



# Pax Christi

LITTLE ROCK

# Pax Christi Little Rock

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- Mary Hunt (V. President)
- Tamara Tahat (Secretary)
- Sherry Martin (Treasurer)
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- Susi Blanco
- Sandee Haslauer
- Marian Paquette
- Martina Pierini
- Jan Pipkin
- George Simon

**Blessed are the  
Peacemakers, for  
they shall be called  
the children of God.  
Matthew 5:9**

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## Johnny Zokovitch, Pax Christi USA Executive Director, To Address PCLR Board

Johnny Zokovitch, Executive Director of Pax Christi USA, accepted an invitation to speak via Zoom to Pax Christi Little Rock Board members on June 18 (6 pm CST). The focus of this meeting will be to learn more about the workings of Pax Christi USA and to explore different ways Pax Christi Little Rock might become better connected with the national organization.

Johnny became executive director of PCUSA on September 21, 2019. He replaced the outgoing director, Sister Patricia Chappell, who resigned in May, 2019 after being elected to the leadership team of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur East-West Province. Johnny worked with PCUSA beginning in 2001, when he was given the task of connecting young people with the Catholic peace organization. From 2001-2015, he worked in many different areas of PCUSA including organizing local chapters, fundraising, communications, planning conferences and program management. He also served in leadership, working alongside past executive director Dave Robinson. From 2016 until he took the executive director of PCUSA position, Johnny was senior communications officer for Brussels-based Pax Christi International.

Johnny Zokovitch has a passion for involving young people in the peace movement and connecting them with the old-

er generation of peacemakers who have sustained the organization for five decades since stepping up during the Vietnam War and responding to the rising threat of nuclear weapons.

"Pax Christi USA will be 50 years old in 2022. I want to insure the work they (the older generation) started will be carried on by the new generation," he told the National Catholic Reporter in 2019.

Johnny's goal is to build up grass-root networks at individual parishes, college campuses and other places where young people are working for peace. In addition to working on issues of climate change and denuclearization, he will continue to address racism within the ranks of PCUSA as well as society at large. He wants to ensure that the Catholic peace movement becomes more multicultural.

"We need to look at next steps to make us an authentically anti-racist organization and accountable to communities of color in the church and in our own movement as well," he told Catholic News Service last year.



Johnny Zokovitch

## Peace Offerings

## PAX CHRISTI LR CONTINUES TO PROVIDE GROCERIES FOR FAMILY OF NINE

During the Pax Christi Little Rock board meeting on April 16, Pax Christi decided to support Nicole, a single mom with eight

children, by providing for her general food needs during these first few months of the COVID-19 crisis. Almost two months later, members continue to step



Mary, Susi and Marian



Beej, Isabel and George

up and supply this family with groceries approximately every two weeks. On June 7, 11 individuals met in the

Christ the King parking lot for the fourth time to load and deliver food and other household staples to this beautiful family.

Given the restrictions on everyone during these days of pandemic, friends used the time to catch up with one another and visit for a few minutes. This mission has become a way to not only connect with Nicole and her family but with one another during these times of increased isolation. There is some discussion among board members about branching out and working with additional families as we go forward, discussing possible connections with folks at Settled Souls after the board meeting this month.



Mary's car filled to the max!

### SAVE THE DATE

### JOHNNY ZOKOVITCH

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

### PAX CHRISTI USA

### JUNE 18, 2020

### 6 PM

### ZOOM MEETING

If interested in attending,

Contact

[paxchristilr@gmail.com](mailto:paxchristilr@gmail.com).

### Pax Christi's Monthly Mission



Our custom is to contribute to a different peace and social justice cause at each of our monthly meetings. In May, we will collect donations for **Indivisible**, a local social justice organization that aspires to a

government that represents the full diversity of Arkansans' lived experiences and that implements policies that protect the environment and honor human dignity and equality. Indivisible works to elect leaders who will develop policies that reflect values of justice, equity, compassion and inclusion. Please be generous in your gift. If you would like to send a check, you can mail it to 415 N. McKinley St., #1040 LR, AR 72205 or call 501-258-8653 to donate via phone.



## Peace Offerings

## PEACE PARTNERS

Peace Partners highlights various peace and social justice organizations that share our vision: active promotion of peace in our neighborhood, state, country and world. The goal is to increase awareness of the many organizations in our area that work for peace through social justice and invite joint ventures between these groups to increase the effectiveness of our mission.



Indivisible of Little Rock and Central Arkansas is a social justice organization that focuses on registering, educating and mobilizing Central Arkansas voters. This is a bipartisan group that holds elected officials accountable to their values of equity, inclusion, compassion and justice.

Indivisible was the primary sponsor of the recent "Take a Knee Rally for Justice" held on June 6 at Hoover Church. Pax Christi partnered with several peace and social justice groups to sponsor this action responding to the murder of George Floyd and the systemic racism inherent in our society. For additional information, email [ContactUs@IndivisibleLRCA.org](mailto:ContactUs@IndivisibleLRCA.org)

## PAX CHRISTI "TAKES A KNEE" FOR JUSTICE IN LITTLE ROCK

On May 25, in the middle of the COVID-19 crisis, our world was further devastated by the murder of George Floyd, a 46-year-old black man, at the hands of white police officer Derek Chauvin. Ex-officer Chauvin knelt on Mr. Floyd's neck for nine minutes while he was handcuffed and lying face down

in the street. Mr. Floyd's murder was

captured on video for all to see, one in a string of recorded racist killings that have put a light on the ongoing presence of systemic racism in our country.

Pax Christi Little Rock participated in the "Take a Knee" for Justice rally at the historic Hoover Methodist Church in Little Rock on Saturday,

June 6 at noon. Speakers including Marquis Hunt, Donald Wood (Just Communities), Dr. Malik Saafir (Philander Smith College) and Senator Joyce Elliot spoke on issues of white privilege, systemic racism, and remedial steps to address the serious inequities that continue to promote racism in our society. Following the speakers, approximately 200 people walked peacefully to the police station on

12th and Pine. A line of white allies took a knee to symbolically protect the line of POC behind them while all chanted, "We honor your service. Please protect us/them" towards the policemen present at the station. In taking the knee, protesters recalled the silent protest of Colin Kaepernick and other NFL players over racism that still exists in our world.



Sen Joyce Elliot



Marian Paquette



Marquis Hunt



Mary, Susi and Sherry

## Peace Offerings

## OUR PRIDE, OUR PRAYER

June is Pride Month in the United States, commemorating the Stonewall riots, which occurred at the end of June 1969. As a result, many pride events are held during this month to recognize the impact LGBT people have had in the world. The light of truth has been shining on the presence of racism in our country and world for these past few weeks since the witnessed murder of George Floyd and other POC. Our world is beginning to recognize the poison of systemic racism and how we must begin to address the multi-generational inequities between races. Let us pray that the light of truth shine on all bias and division, revealing the healing unity that is possible only through Jesus Christ. This prayer of inclusivity is written by New Ways Ministry staff member Dwayne Fernandes:

God of Many Colors, you once set the rainbow, high up in the clouds, to be the sign of the life-giving covenant between you and the earth. Let this symbol of faithfulness resonate with us we renew our relationships with each other, and you, during this season of PRIDE.

Creator God, we thank you for our LGBTQ/ally diversity because these colorful expressions let us see your many faces. Although many, we come together as ONE in you, and joyfully proclaim, "You are our God and we are your people."

Loving Jesus, as you left the ninety-nine to go in search of the one lost sheep, set your sights on those who are excluded in

our world and church. Bring them home, so ALL may return-with pride-to the music of triumphal rejoicing and feel embraced by extravagant welcome.

Emboldening Holy Spirit, continue to animate us with your fire and flamboyance, and dare us to embody your inclusive love in our Church and world. Let YOUR will be done in us, so that at day's end, we, too, may hear the voice from heaven say, "This is my beloved child, with whom I am well pleased."

May these affirming words always echo in our ears and hearts as testament to that life-giving-rainbow-covenant between you our God, and us, your LGBTQ/ally people.

The body is one and has many members, but all the members, many though they are, are one body; and so it is with Christ. It was in one Spirit that all of us, whether Jew or Greek, slave or free, were baptized into one body. All of us have been given to drink of the one Spirit. Now the body is not one member, it is many. . . As it is, God has set each member of the body in the place He wanted it to be. If all the members were alike, where would the body be? There are indeed, many different members but one body. . . God has so constructed the body to give greater honor to the lowly members, that there may be no dissension in the body, but that all the members may be concerned for one another. If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members share its joy. 1 Corinthians 12: 12-27

## Peace Offerings

# The Unspoken Privilege of Being White

Richard Rohr

For a long time, I naively hoped that racism was a thing of the past. Those of us who are white have a very hard time seeing that we constantly receive special treatment (because of social systems built to prioritize people with white skin). This systemic “white privilege” makes it harder for us to recognize the experiences of people of color as valid and real when they speak of racial profiling, police brutality, discrimination in the workplace, continued segregation in schools, lack of access to housing, and on and on. This is not the experience of most white people, so how can it be true? *Now, we are being shown how limited our vision is.*

Because we have never been on the other side, we largely do not recognize the structural access we enjoy, the trust we think we deserve, the assumption that we always belong and do not have to earn our belonging. All this we take for granted as normal. Only the outsider can spot these attitudes in us. (And we are quick to dismiss what is apparent to our neighbors who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) from their lived experience.)

**Of course, we all belong.** There is no issue of more or less in the eyes of an Infinite God. Yet the ego believes the lie that there isn't enough to go around and that for me to succeed or win, someone else must lose. And so we've greedily supported systems and governments that work to our own advantage at the expense of others, most often people of

color or any highly visible difference. The advancement of the white person was too often at the cost of other people not advancing at all. A minor history course should make that rather clear.

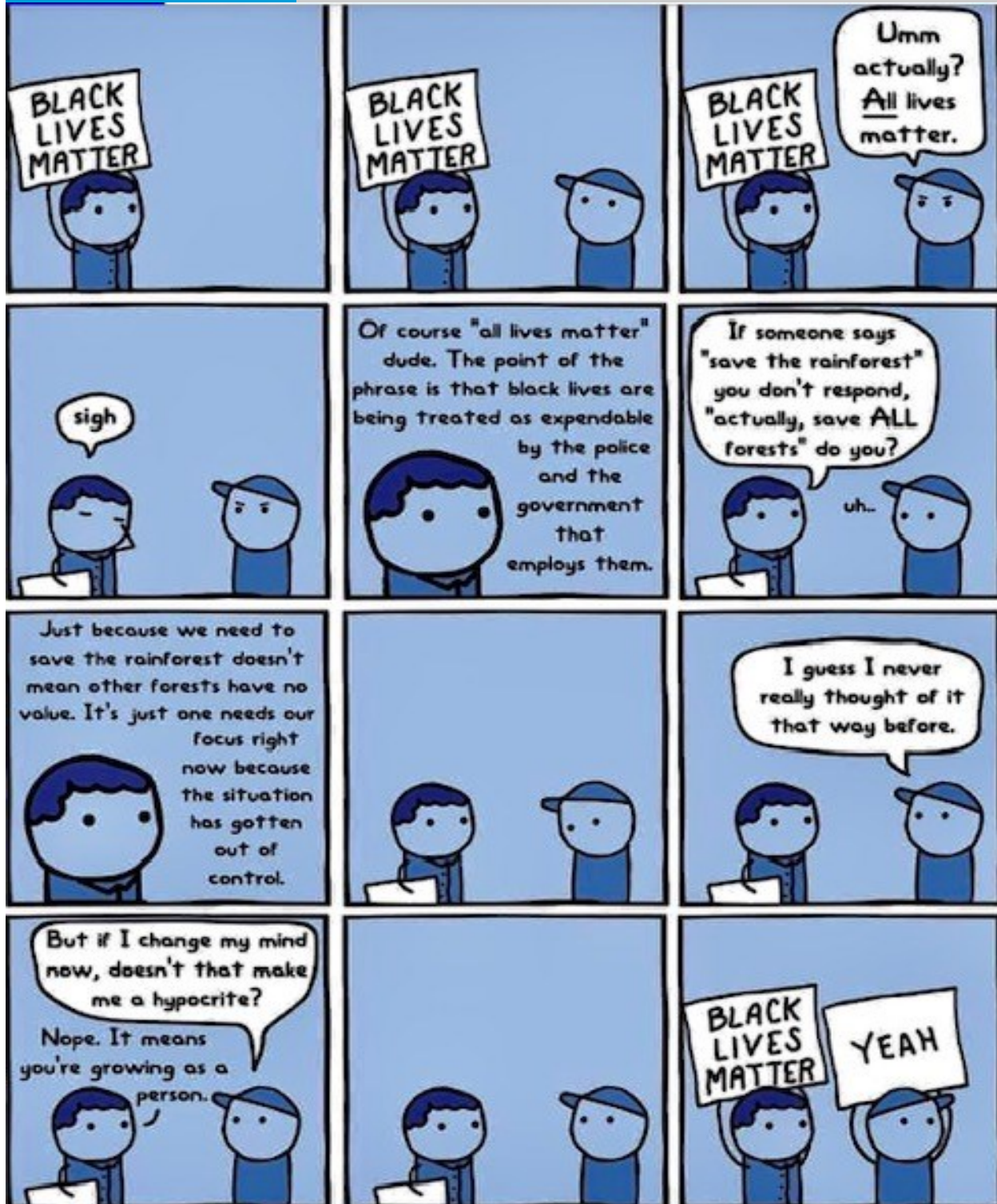
I would have never seen my own white privilege if I had not been forced outside of my dominant white culture by travel, by working in the jail, by hearing stories from counselees and, frankly, by making a complete fool of myself in so many social settings—most of which I had the freedom to avoid!

Power (and privilege) never surrenders without a fight. If your entire life has been to live unquestioned in your position of power—a power that was culturally given to you, but you think you earned—there is almost no way you will give it up without major failure, suffering, humiliation or defeat. As long as we really want to be on top and would take advantage of any privilege or short cut to get us there, we will never experience true “liberty, equality, fraternity” (revolutionary ideals that endure as mottos for France and Haiti).

If God operates as me, God operates as “thee” too, and the playing field is utterly leveled forever. Like Jesus, Francis, Clare, and many other humble mystics, we then rush down instead of up. In the act of letting go and choosing to become servants, community can at last be possible. The illusory state of privilege just gets in the way of neighboring and basic human friendship.



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*Bishop Anthony B. Taylor issued the following statement to the people of the Diocese of Little Rock, June 2, 2020, about racism. It was accompanied by the "[Letter from a Birmingham Jail](#)" written by Dr. Martin L. King, Jr. in 1963.*



**Bishop Anthony Taylor**

Last Sunday we celebrated the great feast of Pentecost, the day when Jesus' earliest followers were empowered by the Holy Spirit to go forth and proclaim to all the nations the Good News that in Jesus' victory over the power of sin and death, the walls that separate people must now come down.

The diversity of languages that day gives witness to the fact that the Kingdom of God will include people of every race and tongue. Jesus proclaimed this vision of inclusion throughout his public ministry. What was the greatest

commandment of the Law? We must love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength. And what is the second commandment? That we love our neighbor as ourselves. These are commandments of God, not just recommendations.

"Loving our neighbor as ourselves leaves no room for anything that harms our neighbor. And in our country, no disease has inflicted more harm to our African American neighbors than that of racism. Both individual acts of hatefulness and systemic evils rooted in our nation's history that continue to produce societal differences that especially disadvantage many African American children right from birth.

"If the George Floyd murder had been just an isolated incident, we might be able to chalk it up to a single bad actor — accompanied by several bad actor 'see-no-evil' companions, made worse by the fact that as police officers they were sworn to uphold the law, not turn a blind eye to murder. But coming in the wake of several other such occurrences, it is clear that acts of racial hatred are not just something in the past — nor are African Americans the only victims.

"Remember last year's massacre in El Paso that targeted Hispanics, killing 23 persons and injuring 23 people can see that this has got to change.

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Police officers as a group is not the problem — most of them are outstanding, self-sacrificing public servants tasked with a very demanding and dangerous job. Most of them deserve our compassion, respect and admiration. Moreover, there is no justification for violence, regardless of the righteous anger more. Most of us are not so malicious as to ever property, understandable though it may be.

"The problem is the structures of racism that are embedded throughout our economy and society, much of which is invisible to us who are not ourselves disadvantaged, but often glaringly evident to those who are — and so the frustration and grievances and pent up anger builds.

"The bottom line is that we as a nation need to remove those things that continue to harm our neighbor. Racism will only end when everyone has — and feels like they have — equal protection under the law, a just wage, decent housing and true access to health care, among other basic human rights.

"Here in the South, removing things that continue to harm our neighbor includes removing anything that serves to memorialize the Confederacy in a positive way. This is especially necessary when it comes to monuments to the so-called 'Lost Cause,' most of which were erected not in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War but rather during the height of the Jim Crow era as a means of intimidation and assertion of white superiority.

"The use of the Confederate battle flag must be abandoned as well, indeed anything intended to put this horror in our national history in a false positive light. Even if some consider these to be symbols of our identity as white Southerners, they need to be set aside because much of the population finds them hateful — otherwise we are not loving our neighbor as ourselves. Is that too high a price to pay for helping to heal the deep racial wounds in our nation's soul? Surely not.

"You don't have to be African American to see these symbols and recoil with disgust. If our white Southern identity needs a touchstone — for what purpose I cannot imagine — we need to find something inoffensive instead. As for the Confederacy, the numerous cemeteries we have are already enough to memorialize a time that is better dead and buried, once its bitter lessons have been learned.

"Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once wrote, 'Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.' ("[Letter from a Birmingham Jail](#)," 1963)

"What is the greatest commandment of the Law? This is worth repeating! We must love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves. Racism and all its demeaning expressions must be eliminated, not only because they harm our neighbor, but because they violate how God has created us to be."



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# The Enduring Pandemic of Violence

George Simon, PhD

The unjust taking of George Floyd's life at the hands of those sworn to protect and serve and the polarizing comments so many have made about this tragedy have led me to contemplate many things. So have the events surrounding the current viral pandemic. I've found myself reflecting on my faith more than ever. And for some reason, I've felt compelled to share some of my ponderings. It's difficult to express all that's been weighing on my heart. So, I beg your indulgence if it seems that I ramble too much in my sharing.

Christianity began as a non-violent movement (known in its earliest days as "The Way"). And the movement was founded on the singular command of Jesus to love all – including those we might regard as adversaries or "enemies" – in the radical manner he demonstrated with his very life. Those calling themselves his followers profess to believe that as the eternally existing Son through whom every created thing was brought into being and is sustained, He had the ultimate authority

to give us this command and hold us accountable for heeding it. But there's a problem. It seems we've come to equate Christianity with our professed doctrinal beliefs instead of the authoritative call to action it inherently is. And lately, I've been musing about just why that might be.

I've been a psychologist and counselor for many years. And I was trained to focus on people's fears and insecurities and help them overcome them. But early on I realized that many of our problems actually stem not so much from what we're afraid of and what we run from but rather what we lust after, worship, and are willing to fight each other for. No psychology has ever been able to adequately address this reality. And more and more, I find myself thinking that's exactly why God the Son had to appear in the Flesh to open our minds and show us the way.

God's ways are certainly not ours. God is Love – incomprehensible, unbounded, willing-to-die-for-us Love. And He

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dares to ask us to love as He does. But largely, sadly, we can't. Why? Mostly because we're an inherently violent lot. Now, at first glance, this might seem both a harsh and bizarre assertion. But I hope you might indulge me for a moment while I explain.

If all violence was of the kind typified by war or that we witness when oppressed people driven to the point of desperation act-out in uncivil ways, it would be easy to dismiss the notion that we're a violent species. But the reality is much more insidious. We are violent in so many small and subtle ways that it escapes our notice. It's kind of like white privilege. Many of us don't see it because we're immersed in it and used to it. But it's there, alright. We display our violence in the way some of us drive on the streets, jockey for a place in line at the supermarket, conduct civil discourse (an oxymoron lately, if you ask me), and try to get ahead in life. And if you doubt the wounds we unthinkingly inflict in the process, just ask an LGBTQ friend or acquaintance how it feels for them to hear someone describe them as "intrinsically disordered." Yes, words can be violent, too. But we utter numerous and subtle violent words all the time, often without thinking. It's how we've helped create and deepen the divide between us. And it's why

Jesus told us that even saying: "You fool!" to someone we think is misguided makes us subject to His judgment. Even such words are inherently violent. And they certainly don't represent *The Way*, he advocated for changing the hearts and minds of men and women.

It's time for us to wake up. I think Jesus sincerely wants us to advance to the next phases of our evolution. But as any student of evolution knows, it happens slowly – very slowly. And as the First Step of A.A. and all similar 12-Step programs assert, you can't even begin to progress on reconciling an issue, especially an issue this big, until you fully acknowledge and embrace exactly what that issue is.

We have to recognize the aggressive tendencies within us if we're even to have a prayer of transcending them. Jesus knew the way to accomplish this, too. We're told that his first spoken ministerial words called upon us to examine and change our hearts and minds. He knew that only a new way of seeing the world around us could lead us to live in it and deal with it in a more evolved way. And only faith in Him and his life-giving message can motivate us to part ways with certain inclinations that are still very much a part of us. They might well have gotten

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us through prehistoric, stone age, and medieval times, but they simply can't get us to the Kingdom He envisioned for us. We have to die to the old and allow the Holy Spirit to make us new, like innocent children desiring merely to live and love.

There is an insidious pandemic amongst us that's been with us since the dawn of time. As Christians, we should find great joy in what we profess to be the ultimate vaccine: the testimony of Jesus Christ and His gospel of unyielding mercy, forgiveness, and radical love. But some of us are in deep denial. And others are desperately clinging to the old ways, worshiping them as the false idols they are merely because they helped get us where we are. And

that's why, I fear, it will still be a long time before we move forward. Where we are is too comfortable for too many of us. And most of us are so accustomed to functioning with our disease that we've even forgotten that we're infected. Worst of all, as is the case with any pandemic, some groups are much more vulnerable than others. And those who have been the longest and most seriously abused by the insidious and unrelenting violence in our culture are screaming for mercy and justice. Are we listening? I don't know. I fear not. For we've heard the words of Jesus over and over again. Yet somehow, it seems, they haven't yet sufficiently pierced the walls around our hearts. Perhaps as the pain and screaming among some of our brothers and sisters intensifies, our hearing will sharpen. Let us pray.

## JUST MERCY



This is a book made into a movie starring Michael B. Jordan, Jamie Foxx and Brie Larson. The plot will help you understand the nature of white privilege and why we must work to correct the racism inherent within our society and ourselves.

After graduating from Harvard, Bryan Stevenson heads to Alabama to defend those wrongly condemned or those not afforded proper representation. One of his first cases is that of Walter McMillan, who is sentenced to die in 1987 for the murder of an 18-year-old girl, despite evidence proving his innocence. In the years that follow, Stevenson encounters racism and legal and political maneuverings as he tirelessly fights for McMillan's life. Movie streamed free on Amazon through the end of June.