



The Pastor's Ponderings

My Ponderings for today are, as the police and law procedural television shows used to say,

***Dun Dun* "Stripped From the Headlines!"**

Like **this** one from the **New York Times: Bars, Strip Clubs and Churches**

Don't you just wonder what that article is going to be about? It almost sounds like the beginning of a bad joke!

However, the article is quite serious, one might even be forgiven for saying that the article is deadly serious.

The article continues,
As lockdowns have ended and public life resumes, the coronavirus is spreading in many of the places people congregate and especially indoors, in nightclubs, casinos, houses of worship and elsewhere, researchers say.

I mean, Gloriosky Zero!, what in the world could those three gathering places possibly have in common?

Let me give you a clue -

Jesus was often found building it, or using it to heal and to teach the folk who followed him how to come closer to, and even create, God's Heavenly Realm on earth.

Need another clue? Well alright! Here it is -

The word we are looking for begins with the letter "C". While you are thinking... Let's examine *another* story stripped from Headlines closer to home.

Our friend and partner in ministry, Pastor Renita Green, has written a new book entitled *This Little Light of Mine*.

In an article penned by Mary Beth Niederkorn of the Southeast Missourian newspaper, Pastor Renita is quoted saying,

"In many places, Scriptures call us to a place to do justice, love and mercy, to walk humbly with God," Green said, adding that her time in Cape Girardeau has been healing for her, bringing the mercy piece into her life where that had been lacking in her approach to people she didn't agree with.

This book describes that journey, from contempt for people who were good people but did not understand, to a place of advocating for justice and abiding love to help bridge the gap of disagreement into common ground, to grow community.

"We can't tear each other down and build community. Community is where our power is," Green said. "A lot of wrongs need to be righted, but we need each other to do that."

DING DING DING DING DING!!

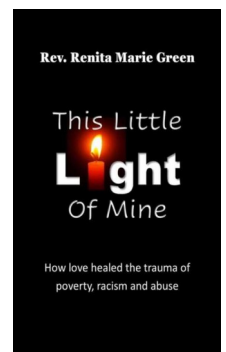
Our Word for the Day is Community!

And community is what I want to address in this week's pondering.

The New York Times article tells us we are experiencing new virus breakouts in the places where folk come together for recreation, company, worship and socializing.

In other words, in the places where community happens.

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I know, you might not imagine a strip club as being a place where community is created, and *maybe* you'd be right, if you are talking about deep, mature, spiritual community. Then again, how can I know? The closest I've come to one is scenes on TV and in movies where the detective is interviewing a witness, or the baddies are laundering money.

And I imagine not every corner bar or pub is like Cheers, where everybody knows your name. Still. I have a sneaking suspicion that community happens where good churchgoers least expect it, as well as at coffee hour and Bible study.

Be that as it may, here is the thing: our Creator made humans so we must experience community. It is built into our DNA to seek out and find places of belonging with others.

Unfortunately, *unlike* our Lord Jesus, who often got challenged and was even despised for spending *his* quality time with folk of ill repute and lack of social standing, we tend to limit *our* places of community to other folk who match us in thinking, social status and often age and cultural or ethnic background.

I say unfortunately, because clearly, Jesus was on to something - hanging around with fisher folk and political nuts, socializing with lepers and the formerly demon-possessed and other women with bad reputations, so much so that his critics named him a drunkard and a glutton by reputation.

But whether at parties or dinners or on barren hillsides or synagogues, Jesus was teaching.

Always teaching.

Always demonstrating what God's Heavenly Kin-dom would look like, in spite of our human inclination to gather in cliques and clubs of "folk just like us".

Our groups and cliques and attraction to status and caste has caused endless and continuing pain all throughout God's earth. And friends, we are blocking God's purpose.

Let me refer back to the article about Pastor Renita's book. She has another book coming out later this year called "Unbecoming".

Renita is quoted as saying: *that book will be a closer look at some systems that have created hardship and pain for Black people in this country, and how those systems are still very much alive.*

Of the book's title, Green said, *"Part of what light should do is reproduce itself. The goal is not for any of us to be the brightest one, but to attract more light."*

The Christ is the Light of the World and we can attract and share that light. We can do it one at a time, or even in small comfortable groups of 'just the same as me' folk.

But if we want to *really effectively* attract Christ's Light, and broadcast it out into the world like a searchlight, calling in the lost and world weary, inviting them to experience the healing that Christ Light brings - and that is what we want isn't it?

Well, then ought not we follow the way Jesus did it when he walked the earth? By stepping away from the comfortable "just like me" gatherings we like, and working to break ground for community done Jesus' Style: Where we can examine our own need to repent of harming others for our own comfort, and work at healing ourselves so we can begin to lovingly gather together with all sorts of people, like Jesus did.

Not to judge or to shame them into changing to be like us, but appreciating them where they are, making amends when necessary, and falling in love with the beautiful spectrum of the Blessed Community of God's Kin-dom.

With So Much Love!

Your,

Pastor E

PS

Our Renita's book "This Little Light of Mine" is available on Amazon.com as an e-book or paperback.



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- ⚙ *Our sympathy is extended to Bruce McKenzie & Charmagne Schneider and family in the passing of Bruce's mother, Maxie McKenzie.*
- ⚙ Much thanks to the Worshipful Work Gardeners: five wonderful folk who showed up to weed the Labyrinth even though the event was canceled due to rain: Carolyn Taylor & grandson Mick Jordan, Glenda Zink, and Jim & Marge Main.



John & Deborah Browne, Luther Hunt, Mark Faith, Bill Cox, Joe Robb Blattner, Debbie McCormick, Susan Spooler, Carol Gleason, Liz Meyer, Debbie Bradley, Dawn Knoderer, Kim Farrar Frank, George & Helen Amick, Iris Likens, Pat Murray & Wally Allstun, Ed Sheridan & Nita Brackin, Pauline Filla, Martha D., Mary Hendrix, Ken Bohnsack, Wayne Piker, Kim Wells Schott, frontline workers, Felicia Fox, Henry S., Gerry Thomason, family of Maxie McKenzie, relatives & friends serving in the military, all who are hurting, lonely, and afraid.




The intent for the
June 28 Meditation/
Centering Prayer
group is
BALANCE.
Join us in spirit at
2:30pm.

Come join our local clergy at Peace Park each Monday at 10 am for conversation about how to understand systems of racism and how we can work together to create Christ-like Community. Bring a chair.



Join us on the parking lot on Saturday, July 4 for a "Safely-Distanced-Fireworks-Watching Party!"
BYO chairs, snacks, & masks to enjoy fireworks and friends!



FAITH Seeking UNDERSTANDING of SYSTEMIC RACISM

- * Area clergy will gather the community every Monday morning, offering a safe space for sharing stories of:
 - failures, regrets, and challenges
 - encouragement, hope, and inspiration
 - commitment to transformation

Mondays, 10 am
PRESBYTERIAN PEACE PARK
Broadway & Spanish in Cape
(in case of inclement weather, meet inside First Presbyterian Church)