



# Awakenings

::::: The Official Newsletter of Renewed Heart Ministries ::::: May 2018 :::::

"FATHER, FORGIVE THEM, THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO"



## Inside This Issue:

### Page 2

It's Easier to Build a Religion Than To Build a Better World.

### Page 4

RHM Annual Reading Course Book for May

### Page 5

Schedule

RHM's Free Resources

Testimony

### Page 6

Australia Speaking Tour 2018

### Page 7

Budget Thermometer

### Page 8

Featured Presentation

Jesus For Everyone Podcasts

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## It's Easier to Build a Religion than to Build a Better World.

by Herb Montgomery  
April 20, 2018



Photo credit: Alexander Watts on Unsplash

***"Yet, it is far easier for those with power and privilege to merely worship Jesus, to preach a gospel about Jesus, and build a religion around Jesus, than it is for them to hear the gospel to the marginalized and pushed down that Jesus taught and build a better world now."***

***"Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?"***

Luke 6:46

On April 4, many people around the world observed the 50-year anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. One poem that I return to each year on both April 4 and January 21 (MLK Day) is Carl Wendell Hines, Jr.'s poem "A dead man's dream." It's quoted in full by Vincent Harding in *Martin Luther King: An Inconvenient Hero*:

"A Dead Man's Dream"  
by Carl Wendell Hines Jr.

Now that he is safely dead,  
Let us praise him.  
Build monuments to his glory.  
Sing Hosannas to his name.  
Dead men make such convenient heroes.  
For they cannot rise to challenge the images  
That we might fashion from their lives.  
It is easier to build monuments  
Than to build a better world.  
So now that he is safely dead,  
We, with eased consciences will  
Teach our children that he was a great man,  
Knowing that the cause for which he  
Lived is still a cause

And the dream for which he died is still a dream.

A dead man's dream."

(Carl Wendell Hines, Jr., "Now That He Is Safely Dead," in *Drum Major for a Dream*, p. 23.; quoted by Vincent Harding, *Martin Luther King: The In-convenient Hero*, rev. ed., Kindle Edition Locations 2430-2431)

Why do we turn those who threatened their social order into revered or even worshipped heroes after they've died? Why do so many of us praise these controversial figures from our history rather than following them? Today those in power ignore King's radicalness, especially from 1965 to 1968, and his ideas during those years are still not taught to new generations. Yet King is lifted up by those in power as an American hero. If the King of 1968 were still alive today, he would be one of the loudest critiques of America's capitalism, continued racism, and militarism (both domestic and foreign). The line in Hines' poem that jumps out at me each time I read it is "it is easier to build monuments than to build a better world."

The pattern of turning into heroes those who once spoke unpopular truth to power is part of the Jesus story as well. In both Matthew's and Luke's version of the story, those in power who were threatened by Jesus' gospel to the poor and marginalized, built monuments to the prophets of old even though their actions repeated the very history that killed the prophets who critiqued those in power within their own society to an early death.

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves

## Quotable Quotes

*"We are called to speak for the weak, for the voiceless, for victims of our nation and for those it calls enemy; for no document from human hands can make these humans any less our brother."*

– Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr;

Vincent Harding  
*Martin Luther King:  
The Inconvenient Hero*

of the righteous. And you say, 'If we had lived in the days of our ancestors, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.' So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets." (Matthew 23:29-31)

"Woe to you, because you build tombs for the prophets, and it was your ancestors who killed them. So you testify that you approve of what your ancestors did; they killed the prophets, and you build their tombs." (Luke 11:47-48)

In this week's featured text above, the question is asked, "Why do you call me Lord (worship or revere me) and not do what I say?" This could be said about those who have revered the Hebrew prophets, Dr. King, Jesus, and many more in history, but not followed their teaching.

Consider just three areas of Dr. King's teachings that are not ignored but profoundly contradicted by those in power today who publicly revere his memory.

## King's Anti Capitalism

"Call it democracy, or call it democratic socialism, but there must be a better distribution of wealth within this country for all God's children." (Speech to the Negro American Labor Council, 1961)

"We must recognize that we can't solve our problem now until there is a radical redistribution of economic and political power...this means a revolution of values and other things. We must see now that the evils of racism, economic exploitation and militarism are all tied together...you can't really get rid of one without getting rid of the others...the whole structure of

American life must be changed. America is a hypocritical nation and [we] must put [our] own house in order." (Report to SCLC staff, May 1967)

"The evils of capitalism are as real as the evils of militarism and evils of racism." (Speech to SCLC Board, March 30, 1967)

When King was saying these things he wasn't labelled as an American hero to be celebrated with an American federal holiday. King was labelled as the greatest threat to America. One of many reasons being King's critique of the U.S. economic order that makes a few in our society inconceivably wealthy while forcing others into poverty. The head of the FBI's domestic intelligence division, J. Edgar Hoover, labelled King "We must mark him now, if we have not done so before, as the most dangerous Negro of the future in this Nation from the standpoint of communism, the Negro and national security." (Aug. 30, 1963, post-speech memo: "Communist Party, USA, Negro Question.")

## King's Anti Militarism

Again In the book, *Martin Luther King: The Inconvenient Hero*, Vincent Harding writes about how Martin Luther King, Jr. Day originally included the pomp of the very military King decried and was instituted by the very government whose global policies he denounced.

"Now that King seems safely dead, now that he has been properly installed in the national pantheon—to the accompaniment of military bands, with the U.S. Marine Corps chorus singing 'We Shall Overcome,' and the cadenced marching of the armed forces color guards—we think we know the man's impact and influence. Didn't President Reagan sign a bill authorizing a national holiday honoring this teacher of nonviolence (shortly after the president had sent the comrades of the singers and musicians to carry out an armed attack on Grenada, one of the smallest countries in the world)? And didn't Vice-President Bush go to Atlanta to help inaugurate the King national holiday in January 1986 (presumably taking time off from his general oversight of the murderous Nicaraguan counter-revolutionary forces who were being brutally manipulated in this government's cynical attempt to destroy what was one of the most hopeful revolutions for the poor in the Americas)? [Harding, Vincent. *Martin Luther King: The Inconvenient*

*Hero*, rev. ed. (Kindle Edition Locations 1271-1278).

## King's Anti-Racism

The actions of the current US administration have given rise to hate speech and the expression of a myriad of violent phobias. Dog whistles have caused those like David Duke to see in the administration a champion for making America White again, and those in the administration have repeated and publicly condemned those who walk in the path of King's legacy (Colin Kaepernick is just one example) and protest modern expressions of the very same injustices King protested.

Yet on the fiftieth anniversary of King's assassination, both the American President and the Vice President tweeted:

"Today we honor Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on the 50th anniversary of his assassination. Earlier this year I spoke about Dr. King's legacy of justice and peace, and his impact on uniting Americans. #MLK50 Proclamation: [45.wh.gov/DrKing50th](https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2018/04/04/mlk-50-proclamation)"

—President Donald Trump (@realDonaldTrump)  
April 4, 2018 ([twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/981548354088898560](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/981548354088898560))

"50 years ago today, Dr. King's life was tragically cut short – but that did not stop his immortal words, his courageous example and his faith from inspiring generations of Americans. Today we honor the man and the Dream. #MLK50"

– Vice President Mike Pence (@VP)  
April 4, 2018  
([twitter.com/VP/status/981521924969857025](https://twitter.com/VP/status/981521924969857025))

(An article worth reading on this is Dave Zirin's article, "Donald Trump and Mike Pence Have No Business Speaking About Martin Luther King Jr." at [thenation.com/article/donald-trump-and-mike-pence-have-no-business-speaking-about-martin-luther-king-jr/](https://thenation.com/article/donald-trump-and-mike-pence-have-no-business-speaking-about-martin-luther-king-jr/).)

In this context, read again Jesus' words in Matthew:

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. And you say, 'If we had lived in the days of our ancestors, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.' So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets." (Matthew 23:29-31)

## Jesus

This brings me to another thought this year



cont'd on page 4



that weighs heavily on me: We have done a very similar thing to the historical Jesus that we have done with Dr. King. Today we could, in Hines' fashion, say about Jesus and the religion that has been created around him, "It is easier to build a world religion than to build a better world."

Recently I sat in my local town hall and listened to a panel of young people including my daughter representing our local March For Our Lives campaign. These young people posed questions to those who are currently running for political election in our May 8 primary.

One of the candidates had me on the floor. In a pious yet uninformed spirit, this candidate said that the problem in our societies is not that we need more laws but that we need a "return to God." They said they were a "Christian" and that they felt the way to solve our social challenges was for "our society to return to *the path*" of Jesus—by implication the way or teachings of Jesus.

While I agree that Jesus' teachings of

liberation from systemic oppression, and survival, resistance, reparation, and transformation can still speak to society's challenges, I was concerned about the contradiction between the candidate's statement and everything else they stated. If I had to choose between someone who religiously worshiped Jesus as they passed through this world on their way to "heaven" and a secular candidate, atheist or agnostic like Kurt Vonnegut ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurt\\_Vonnegut](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurt_Vonnegut)), for example, who was genuinely aligned with Jesus' actual ethics and teachings and wrestling with how to apply them to our life with the marginalized and oppressed, I'd have to pick the latter. There are many sectors of the Christian religion that deeply contradict Jesus' actual teachings. Consider just the following passages from the early church.

## Anti-Capitalism

"Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys." (Luke 12:33).

"The disciples, as each one was able, decided to provide help for the brothers and sisters living in Judea." (Acts 11:29, emphasis added).

"They sold property and possessions to give to *anyone who had need*." (Acts 2:45, emphasis added).

"And put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to *anyone who had need*." (Acts 4:35, emphasis added).

"That there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales." (Acts 4:34)

## Nonviolence, Mutual Aid and Enemy Love

"Put your sword back in its place," Jesus said to him, "for all who draw the sword will die by the sword." (Matthew 26:52)

"You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you. "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even gentiles do that?" (Matthew 5:38-48)

## Solidarity with the Societally Marginalized

"But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, 'Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?'" (Luke 5:30)

"But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." (Matthew 9:13)

## Conclusion

Some who called Jesus "Lord" *did* also embrace his teachings. And there are some

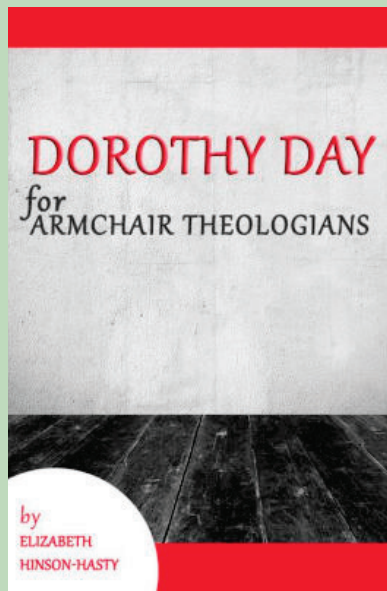
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## RHM's 2018 Annual Reading Course Book for May

### *Dorothy Day for Armchair Theologians*

by Elizabeth Hinson-Hasty

"If theology is about more than books and libraries, lecture halls and dusty debates; if theology is instead about lived experience, especially the experiences of those living at the margins of society's care and concern; if, in short, theology is about the real needs of real people, then Dorothy Day was one of the greatest theologians of the twentieth century. In spite of having no formal training in theology, Day's work and writing on behalf of the poor and oppressed bears eloquent testimony to the creativity and courage of her theological vision. Her journalism for the *Catholic Worker* and her advocacy for the poor, women, ethnic minorities, and others come together to form a consistent theology of the church and its ministry to the world.



In this contribution to the *Armchair Theologians* series, Elizabeth Hinson-Hasty demonstrates how Day's tireless work on behalf of the marginalized arose from and articulates a deeply theological commitment to the Reign of God and the dignity of all God's children. This book is the perfect introduction to the Day's remarkable life and powerful vision."

today who embrace him, too. The story of Zacchaeus represents them:

"But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, 'Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.'" (Luke 19:8)

Yet, it is far easier for those with power and privilege to merely *worship* Jesus, to preach a gospel *about* Jesus, and build a religion *around* Jesus, than it is for them to hear the gospel to the marginalized and pushed down that Jesus taught and build a better world now.

Both King and Jesus were radicals and both have been moderated or muted since their deaths.

Both leave us with the call to engage, apply, and live out their teachings—to "follow" them—not simply build monuments to them.

***Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven...Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform***

***many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'" (Matthew 7:21-23)***

## HeartGroup Application

1. Which teachings of Jesus' do you find challenging, if any?
2. Which teachings of Jesus do you think challenge the pursuit of justice today, and which teachings do you see as supporting our justice work today?
3. Discuss your answers with your HeartGroup this upcoming week. How can your group more deeply engage the teachings found in the Jesus story as we make our world a safer, just, more compassionate world for everyone?

Thanks for checking in with us this month.

Wherever you are, keep living in love, in resistance, survival, liberation, reparation, and transformation.

Another world is possible. ■

To support our weekly podcasts and eSights and help us grow, go to [renewedheartministries.com](http://renewedheartministries.com) and click "Donate"!

# Schedule

**MAY 19, 2018**

Asheville Adventist Forum  
Asheville, NC USA  
828.552.3072

**JULY 11 - 14, 2018**

Kinship Kampmeeting  
Baltimore, MD USA  
304.520.0030

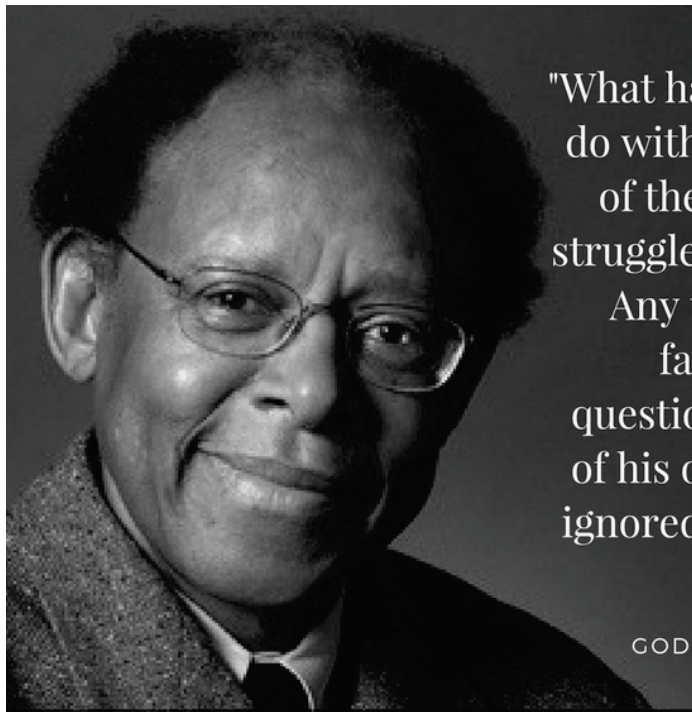


## Sign Up for RHM's Free Resources!

Daily Quotations in your email inbox, weekly articles, podcasts, and ministry updates, monthly newsletters, and more.

**Sign up now so you don't miss a thing!**

<http://bit.ly/RHMSignUp>



"What has the gospel to do with the oppressed of the land and their struggle for liberation? Any theologian who fails to place that question at the center of his or her work has ignored the essence of the gospel."

GOD OF THE OPPRESSED

**REV. DR. JAMES HAL CONE**  
(AUGUST 5, 1936 – APRIL 28, 2018)

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Photo by Robin Holland

# Testimony

"Your weekly e-Sights and podcasts are the most insightful I have ever read/listened to. Just wanted to say a big 'thank you' for posting all the resources on your website. I am a long-haul truck driver, and so I download the presentations onto my iPod and listen to them as I'm driving along. God bless you." — D





## Australia Speaking Tour 2018

March 6-22, 2018

by Herb Montgomery | April 11, 2018

This March, I had the immense privilege of sharing a series of talks in New South Wales, Australia. About a year ago I was contacted by a couple, Brenton and Kylie Stacey. They had been introduced to Renewed Heart Ministries by friends of theirs, Matt and Heidi Tompson. Matt was a pastor at the time he came across RHM's material. During that time he was experiencing what many pastors do; a tension between the requirements of their profession and a growing list of personal questions that gnaw at one's own worldview. Matt stumbled onto a series I started giving back in 2012 called *The Jesus Dialogue*. "When I first entered *The Jesus Dialogue*, my picture of God was messed up," says Matt. "As a lifelong Christian and as a pastor, I couldn't reconcile the God of love my heart embraced with the God of fear and punishment often taught to me." He thanks RHM "for revealing that not only do I not have to reconcile these two Gods, but that it's dangerous to do so. *The Jesus Dialogue* released a powerful picture of a loving God who stands up in the person of Jesus for the lost and for the vulnerable. It has forever changed how I view God, others and myself. I cannot help but share this with others."

From this, Matt began sharing what he was experiencing with Heidi, and then they both began to encourage their friends, the Staceys, to take a look at

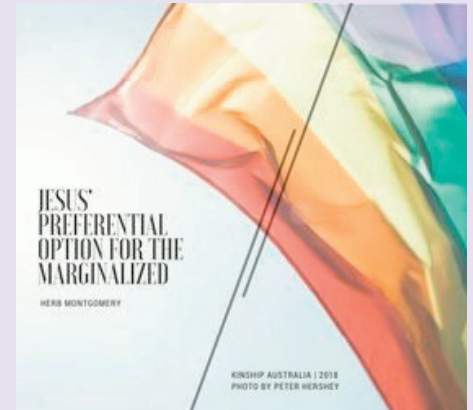
RHM's materials for themselves. Kylie Stacey echoed Matt's above words. "After reading *Finding the Father* and listening to a variety of audio recordings, we knew we had to share what we were learning with our friends. We figured the best way to do that would be to have Herb share in person."

Last year Brenton and Kylie Stacey connected with me online and asked if we could chat by phone. During our conversation, they extended an invitation for me to come to Australia and share. Immediately afterward, Brenton and Kylie launched a Facebook group where they hosted a weekly discussion on the series *The Jesus Dialogue*. Then afterward they launched a five-week book club reading my book *Finding the Father*. When I finally did arrive, I was meeting people who knew this older material better than I did!

Given the recent political events in Australia, I choose to focus my presentations during my tour on the sayings of Jesus that offer hope and liberation to those our society pushes to the undersides or edges of our religious and civil communities. Jesus' example of an inclusive shared table and his teachings in solidarity with those on the margins of his own community still have much to offer us today given that we are still structuring our societies in many of the same oppressive and exploitative forms. These sayings of Jesus deeply challenge certain traditional Christian communities that have historically found themselves repeatedly on the wrong side when civil society shifts toward more just and compassionate changes.

My speaking engagements began that first Saturday (March 10) with Kinship

Australia, a Seventh-day Adventist LGBTQIA community and advocacy organization. You can listen to this first presentation I shared at: *Jesus' Preferential Option for the Marginalized*. ([renewedheartministries.com/presentation/Jesus-Preferential-Option-for-the-Marginalized](http://renewedheartministries.com/presentation/Jesus-Preferential-Option-for-the-Marginalized)).



Next, I shared a four-part series at various locations in Cooranbong and on the Morisset peninsula. These presentations focussed on embracing Jesus' shared table and his call to solidarity with those on the margins as a way we can reclaim, not only the humanity of others, but our own humanity, as well. These four presentations were titled:

*Pyramids, Circles and A Shared Table*  
*From the Outside In*  
*Self Affirming Nonviolence*  
*Where Do We Go From Here?*



Friday, I was invited to teach a class for the International Development and Poverty students at Avondale College of Higher Education. That evening I shared a presentation for the entire campus titled *The Sayings of Jesus: The Intersection of Faith and Social Justice*. The next morning I travelled two hours south to Sydney to give a presentation

at the Fox Valley Seventh-day Adventist Community Church titled *Jesus From the Edges: Doing Theology from the Margins and the Open Future of Christianity*. Later that afternoon I shared a presentation with the friends of Sydney Adventist Forum titled: *The Myth of Redemptive Suffering: Nonviolence and the Impact of Violent Atonement Theories on Marginalized Communities in Their Work of Survival, Resistance & Liberation*.

You can listen to these presentations on our website at: [renewedheartministries.com/presentation/Australian-Tour-2018](http://renewedheartministries.com/presentation/Australian-Tour-2018).

I want to say a special thank you to Matt and Heidi Tompson for their kindness, for sharing my materials with the Staceys, and suggesting I should be invited to Australia. I also want to thank Brenton and Kylie Stacey, my hosts, for opening their home and taking such good care of me while I was there. I cannot say enough good things about these two. They and their four boys are beautiful human beings. I want to thank each person who attended and those who hosted the four presentations in Cooranbong and on the Morisset peninsula. It was such a pleasure to get to know each of you as the week progressed. I also want to thank John and Margaret Ashton for inviting me to participate on Thursday with food distribution through their community food pantry. I want to thank Kinship Australia, Avondale College, Fox Valley Seventh-day Adventist Community Church and the Sydney Adventist Forum for inviting me to share. Thank you to each and everyone of you who took time to attend and share. And thank you to each of you who took me sight-seeing throughout the week. Those one-on-one conversations were amazing!



Avondale College, Australia

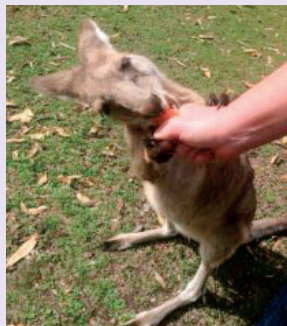
My time in Australia closed with a shared table experience, a Sunday brunch at Craig and Ngareta Rorich's home where supporters gave me a loving farewell with affirmations and a huge basket of Australian food.

Kylie Stacey commented that their decision to extend the invitation a year earlier had proven to be a good one. "Herb's passion and message rang true for so many, changing lives and hearts in our local community. We now have a newly formed family that's catching the vision of what it means to live a radical life and to challenge the status quo as followers of Jesus."

My time in Australia also helped to launch a Lake Macquarie, New South Wales-based community collective seeking to build stronger connections through shared and non-homogenous experiences called *The Open House*. The Open House ([facebook.com/theopenhouselakeside/](https://facebook.com/theopenhouselakeside/)) will be a hub, bringing together diverse, people-led services for folks in the local community. This collective resonates with RHM's passion to engage the work of making our world a safer, just, more compassionate home for us all.

Lastly, I want to say thank you to all of you who support the work of Renewed Heart Ministries. Without you we could not exist and do the work we do. We are seeing so many lives impacted for good. Together we are making a difference.

Another world is possible.



The RHM team, in any given month, consists of a small team of 10–12 people working either full-time, part time, or as volunteers dedicating hundreds of hours to make what we do possible. If you find blessing, encouragement, and renewal here, please consider becoming one of our Monthly Partners with a reoccurring donation or by making a one time gift.

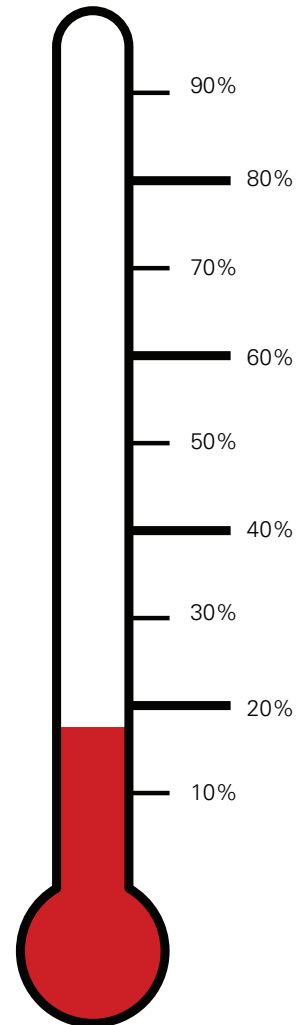
**2018 Annual Budget Goal:**  
**\$183,206.00**

**Monthly Budget Goal:**  
**15,267.00**

**March's Contributions:**  
**\$9,485.74**

**January–March's**  
**Budget Goal: \$45,801.00**

**January–March's Contributions:**  
**\$30,209.72**





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 hold in various venues. You can support our work either with a one-time gift or by becoming one of our monthly contributors by going to [RenewedHeartMinistries.com](http://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 personal, systemic and structural differences in the lives of people who are less privileged.

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."

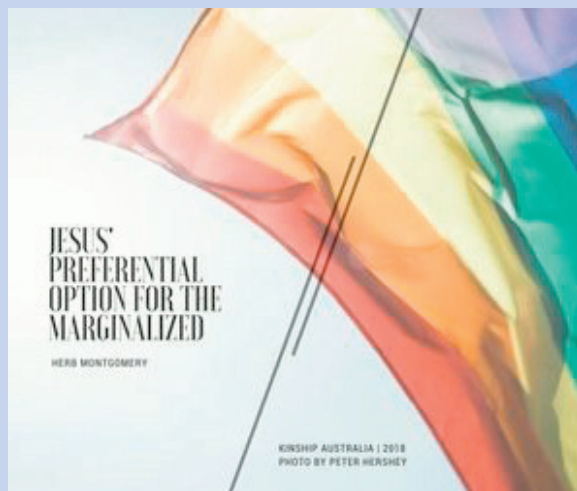
Together we are making a difference, till the only world that remains is a world where only Love reigns.



RENEWED HEART MINISTRIES

## Featured Presentation

A Jewish proverb states, "Before every person there walks an angel proclaiming, 'Behold the image of God.'" What a difference it would make if we would remember this in each of our interactions, in our community, and in our larger societal structures. This month we are featuring a presentation Herb gave to Kinship Australia this past March entitled *Jesus' Preferential Option for the Marginalized*. It's our hope that your heart will be renewed and inspired to action as we together continue to engage all the varied expressions of Jesus' work of distributive justice in our world.



***Jesus' Preferential Option for the Marginalized*** by Herb Montgomery.



### The *Jesus For Everyone* podcast.

A weekly podcast where we discuss where faith in Jesus and social justice work for the vulnerable today intersect and what a first-century, Jewish, Galilean prophet of the poor might offer us today in our work of survival, resistance, liberation, restoration, and transformation.

[www.renewedheartministries.com/Podcasts](http://www.renewedheartministries.com/Podcasts)