

On Monday, Mason and I planted part 1 of our vegetable garden: peppers, onions, kale, lettuce and leeks. The onions and the lettuce are from seed. The kale was two small seedlings. I was so busy yesterday, I didn't go out to have a look, but this morning, as I sat down to write this, I realized I couldn't see the kale from my desk in the living room. (You know where this is going, don't you?) Just as the rain was starting this morning, I went over to the garden and the kale, which had been around 5 inches tall, was now reduced to 1 inch high. The little chewed stumps told a tale of hopping things, of hungry, wild things. Parent bunny is currently hopping through my yard, perhaps wondering if/when I will be planting more yummy kale. To be honest, I don't really LOVE kale (though my excellent co-worker, Kirsten does), but I was interested in watching it grow. It was purple and blue in colour (not your average green) and I wondered how the leaves would look once they got larger and unfurled. I imagined them drooping in the heat and standing tall after the rain.

Maybe the little kale stumps will regrown, as we know that bushes after a winter of being gnawed by bunnies do regenerate in the springtime, sometimes even better than before, but if not, that's ok.

Recently some wise people told me that they plant their vegetables with a 10% surplus that they expect will be eaten by the wild things in their backyard. An animal tax, if you will. I thought that was brilliant! There was no chicken wire, no big fences obscuring the view to their bounty - just open spaces, freedom for animals to roam and for the gardeners to not only see the beauty of the growing things, but also to move about and gaze upon, touch, smell. It felt very symbiotic - very natural to expect animals to eat things. And, clearly, they will eat specific things. (Maybe I should plant kale each year as my decoy plant: eat this, not that?)

I've been thinking about the Creation story since reading it on Sunday morning responsively with Elizabeth. This great creation that God asks us to steward did not come with fences or chicken wire to keep people, creatures and creeping things out. This great creation was meant to be open with equal access for everyone. We were meant to live together in harmony - to respect creation and one another.

We know from history this is not what happened. The original idea of God's that everyone could live in harmony with one another and creation is one we've perhaps thrown in the proverbial compost bin - early and continuously. Yesterday afternoon, I was part of a virtual zoom call about anti-racism and poverty called 'The Urgency of Now'. The Rev. Traci Blackmon, who has quickly become my favourite United Church of Christ (of the USA) minister, said that we are dealing with multiple pandemics right now. We are living with the pandemic of covid-19, of racism, of poverty, and the latent state sanctioned murders of black bodies. The Rev. Dr. William Barber was also part of this discussion and his contributions are equally wonderful. Here is the link to watch it: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL6VgfHt6zEy7yDgdSE-fLLYEVaNBM2943>

How do we restore equality in creation? How do we adjust ourselves so that those who have been treated as less-than will be elevated? How do we start, continue, promote this work?

This article from Saturday's Citizen is so informative and I used it for the basis of my prayer on Sunday, borrowing Dadjó's language. There is so much that we can do!
<https://ottawacitizen.com/opinion/dadjó-welcome-to-the-fight-i-hope-you-stick-around/wcm/4a139c70-f9b0-4b3c-af32-429b9084de30/>

I was so thankful to receive a call early last week from the Rev. Michael Blair, asking if I would like to continue on the White Privilege Working Group (I was brought in late in their process, spring

2019), to which I said 'yes!'. We have had one zoom meeting and are getting back to this important work, under new leadership.

As we are all in a modified lockdown and perhaps reading more than ever, I have so many books to lend out on race relations. (I also have a good selection of Indigenous rights books too.) I offered these throughout February, but I'd love to arrange to get you books that I have bought and haven't had the time to read yet. I have 'How to be an Anti-racist' and 'Stamped: racism, anti-racism and you' by Kendi, 'So you want to talk about race' by Oluo and 'White Fragility' by DiAngelo. I have many more titles as well, and on Friday, I hope to share pictures with you. Please be in touch with me and we can arrange pick up. (jleslie@kitchissippiuc.com)

As Barber said in the Urgency of Now, in Amos 5:24 we need lament, extended lament, public lament and it will lead to transformation: "But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." May it be so.

Tomorrow morning is Coffee Time! We gather from 10-11:30am for conversation and sharing. Join Zoom Meeting:

I hope you are all doing well - that you are feeling God's presence in your lives in the beauty of creation, in the wind that sweeps through your dwelling places and in the love you share with others. May we all be blessed and be a blessing in God's great creation.

I have also included a Prayer (see attached).

Blessings in this difficult time,
Jenni