

ON Broadway

Ann Arbor Christian Reformed Church Newsletter

July / August 2018

How the Bible Defines Justice

by Shiao Chong, editor-in-chief of *The Banner*

The prophet Amos portrays justice as a river: “But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!” (Amos 5:24). Notice the two words that seem synonymous: justice and righteousness. In the original Hebrew, justice is mishpat and righteousness is tzedakah. However, tzedakah means more than personal moral righteousness; it also means justice.

In his book *The Dignity of Difference*, chief rabbi Jonathan Sacks explains, “The two words, tzedakah and mishpat, signify different forms of justice. Mishpat means retributive justice or the rule of law...Tzedakahby contrast, refers to...what is often called ‘social justice,’ meaning...that those who have more than they need must share some of that surplus with those who have less.”

We can say that the biblical river of justice has two banks: mishpat and tzedakah. And they are often emphasized together (Gen. 18:18; Hosea 2:19; Jer. 22:15), which is somewhat obscured by our English translations of tzedakah as right or righteousness.

Rabbi Sacks also points out that tzedakah combines in a single word both charity and justice. Hence, when Micah 6:8 calls us to do justice (mishpat) and love mercy (hesed), the two combined imply tzedakah, that is, justice and compassion. The biblical worldview holds these two together in a way that our common Western mindset does not. This may explain why God, on one hand, shows no partiality but, on the other hand, favors the poor and marginalized because his compassion turns his attention to their plight.

Submitted by Social Justice Committee – AACRC

(Reprinted with permission in abridged form from *The Banner*: July/August, 2017)

Loving God, Serving People

Building a community loved and changed by Jesus,
loving and changing the world for him.

Christian Hospitality—Heavy on “Biblical”

Pastor John

Here’s why I believe the vision and mission statement presented in the “Oikos Document” is Biblical and therefore Christian.

I want you to read the Bible with me and read it through the lens of what God has done and is doing as God saves and renews the world through Jesus Christ. And one disclaimer before I proceed. There is much more that can and will be said and presented as we move forward in presenting this vision based on the Good News of Jesus, the salvation he brings, the faith we profess, and the lives we are called to live.

There is also more that needs to be said about the societal and cultural context in which we live today which makes Christian Hospitality such a vital vision and mission. Just one word about that. Loneliness has been declared a nation epidemic by the Center for Disease Control. Jesus, his love, and the community of faith speaks into the heart of human loneliness. Remember what Augustine said. I’ll quote it loosely, “We are restless (and I would say lonely) until our hearts find the rest or the welcome God offers us in Christ.”

The God who came to us in Jesus Christ, is a God of hospitality. The God, who’s story is unfolded in the Bible, is the God of hospitality. God extends a liberating hospitality to his people. God then requires that these people, newly freed from Egypt, become God’s light to the nations through the practice of hospitality. The stranger and immigrant who find themselves among God’s people are to be welcomed. In the New Testament all those who become Christ’s disciples are required to embody hospitality to others. I believe the practice of Christian Hospitality is part of the good works God has prepared for all who follow Jesus—

Ephesians 2:8-10 (Common English Bible)

You are saved by God’s grace because of your faith. This salvation is God’s gift. It’s not something you possessed. ⁹ It’s not something you did that you can be proud of. ¹⁰ Instead, we are God’s accomplishment, created in Christ Jesus to do good things. God planned for these good things to be the way that we live our lives.

Stated simply, God’s hospitality to us is the basis of our hospitality to others, those in the body of Christ and those not yet in the body. God, in Jesus, demonstrates for us how to live our lives. God’s relationship to his people is fundamentally an act of hospitality to strangers, as God makes space

for “the other,” for his people, by inviting humanity into relationship with him. This experience of God’s hospitality is at the very heart of the church’s identity. We are God’s guests and friends. (Joshua Jipp, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality*).

The Bible’s story, as I indicated earlier, is filled with God’s people acting hospitably and thereby furthering God’s work to save the world.

Mark Glanville, a pastor in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, drives home this point in his examination of the book of Deuteronomy. He writes in his doctoral dissertation that persons we have in the past and still today designate as “stranger” are to be, according to God’s teaching in Deuteronomy, welcomed into the community of faith and welcomed as if they are members of our family.

The Bible story tells us of Abraham who welcomed strangers (Genesis 18:1-15), as did Lot, (Genesis 19), and Rahab (Joshua 2:1-14), and then of course the story of Ruth is one of hospitality fully on display. (Ruth)

Then we find in Matthew’s story of Jesus (25:31-46) a parable about sheep and goats who represent certain kinds of people. As Jesus tells the parable he sets the context in the time of the final judgment. There we will be standing before King Jesus who will ask us some questions. These questions have to do with how we lived out our faith.

As Neal Plantinga explains,

“Two groups of surprised people will stand before the King. One group consists of do-gooders. They have graciously welcomed hunger-relief experts and have taken on themselves the same financial burden to relieve hunger as others do to take a luxury vacation. They have adopted orphans, visited prisoners, used their wealth to set up charitable foundations. They have acted politically in the interests of people who lack political muscle. They have spent money, time, emotional energy—they have spent themselves—ministering to the least of Jesus Christ’s brothers and sisters.”

These people are surprised! They also embody a low self-conscious piety. They did what they did simply because they followed Christ. What else would you do?

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These people hear a welcome from the King, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom ...”

The members of the other group are also surprised. In fact they are stunned. Their record shows that they also gave away so much money, etc. But the record also shows that their giving was not done for the least of these. It was done for themselves and their friends.

Here is a parable to rattle every conservative bone in our body. We may try to ignore it or finesse it (explain it away), but at the end of the day we have admit that this terrible parable presents a social gospel. In fact, it presents our Lord’s social gospel, and it therefore ought to sober us. It’s true, of course, that all who trust Christ may face judgment without fear. But the parable says this trust is expressed and measured by ministry to the least of these. And by that standard, how many of us can really say we have put our trust in Jesus Christ?” (Neal Plantinga, *Beyond Doubt*, p. 332-333)

I have been deeply impressed by Jean Vanier and his way of embodying the practice of hospitality as Jesus practiced it. Here’s a story about Vanier that Glanville tells.

Intuitively, we know that Christ’s way is different. To illustrate this difference, a good friend of mine arranged to visit Jean Vanier. When my friend arrived, Jean Vanier didn’t greet him with words. Instead, Vanier took my friend’s hand. The two strangers held hands as they walked some distance to a room in which they were to share in conversation. This experience of walking hand-in-hand with a stranger reminded my friend of the deep human connection that the gospel invites us into. This story recalls the event of Jesus’ healing the leper. You may remember the phrase: filled with compassion, Jesus reached out and touched the man (Mark 1:41). Jesus didn’t have to touch this man, he could have healed him with a word. But, Jesus wanted to touch him. Jesus was so deeply human, so full of life, of love, of kinship, of skin, of longing, of touch, of community.

So what about Christian hospitality and sharing our faith in Jesus Christ and inviting people—our family and friends, colleagues, and neighbors to place their faith in Jesus Christ? Christian hospitality is exactly that! I can’t imagine having a relationship with another person where our faith is not expressed and we don’t speak of Jesus. Can you?

It is only through the practice of Christian hospitality that we encounter “the least of these” who are referred to in Matthew 25. It is only through the practice of Christian hospitality that we invite friends from around the world into our church building, into our lives, into our homes, for the purpose of showing God’s love and to build a relationship with them.

There is one thing I’ve learned over years of reaching out to others. People are never projects. They are people whom God loves and whom God, in Christ, asks me to befriend.

The practice of Christian Hospitality has been in the AACRC’s DNA for decades. And it should not be allowed to erode away. This is what so many people who have attended here, members and non-members alike, have practiced. This new emphasis is not a critique on our past practice, but an endorsement of it. And, a reminder that we not lose this emphasis.

So, just like many marriages need a time away, a time to consider the future, a time to affirm the past and pledge to more of the same only better in the future, so we propose a time of reflection to gain a renewed vision of a long held practice. It might not be radically new, but we’ll discover some exciting challenges as we move into this renewed vision. In fact, those of our members currently involved in with a ministry such as “Circles America” (through Friends In Deed) know this to be true already.

If you were to ask me to define Christian hospitality, I would urge you to read the story of Jesus. He is so deeply human, so full of life, of love, of kinship, of skin, of longing, of touch, of community. He is God in the flesh reaching out to us, making space for us, so that we might experience the hospitality of God’s saving grace and become renewed human beings who reflect God’s hospitality to others.

Christian hospitality embodies the practices and teachings of Jesus and lives them out in our community. I’m sure you want to engage with me in living out of our past into our future.

Trusting God's Call

Mission Team News

As Lauren Holwerda (sister of AACRC member, Emily Geerlings) prepared for six months of volunteering, she heard from many people that she would have to be flexible. At the time, she didn't know just how true that was.

A volunteer with Resonate Global Mission taking part in a Youth With a Mission program, Lauren arrived in the Philippines in September 2017, where she planned to take part in a three month missional training program before serving in Papua New Guinea for another three months.

"I was excited and a little nervous," Lauren said. "I had just turned 18 and this was my first time really being away from family ... and I was doing it for six months!"

What brought Lauren the most joy about arriving in the Philippines was her clear sense of calling to serve there. As a missionary kid, Lauren lived in the Philippines until she was seven. She was excited to return and can even see herself in the future teaching at the school she attended—Faith Academy.

"Many people in my family have been on the mission field and I've wanted to continue that story for a long time," she said. "At first I didn't think I wanted to return to the Philippines when I was looking for volunteer opportunities, but then God made it very clear to me that he wanted me there."

Confused with God

Then Lauren's certainty and excitement turned to confusion about what God was doing.

The group in the Philippines was smaller than originally expected and the training was canceled. Instead, Lauren would have to attend a different training course—possibly even in another country.

Still, Lauren remembered to be flexible and trust God.

"I was a little confused with God's mind," Lauren wrote on her blog during that time. "Why did he so strongly confirm the call to be in [the Philippines] and make plans come together so well if I was only going to be at the base for a week? God's plans are better than mine, so I can only trust that where he'll bring me next is the best place for him to teach me."

God's Larger Plan

Lauren ended up attending a training course in Australia, where she dove deep into different mission-related topics each week to prepare her for her time in Papua New Guinea.

But then, just as Lauren was about to serve in Papua New Guinea, she had to be flexible again. Instead of doing the mission work she was planning on, one of the team leaders asked her to join the medical team because it was short on people.

"I didn't have any medical background and I don't plan to go into the medical field," she laughed. "But I said yes."

Ultimately, Lauren said she can look back on her experience and see God's larger plan. The medical team experience allowed her to meet a national healthcare worker who inspired Lauren's view of missions. She was able to make great connections with a group of young men at a farm who had recently come off the streets or out of jail. Finally, she learned to trust.

"My trust in God has grown, seeing him provide for major things and little details," she said. "Being on my own and realizing that God was the only person there I could count on really made me trust in him."

As a new group of volunteers prepares to serve this summer and in the upcoming months, pray that they will also be open to trusting God to find their missional calling.



Nicaragua Missionaries Consider Evacuation

Escalating protests and violence throughout Nicaragua have prompted some Resonate Global Mission and World Renew staff to leave the country.

No CRCNA staff members have directly experienced any violence, though all are embroiled in the difficulties that come with the country being in turmoil.

Many staff and partners had plans to leave the country during the summer months, and some have decided to leave earlier than planned due to the rising tension. A few families and staff still in Nicaragua are discerning whether or not to leave. At this point, the CRCNA is not evacuating all staff from Nicaragua; decisions are being made on a case-by-case basis by the staff themselves.

As protests intensify, missionary reports paint a picture of roadblocks, burning tires, violence, and sorrow. Across the country, protests demand the resignation of the Nicaraguan president. Protests disrupt travel, business, services, and other areas of life. Missionaries report roadblocks on almost every major highway leaving many in danger of food and fuel shortages.

Resonate and World Renew, monitoring the crisis for nearly two months, are working to support staff in the country and make recommendations concerning security. At the onset of the protests, Dr. Steve Timmermans, executive director of the CRCNA, established a Crisis Monitoring Team for Nicaragua.

“We would ask that you continue to pray for the people of Nicaragua, who have been experiencing increased violence in their communities,” said a joint statement from director Zachary King of Resonate and director Carol Bremer-Bennett of World Renew. “This has hindered the way Resonate and World Renew can work in the country, as it has become more dangerous to move about, even in daylight hours.”

“Everyone is afraid to be out after dark,” read a recent missionary update. “[T]he police forces have nearly completely withdrawn from society. For the last two weeks, crime has gone rampant around the city, taking advantage of zero law enforcement.”

All of the Resonate and World Renew staff and partners in Nicaragua ask for your prayers. Anxious for their friends and colleagues in Nicaragua, they are keenly aware that their Nicaraguan brothers and sisters have no “alternate reality to which they may escape.”

Please pray for ministry in Nicaragua as many organizations must cancel functions, reduce hours, or even close down indefinitely.

Please pray also for the people in Nicaragua who struggle each day with providing for basic needs like food and water and face danger from increasing violence and lawlessness. Pray for peace, resolution, and lasting change.



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AmazonSmile is a simple and automatic way for you to support your favorite charitable organization every time you shop, at no cost to you. When you shop at smile.amazon.com, you'll find the exact same low prices, vast selection and convenient shopping experience as Amazon.com, with the added bonus that Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase price to your favorite charitable organization. You can choose from over one million organizations to support.

Many of the missionary organizations AACRC supports are listed as charities such as Fridsro (listed as “World Relief Organization for Children”), WISH, DAAM, AAFC, Habitat for Humanity, and so on. Please prayerfully consider using smile.amazon.com whenever you use Amazon for online shopping.



The Huysers Are Coming!

Joel and Jeannie Huyser will be worshipping with us on Sunday August 5, 2018. Joel is the Asia and Latin American Global Area Director of Resonate Global Mission and Jeannie is an English as a Second Language teacher. Joel is ordained to preach within CRCNA, and as such will be preaching that Sunday. Please save the date!

Position Openings at AACRC

AACRC is looking to fill two positions:

1. Church Administrator (Director of Communication and Community Engagement). This position is 25 hours per week Monday through Thursday.
2. Worship Leader - The Ann Arbor CRC is looking for an individual to help plan, facilitate, and lead worship services. This individual will help the AACRC learn the language of reformed worship through practice and participation and help create a culture of hospitality and openness in our worship services.

If you are interested or know someone who might be please contact hr@aacrc.org for more information.

Dear Ann Arbor Christian Reformed Church,

Thank you so much for your incredible generosity in allowing us to use space at your building for our ministry meetings this past year. In previous years as a group looking to reach U-M North Campus students, it has been a challenge to find a place to meet regularly. Being able to meet at AACRC has been a huge blessing that has allow us to have a steady presence on North Campus to invite students deeper into knowing Christ and being welcomed into Christian community. It is a special joy to get to be teamed up with AACRC as the Body of Christ, seeking to serve A2! Thank you! May God bless you all richly.

With gratefulness and joy,

*Shepherd & Amy Grace Smith
on behalf of the Northside New Life Team*

Please send to:



**Ann Arbor Christian
Reformed Church**

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Published by the
Church Office Staff
Deadline: the 18th of every month

Sunday Morning Worship
9:30 am
10:50 am Sunday School
11:10 am Adult Ed