

A New Spirit and A White Confession at Pentecost

First Christian Family, you know when God says share, you need to share. I am sharing this with you this Pentecost. Mary Evans, our NC Disciples Women's Ministry President, asked us to share some reflections about what it means to ask the hard questions and have open and honest conversations in our Disciples Women's Ministry. I wrote this close to Pentecost some years ago, just after coming back from visiting someone who had a heart blockage; things had hardened; deposits had to be removed for him to live. He couldn't breathe, he said, and had lost his ability even to hear. There was this heaviness in his chest. The blood could not pass through.

The trip home God brought to mind the Ezekiel passage below. We in the Disciples Women Ministry pray our hearts will be open to the Spirit's power to make us one. We white women need to face some hard things. The path to wholeness faces a blockage that is social, cultural, economic, mental, and spiritual. As a white woman, I have had an easier time than my black and brown sisters and brothers. One of the gifts of our region is the opportunity to share in our Race and Reconciliation regional trainings. As we sit and listen together, we weep, we own, we hold, and we begin the work of becoming living stones bearing witness to God's power to draw us into one life.

I who am white must confess, that even as God wants to put a new spirit within us, *there is this stone in the way. We begin by admitting there is this blockage. Here is a writing from that time near Pentecost I decided to post on our church website this Pentecost.*

Ezekiel 36:26, " ... a new heart and a new spirit I will put within you.
And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a
heart of flesh."

It's Pentecost, Lord, and
You want to put a new spirit within us,
But there is this hardness
Mercy has calcified,

Life is blocked and we cannot breathe under this stone in our chests
Cannot breathe or hear you breathing,
Hear you speaking,
Cannot hear your heart, or the flow of your blood in our veins,
Or our sister's veins, our brother's veins, so
Come Holy Spirit and remove the heart of stone
So we can breathe again, so blood can flow again, so
Hearts can beat again.
Come, so we can hear what we have been deaf to-
The hard pounding of the hearts of
Our black and brown sisters and brothers
When they were chained in slave galleys
To till white fields and bake white bread and sew white clothes and
rock white babies,
When their own were ripped from their arms and sold to work other
fields.
We need to hear their hearts pounding,
When even now their children are profiled,
Profiled, while our white children file past
Imprisoned, while our white children go free,
Pounding when doors are shut in their faces,
The doors to buildings we whites called our own,
Which they, not we, quarried, carried, laid, and cemented together,
To consolidate our power;
Lord, have mercy, and open our ears to hear their hearts
Pounding when guns were put in their faces,
While we white folk drove on -we whites
Who have not been in their places,
And can never know,
But nevertheless took the places their ancestors built
Stone by stone,
With sweat and blood.
Lord, have mercy and forgive our hardness, our privilege.

Come and let us lay down these hearts before you,
Remove the hardness, open the way
For life to flow.
I who am white, come confessing our white lives have been built on the
backs
Of our Black and Brown brothers and sisters,
And we can't back away from that,
Can't stone wall that,
Without backing away from you,
Come Holy Spirit and remove our hearts of stone so we can live again,
And hear again the pounding of all hearts,
Your heart,
Come Holy Spirit,
You,
Who had the power to break through that stone on Easter
And raise Jesus from the dead and did,
Oh, break us down, Lord,
Remove our hearts of stone and put a new spirit
Within us,
So we might confess, weep for, listen to, hold
Pain we never knew, we who are white
And won't know as long as we stay like stone,
Like white-faced sepulchers that hold stories of death
But have no life in us unless you come,
Come, come, Holy Spirit,
So we can breathe again, so life can flow again,
So we can listen again
To the pain inside each chest, each memory, each life
Come, so we might repent again
Be broken so we might be rebuilt again,
Start over again
Be living stones again,
So you can mold us and use us,

Come,
At Pentecost
Inside our tombs,
Behind our doors,
Around our walls
To bring us again,
One breath,
One Spirit
So we might be
One people
One us.
In You.
Please come.