



RENEWED HEART MINISTRIES

Awakenings

"Only by love is love awakened."

::::: The Official Newsletter of Renewed Heart Ministries ::::: July 2016 :::::



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Budget Thermometer

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Renewed Heart Ministries

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Herb Montgomery

"Blessed are you when they insult and persecute you, and say every kind of evil against you because of the son of humanity. Be glad and exult, for vast is your reward in heaven. For this is how they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

(Sayings Gospel Q 6:22-23)

Let's begin this month by taking a look at this passage in our companion texts.

Luke 6:22-23: "Blessed are you when people hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their ancestors treated the prophets."

Matthew 5:11-12: "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

Gospel of Thomas 69:1: "Jesus says: 'Blessed are those who have been persecuted in their heart. They are the ones who have truly come to know the Father.'"

Gospel of Thomas 68:1: "Blessed are you whenever they hate you and persecute you."

If you have ever been insulted, ill-treated, had evil things said about you, hated, excluded, or suffered rejection for trying to effect social change, then the sayings of Jesus we're looking at this month are for you.

There are a few things I need to say first. Experiencing ill treatment or exclusion doesn't necessarily mean you are in the right. You could be being "persecuted" simply because you are a jerk! Keep this in mind.

It's equally true that any time people endeavor to effect the same social changes that Jesus taught in the 1st Century, they will be persecuted by whomever has the most to lose from those changes.

As we mentioned last month, societies rooted in domination are structured in the shape of a hierarchical pyramid: the privileged elite lives at the top of the pyramid while the subjugated live at the bottom. This domination structure isn't always based on population: it is not always the elite few benefiting from the masses' oppression. Sometimes a majority subjugates and oppresses a minority, a marginalized group pushed out to the social fringe by those that most deem as "normal."

Friedrich Engels commented on this pattern: "(Ever since the dissolution of the primaeval communal ownership of land) all history has been a history of class struggles, of struggles between exploited and exploiting, between dominated and dominating classes at various stages of social evolution; [this] struggle, however, has now reached a stage where the exploited and oppressed class (the proletariat) can no longer emancipate itself from the class which exploits and oppresses it (the bourgeoisie), without at the same time forever freeing the whole of society from exploitation, oppression, class struggles—this basic thought belongs solely and exclusively to Marx." (Preface to the 1883 German edition of the *The Communist Manifesto*; London)

What we see in the teachings of Jesus in Sayings Gospel Q is recognition that every person is a version of the Sacred Divine. Every one of us is of inestimable worth. We are, every one of us, deserving of the same sunshine and rain that falls on all life. Through this collection of sayings, Jesus is casting before our imagination a world where no one in our society is privileged at the expense of others. No more oppressed people, no more subjugated people. No more hierarchy.

Yet a world where the sun and rain are equally shared, where all the ravens and lilies are fed and clothed, can be very threatening to those who benefit from the presently imbalanced arrangement.

When balance is promoted, when redistribution of wealth is suggested, don't rush to claim persecution. First ask yourself, "From what position in our society am I feeling like I'm experiencing persecution?"

The Beatitude for the Persecuted

(Originally posted online January 24, 2016)

by Herb Montgomery

Quotable Quotes

"Before his conversion, Paul had read his Bible and concluded that he should commit violence in God's name. He was convinced that justice comes through punishment, and saw himself as an agent of that. After his encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus, Paul completely reassessed how to understand scripture, leading him to a radically different understanding focused on God's way of restorative justice in Christ."

— Derek Flood
Healing the Gospel: A Radical Vision for Grace, Justice, and the Cross

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The Beatitudes... cont'd from page 2

"Am I in a favored position? Do I feel like I am losing some of my comfort and ease?"

If your answers to these questions are "Yes," then you're likely not experiencing the persecution that Jesus refers to in the sayings we're reading this month.

But if instead you are pushing for greater justice and equity in our world, and intimately feeling push back from those who have much to lose by moving in this direction, *you* are who Jesus is speaking to in our scriptures for this month.

In other words, are you at the top of the social pyramid and feeling like the entire world is changing around you? (see Acts 17:6). Or are you closer to the bottom of our society and feeling push back from those higher on the hierarchy as you call for a more balanced world?

Where you are in the hierarchy of our society?

Which end of the pyramid do you feel "persecution" coming from?

Today, in my daily life as an American, I continue to bump into a group of Christians crying out that they are being "persecuted." There are places around the globe where Christians are legitimately being persecuted (see <http://bit.ly/1Kvofg5> - "Where In the World Is the Worst Place to Be A Christian"). But here where I live, in America? Fear-mongers have stirred up well-meaning people with the claim that their freedoms are being taken away. There are "Religious Freedom Acts" cropping up all over the nation, but they are about religious freedom in name only. Too often, these acts are actually ways of creating loopholes for some Christians to practice discrimination against those who don't share their religious beliefs. We saw this in the 1960s as well: at that time, private Christian schools began popping up all over the south, not to protect Christianity, but to enable white segregationists to opt out of the integration of the public schools in the name of "religious freedom." (See <http://bit.ly/29hPCfI> - "Segregation Academy")

What the Jesus of Sayings Gospel Q proposes instead is a society that eliminates all domination hierarchies, regardless of their ideological basis. It matters little if the hierarchy is economic, racial, gender, based on orientation, or *whatever!* Jesus has a vision for human society that mimics

the indiscriminate shining of the sun and pitter-patter-pit of the rain.

People, who have the most advantages to lose by an equal society that looks like Jesus's vision, too often cry persecution to stop it from becoming reality. (See Matthew 20:11-16) I've witnessed here locally Christian folks, too, claiming persecution, exclaiming, "unfair" in recent movements in our little town toward the direction of equality. ("*Lewisburg is trying to pass a nondiscrimination ordinance, and all anyone can talk about is bathrooms.*") The irony is that they are the ones actually persecuting those calling for change.



Jesus pronounces a blessing on those who, as a result of following his vision for humanity, are insulted, ill-treated, have evil things said about them, are hated, excluded, or suffered rejection. And he tells us to take courage. If you are experiencing any of these judgments, you are following in the footsteps of the Jewish prophets.

For your homework this month, please engage in an exercise with me. It's based on the book of Amos. Marcus Borg used to say he wished every Christian would read the book of Amos, and so, this month, I'd like you to read it.

In the margins, every time you see Amos speaking about justice place a *J*. Every time you see Amos speaking equity for the poor, place a *P*. The rich? Jot down a dollar sign, \$. And lastly, every place you see Amos predicting the future, put an *F*.

What you'll discover is that the heart of Jewish prophecy isn't whether a prophet can predict the future correctly. Jewish

prophecy has a social justice dynamic. A true Jewish prophet spoke on behalf of Yahweh, critiquing the monarchy (the social pyramid of their day), and calling for justice and equity for the oppressed and marginalized. (See also Karen Armstrong, *The Great Transformation: The Beginning of Our Religious Traditions*.)

Jewish prophets stood up to the status quo's exploitation or subjugation of others. They called those at the top of social pyramids to grant the oppressed justice. They did not call it charity; it was rather the restoration of that which was just in an exploitative system. A false prophet, by contrast, would proclaim that the subjugation and oppression of the poor was the will of God or by God's design.

Jesus stood in the same Jewish prophetic tradition as Amos, but he wasn't alone: he called his disciples to join him. When you and I follow the teachings of Jesus and stand up against oppressive systems in our own day, Hebrew tradition teaches that we are speaking with a prophetic voice as well.

Today, Jesus's teachings call us to work for systemic change in favor of the marginalized, those pushed to the fringes, those subjugated, and those who find themselves bumping their heads against glass ceilings and feel their backs against invisible walls. We follow Jesus's teachings when we work for these changes, either as members of oppressed and marginalized groups, or in areas where we find ourselves among privileged groups and able to work *alongside* the oppressed and marginalized.

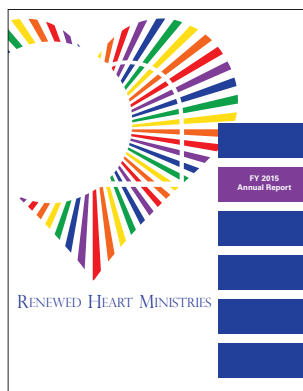
Remember: all those who join in this work will be insulted, ill-treated, have evil things said about you, be hated, excluded, and suffer rejection. You may even be banned from certain circles. It's okay. You're in the right story!

Next month, we'll look at how Jesus taught his disciples to respond to the push back of those who feel threatened by social changes. But for today, Jesus says to you:

Blessed are you when they insult and persecute you, and say every kind of evil against you because of the son of humanity. Be glad and exult, for vast is your reward in heaven. For this is how they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Q 6:22-23)

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Renewed Heart Ministries 2015 Annual Report



On behalf of all of us here at Renewed Heart Ministries, I would like to thank you for your continued support of RHM during 2015. Your financial partnership with us enables us to continue our passion all around the globe. Your partnership with us in 2015 enabled us to do some pretty amazing things.

As you well know, we are a not-for-profit, 501(c)3, religious, re-education ministry that is passionate about helping people rediscover, explore and follow the teachings of the historical Jesus.

This past year we have witnessed, over and over again, some of the most beautiful stories of healing and restoration in the hearts and lives of those we've had the privilege of serving. In this annual report you will not only see some of what we were able to accomplish in 2015, you'll also see a few of the projects we hope to accomplish in 2016, as well.

The generous support of people like yourself make it possible for our ministry to exist and to continue being a presence for positive change in our world.

Together, in following the example Jesus set before us, we will continue to make a difference in the lives of those we come in contact with in 2016.

Here's to another year of working toward making our world a safer, more just, more compassionate home for us all, til the only world is a world where love reigns.

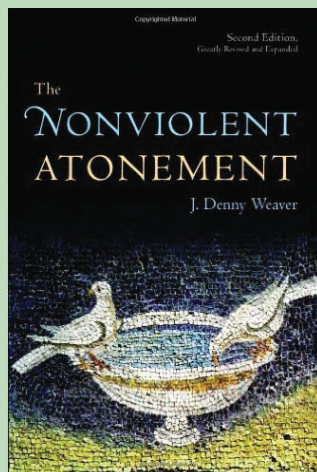
You can access RHM's 2015 Annual Report at: renewedheartministries.com/NewsLetters/V10_I04.pdf

RHM's Monthly Book Recommendation

July's book of the month for our annual reading course is

The Nonviolent Atonement, Second Edition

by J. Denny Weaver.



I have met Denny. I spent a morning, just him and myself, in a coffee shop in Madison, WI. His work in helping

his own tradition (Mennonite) hold on to their peace teachings and their ethic of nonviolence and conflict resolution is immensely valuable. In this volume he applies that same effort to understanding the death and resurrection of Jesus within the context of that nonviolence.

In this book Denny dialogues with Black, Feminist, Womanist as well as the defenders of a theory of atonement whose adherents too often see wrongs as something to be violently punished rather than corrected and righted.

This book came at a pivotal time for me quite a few years ago now. It is with great pleasure that we add it to our 2016 line up.

If you use Amazon, please consider supporting the work of Renewed Heart Ministries through AmazonSmile and selecting Renewed Heart Ministries as your charity at no additional cost to you.



HeartGroup Application

It never feels good to be on the receiving end of ill treatment. Some of us simply cannot cope with conflict of any kind. But working toward a safer more compassionate world for us all will initially cause conflict. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke of those who are "more devoted to 'order' than to justice, who prefer a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice." (1963).

All who desire peace must work for justice. Peace is not the absence of conflict. It is the presence of justice and equity for everyone, and it's as indiscriminate as sunshine and rain fall.

1. When you begin to feel push back from others, discuss as a group how each one of you, individually, can engage in some "self-care"?
2. Discuss how the group itself can come under and around those who at times experience ill treatment in their work for a more just world.

3. Discuss together how Jesus's words encourage you in these movements. Do they comfort you? Do you feel as if you are in the right story? Certainly, these insights do not take away the pain of rejection, but at the least, they tell us that push back is to be expected and part of the process.

I remember my thirteen year old daughter was working for certain social changes in her school three years ago. Some of the teachers at her school became quite upset and lashed out at her as a result. She came home in tears. Her personality is such that she becomes very quiet and inward in moments like these. At dinner that night she quietly asked how people responded to Gandhi and King when they were working toward change.

As Crystal and I shared with her the heartbreaking stories of the push back both received, I saw comfort and peace come over her face. "This is just part of it I guess." I assured it that as painful as it was, she was not in the wrong: It was okay to get in trouble for the right reasons; she was in the right story.

A few minutes later she looked at us and resolutely stated, "Change is worth it."

I was never so proud of her. She is older now, but she still has a heart for others.

May the same be said of all of us.

Next month we'll look at how Jesus teaches us to respond to our "persecutors."

Until then, keep living in love, till the only world that remains is a world where only love reigns. ■

Schedule

AUGUST 5-7, 2016

Carmichael Adventist Church
Sacramento, CA, USA
916.487.8684

AUGUST 12-14, 2016

Stanley SDA Church
Stanley, VA, USA
540.333.4458

AUGUST 19-20, 2016

Metro New York Forum
Hartsdale, NY, USA
516.650.9528

SEPTEMBER 2-11, 2016

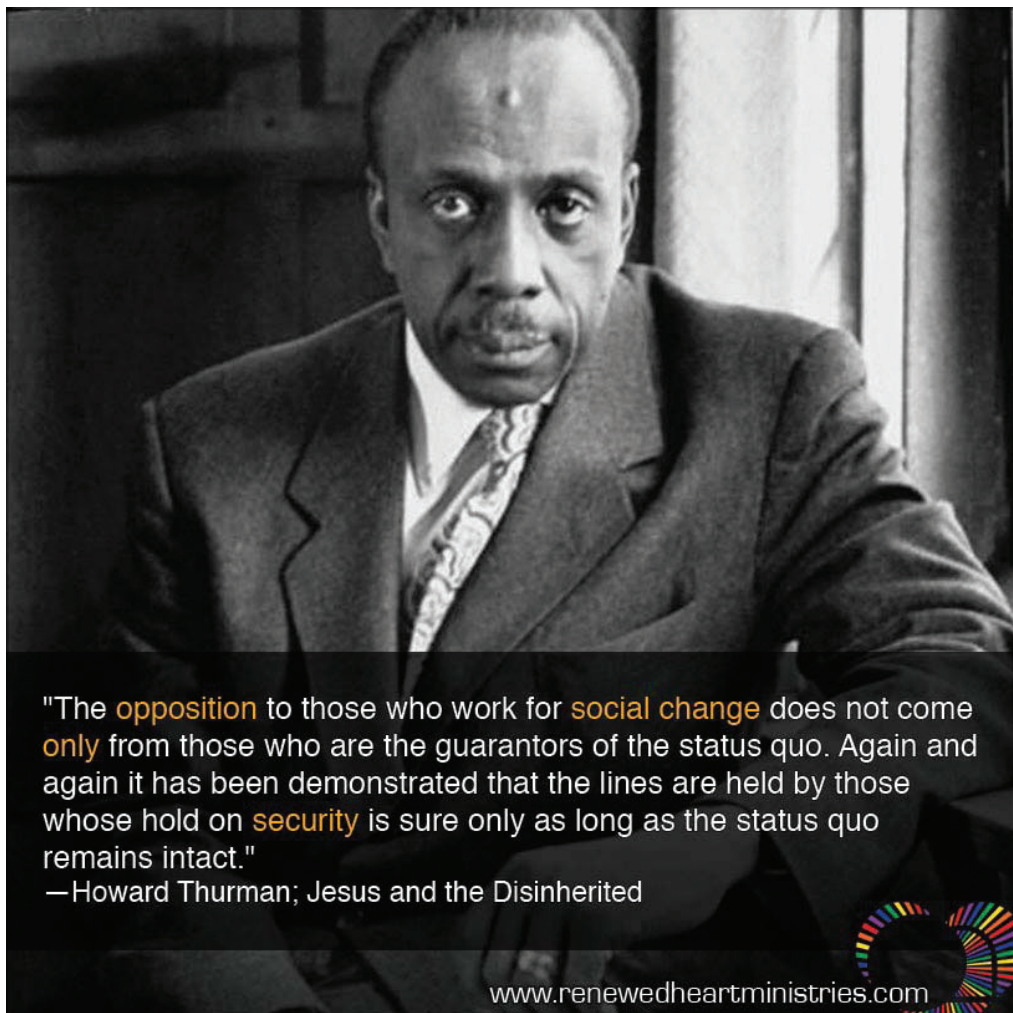
Wasatch Hills Church Event
Salt Lake City, UT, USA
801.484.4331

SEPTEMBER 16-17, 2016

Adventist Forum 2016
Conference: Nonviolence
and the Atonement
Silver Spring, MD, USA
916.774.1080

SEPTEMBER 23- OCTOBER 2, 2016

New England Seminar
Rutland, VT, USA
802.345.3862



"The **opposition** to those who work for **social change** does not come **only** from those who are the guarantors of the status quo. Again and again it has been demonstrated that the lines are held by those whose hold on **security** is sure only as long as the status quo remains intact."

—Howard Thurman; Jesus and the Disinherited

www.renewedheartministries.com



West Virginia Flood Relief

Hello Everyone,

My heart is heavy as I write this.

So many of you have been asking for an update of what is happening here in the wake of the flood that ravaged West Virginia last weekend.

First, we (myself, Crystal, Emarya and Christian) were in Arizona until the Wednesday after the flooding struck. I was giving four presentations at an annual event for AWC. We were without cell phone signal where we were in Arizona, as well as having no way to connect to the internet for about four days. This explains why we were not able to publish a podcast/eSight that week. We were off the grid. *(Smiles.)*

We arrived back in West Virginia on Wednesday and hit the ground running. On Wednesday we received word of some of the needs of the shelter/station in Ronceverte (two towns away). We immediately hit all the stores and purchased every mop Crystal and I could find and ran it down to them. While there we were connected with a family of five who lost everything. The only things they were able to escape with were the clothes on their backs. Crystal and I purchased some more clothing for them and then connected them with the American Red Cross Station, United Way and FEMA. On Thursday I met up with a group of four friends here in Caldwell, one of the hardest hit towns in this area. We spent the day cleaning out three homes. In one we were slogging through mud up to our ankles while standing in the residents' living room. Most of everything they had, as well as their home was lost. The most heartbreaking story was the home where we hauled out everything the flood had decimated on the first floor. This dear lady, with tears in her eyes, looked into mine and said, "This stuff doesn't even begin to compare with what I have lost." Her husband was one of the fourteen bodies found when the waters subsided. I fought back the tears in my eyes, as well. We helped clear out

three homes there yesterday. Today my efforts were split between two homes. One was shoveling mud out of the home of a family in that same area, then in the



afternoon I met up with that same group of friends to help clear out a home in White Sulphur Springs, one of the four hardest hit towns in this county. At our home, since Wednesday, our washing machine and dryer have also been running nonstop trying to help with specific laundry needs here in Lewisburg, as well.

One of my friends that I have been working along side is also a Katrina survivor. He was relocated here after the flooding of New Orleans. "There is a difference this time," he said, "there is something very unique about the way West Virginians come together to take care of one another." Amidst all the shock and grief, I continue to have moments where my eyes tear up as I hear heroic stories of the power of community; how our community is coming together to provide for and get each other through this. The generosity and selflessness of so many is astoundingly beautiful. One thing Mountaineers lead the way in (and it is this that for me sets the residents of the Mountain State apart from the rest) we know how to take care of our own. When horrific events strike, we've got each other's backs. We know what love, especially in moments of horrendous tragedy, looks like. We open our hearts, homes, lives and we get each other back on their feet.

As I have had time to process everything I'm wading through each day, I'm overwhelmed by so much loss for this little community, both of property as well as loved ones. Pictures (and words) don't even begin to tell the story of the magnitude of the devastation left in the wake of this flood. Greenbrier County was one of the hardest hit; the last lives-lost count I've seen is 23 state-wide with 17 of those from our little county. One of the 17 was one of our local high school students. Another 14 year old girl has still not been found.

My dear friend Dr. Keisha McKenzie recently wrote, "There are enough resources on Earth to feed, water, and clothe everyone here. We don't lack because there isn't enough. People lack because we don't care for each other enough to distribute what we have effectively." (mackenzian.com/blog/2016/06/25/investing-in-imagination/)

Moments like these are when the truth of statements like this are also keenly felt.

I'm writing this to ask you, as a follower of Renewed Heart Ministries, for help. I can count the times we have asked folks for money directly on one hand in the last ten years. But this seems different.

We have set up a link through Renewed Heart Ministries webpage where you can give in increments of \$15 all the way up to \$5000. Every little bit helps when people have lost so much. 100% of your donation will go directly to help the victims of the 2016 flooding here in Greenbrier County, West Virginia where Renewed Heart Ministries is located.

You can also mail your contribution to help to:

Renewed Heart Ministries
PO Box 1211
Lewisburg, WV 24901

Please mark the contributions you mail as "WV Flood Recovery" so we can ensure that none of the funds we receive for this purpose will go toward RHM, but directly to aiding our local victims.

I also want to apologize for the pause in publishing podcasts/eSights during this time. I'm so sorry. I simply have not had

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Pulse Shooting

Orlando, FL, USA

June 12, 2016

This month, we want to take a moment to pause and remember the forty-nine victims of the Orlando Shooting on June 12, 2016.



This tragic event took place at the gay nightclub, Pulse, where our Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer/Questioning siblings within our human family were targeted. Fifty-three others were injured. That's 102 beautiful lives either gone or at minimum will never be the same.

Within the Jewish wisdom tradition it is said, "Whosoever sheds human blood diminishes the divine image; destroying only one human life is equivalent to annihilating the entire world." In this instance it was a specific demographic within our world that was purposely, hatefully, and senselessly singled out. This was the largest targeted mass killing people in the Western world since the Holocaust.

Our hearts at Renewed Heart Ministries are with the families and loved ones of those who were both injured and lost. Our hearts are with the LGBTQ community at large who daily live in fear, afraid to drop their guard, constantly aware they are at some level of risk; ever performing habitual safety-checks assessing their surroundings when in public. You are not alone. We grieve with you. And we at RHM will continue to stand along side you in the work

These are the names of those whose lives will be remembered:

Edward Sotomayor Jr., 34
Stanley Almodovar III, 23
Luis Omar Ocasio-Capo, 20
Juan Ramon Guerrero, 22
Eric Ivan Ortiz Rivera, 36
Peter O. Gonzalez-Cruz, 22
Luis S. Vielma, 22
Kimberly Morris, 37
Eddie Jamoldroy Justice, 30
Darryl Roman Burt II, 29
Deonka Deidra Drayton, 32
Alejandro Barrios Martinez, 21
Anthony Luis Laureano Disla, 25
Jean Carlos Mendez Perez, 35
Franky Jimmy Dejesus Velazquez, 50
Amanda Alvear, 25
Martin Benitez Torres, 33
Luis Daniel Wilson-Leon, 37
Mercedez Marisol Flores, 26
Xavier Emmanuel Serrano Rosado, 35
Gilberto Ramon Silva Menendez, 25
Simon Adrian Carrillo Fernandez, 31
Oscar A Aracena-Montero, 26
Enrique L. Rios, Jr., 25
Javier Jorge-Reyes, 40
Miguel Angel Honorato, 30

Joey Rayon Paniagua, 32
Jason Benjamin Josaphat, 19
Cory James Connell, 21
Juan P. Rivera Velazquez, 37
Luis Daniel Conde, 39
Shane Evan Tomlinson, 33
Juan Chavez Martinez, 25
Jerald Arthur Wright, 31
Leroy Valentin Fernandez, 25
Tevin Eugene Crosby, 25
Jonathan Antonio Camuy Vega, 24
Jean C. Nives Rodriguez, 27
Rodolfo Ayala-Ayala, 33
Brenda Lee Marquez McCool, 49
Yilmary Rodriguez Sullivan, 24
Christopher Andrew Leinonen, 32
Angel Luis Candelario-Padro, 28
Frank Hernandez, 27
Paul Terrell Henry, 41
Antonio Davon Brown, 29
Christopher Joseph Sanfeliz, 24
Akyra Monet Murray, 18
Geraldo A. Ortiz-Jimenez, 25

Varied is the image of God. Our work will continue.

to end homophobia, heterosexism, and the violence through which they most often find their expression. We acknowledge and affirm your presence within our human family. You deserve dignity, respect and life. And to all the critics, our time among the LGBTQ community has taught us that there really is only one, as is so called, "gay agenda" and that too often, sadly, is simply to survive. If history has proven anything it is that those who are excluded today will be eliminated and exterminated tomorrow. To the LGBTQ community, we love you. We are standing with you, and when needed, we pledge to stand between

them and you. The names of those lost will not be forgotten.

As the sun continues to rise, so will our efforts till the day comes when our world is a safer, more just, more compassionate home for us all.



...Flood Relief cont'd from page 6

any spare time to write or publish. We are spending every moment we can, shoulder to shoulder, working along side those who, for now, have lost everything.

John F. Kennedy, while visiting in West Virginia, once said, "The sun does not always shine in West Virginia, but the people always do." (wvculture.org/history/government/jfkcentennial.html)

We are a strong people. We will come back from this. You get the privilege of being able to participate in our recovery; helping in ways either big or small.

Thank you in advance for your kindness.

You can contribute to the recovery efforts through RHM at the link below:

<http://bit.ly/29SSK3E>

May the bright rays of the sun continue to supersede the dark storm clouds that

have battered our little community, till the only world that remains is a world where only love reigns.

Herb Montgomery

Director
Renewed Heart Ministries

Renewed Heart Ministries is a not-for-profit group that is passionate about rediscovering, following and helping others rediscover the teachings and sayings of the historical Jesus of Nazareth. We believe these teachings have an intrinsic value in informing the work of nonviolently confronting, liberating and transforming our world into a safe, more just, more compassionate home for us all.

Everything we do here at Renewed Heart Ministries is for free. Even the many educational events that we do in various venues. If you'd like to support our work you can make a one-time gift or become one of our monthly contributors by going to RenewedHeartMinistries.com and clicking the donate tab at the top right.

Or you can mail contributions to:
Renewed Heart Ministries
P.O. Box 1211
Lewisburg, WV 24901

Also, please sign up for our free resources and remember, every little bit helps.

Anything we receive over and above our annual budget we happily give away to other not-for-profits who are making both systemic and personal differences, significant differences, in lives of those not presently benefited but the status quo.

And to those already supporting the work of Renewed Heart Ministries, your generous support makes it possible for us to exist and to continue being a presence for positive change in our world. So with all of our hearts, "Thank You."

Together we are making a difference, till the only world that remains is a world where only Love reigns.



RENEWED HEART MINISTRIES

Featured Presentation

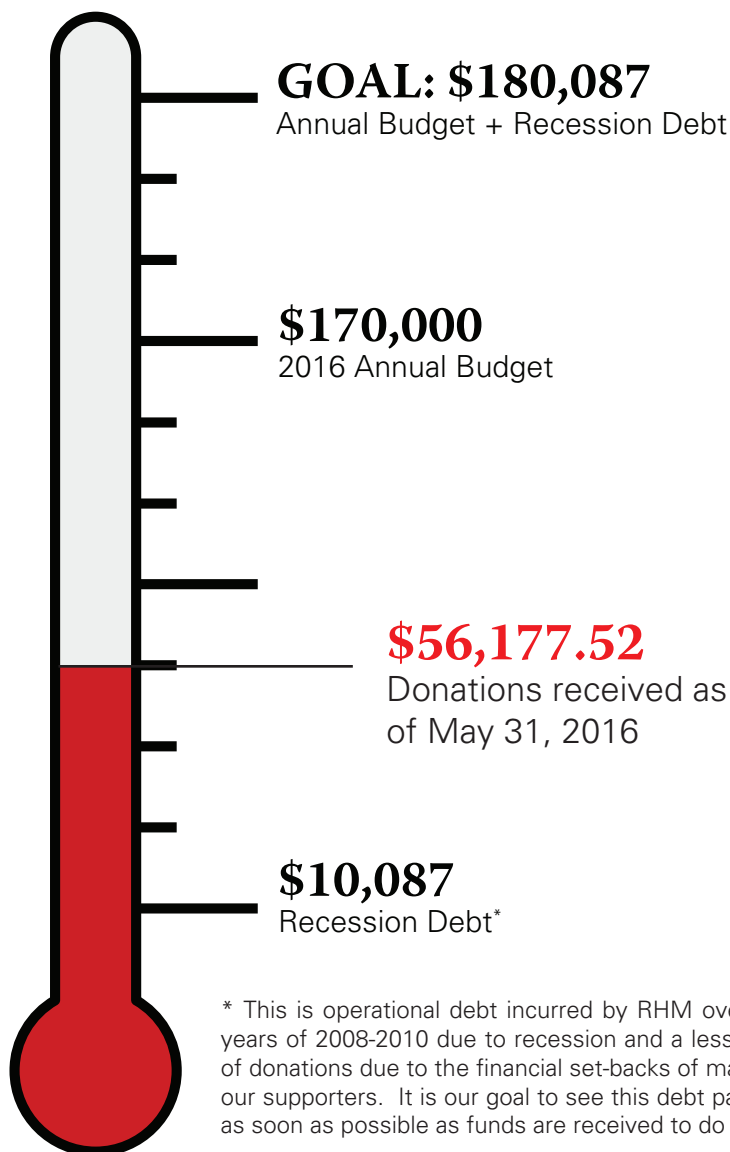
This month, we at Renewed Heart Ministries are working shoulder to shoulder along side the clean up efforts of our fellow Greenbrier county residents in the wake of the worst flooding disaster in the history of West Virginia. What I've witnessed is that the hardest hit in any natural disaster are the poor. I knew this theoretically before this, but I'm seeing, daily, right before my eyes, the stark truth here locally. We feel **The End of Poverty** is fitting presentation to feature right now. This presentation is from our *Revolutionary Jesus* series. It is our hope that as you listen your heart will be renewed, inspired and empowered to continue following the teachings of the revolutionary Jesus more deeply.



Annual Budget as of May 31, 2016: \$70,833.00

Annual Contributions received as of May 31, 2016: \$56,177.52

April's Contributions: \$11,027.56



* This is operational debt incurred by RHM over the years of 2008-2010 due to recession and a lessening of donations due to the financial set-backs of many of our supporters. It is our goal to see this debt paid off as soon as possible as funds are received to do so.