformative relationships with BIPOC in your community?

I realize reading this list can feel incredibly overwhelming. This is a deeply-rooted, systemic problem and there’s lots of work to be done. You may be tempted to jump ship and let others with more time, energy, and passion for this issue pick up the slack. I’ve felt that way at times, too. But the truth is this problem is just too big for just a few of us to take on alone—your voice is needed, your intentional stewardship is invited.

Start with one small step forward and continue from there. Listen and then focus on your gifts. As [Lindsey Young](#) said, “Resistance is NOT a one lane highway. Maybe your lane is protesting, maybe your lane is organizing,

maybe your lane is counseling, maybe your lane is art activism, maybe your lane is surviving the day. Do NOT feel guilty for not occupying every lane. We need all of them.” Let’s each bring our best gifts to our lane on the resistance highway—and encourage others to do the same.