

RENEWED
HEART
MINISTRIES



Awakenings

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



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Renewed Heart Ministries

Follow Herb!



@HerbMontgomery



Herb Montgomery

"Like God Speaking into my Story"

We here at Renewed Heart Ministries believe that things that drive us toward taking care of one another, mutual aid, resource sharing, belonging, and community are the things worth supporting and participating in. These are things that grow out of our passion for engaging the intersection of faith, love, compassion and justice.

As many of you know, RHM offers resources that inspire and renew hope, directing our feet to take action throughout the entire year, partnering with you and many others in the work of shaping our world into a compassionate, just and safe home for all.

We want to thank you for supporting our much needed work.

A new friend who attended one of our week long events this past year wrote in:

"I think I need a week in solitude to just absorb, consolidate, dream, energize and activate after the last few days.

I had a feeling deep down, that I would feel a change in direction, deep

impression, inspiration, soul-filling from Herb being here—and the last few days have been a journey and a half already!

I had a soul-awakening tonight, like God speaking into my story. I feel as if I have been fueled and directed! One of the things that got me starting to cry to start with tonight was Herb's definition of God's kingdom—where a community of people desiring to live out Jesus' principles of distributive justice, sharing, compassion and care—that's us! How exciting! I've gone from not feeling like we were doing enough to having real direction and feeling inspired for what lies ahead. I can't thank you enough for hosting and sponsoring this event!"

These critical moments where people are connected with the things in life that matter are what you are empowering and enabling to continue by your support of RHM.

I wish there were a thousand ways to say thank you, I'd use them all.

With much love and gratitude for you,



Herb Montgomery
Director I Renewed Heart Ministries



What's Your Story?

We here at Renewed Heart Ministries are asking our followers to share their stories with us. How has this ministry impacted your life for the better? How have you been blessed by Renewed Heart Ministries? How has journeying alongside RHM inspired you or made a difference for you?

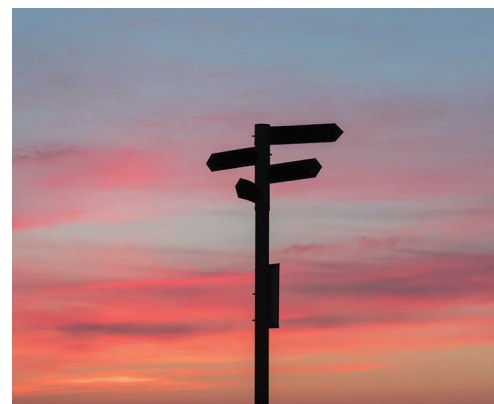
We want to hear your story! And if you give us permission, we may feature your story in one of our upcoming newsletter issues so your story can help others, too! (But only if you give us permission.)

We believe every person's story matters and every person's voice has value. Sharing our stories is one of the ways that we heal our world. Hearing one another's stories empowers us to let go of our fear of one another and enter into compassion. Listening to the diverse experiences of one another's lives leads us to replace insecurity with a much broader understanding of each other and our larger world.

Will you share your story with us?

Send your story of how you've been positively impacted by the ministry of Renewed Heart Ministries by emailing info@renewedheartministries.com.

We're looking forward to hearing from you!



No Room In The Inn

by Herb Montgomery | December 1, 2018

Last week I witnessed many of my friends argue against tear-gassing women and children at the U.S.'s southern border. At the same time, many of the people they attend church with argued the U.S. was right to do so. Their thin arguments did little to veil the bigotry underneath them. Yet many of those arguments are being made by people who will soon put up nativities to celebrate the birth of the Jesus whom the innkeeper turned away.

They will celebrate a narrative that speaks of Jesus as a child with his parents escaping violence to seek asylum in a foreign county. The irony is painful. The U.S.' recent acts at its southern border not only should not be defended by Christians or any person of goodwill, but are themselves deeply inhumane.

"Tear gas has been outlawed as a method of warfare on the battlefield by almost every country in the world, [but] that prohibition does not apply to domestic law enforcement officers using tear gas on their own citizens. The use of this chemical agent, which can cause physical injury, permanent disability and even death, is often excessive, indiscriminate and in violation of civil and human rights. Studies suggest that children are more vulnerable to severe injuries from chemical toxicity: Infants exposed to tear gas can develop severe pneumonitis and require weeks of hospitalization. Using it on a crowd of people who were exercising their right to seek asylum at an international border indeed violated human rights norms." (See *Tear gas should never have been used at the border. It doesn't belong at protests, either*)

In the Hebrew scriptures is an ancient story of a town refusing to show hospitality to protect its affluence from others. The city of Sodom was located in a coveted, fertile region, and, much like the U.S., developed an effective terror strategy to keep foreigners away.

Lot saw two foreigners in his town and invited them to his home for the evening to keep them safe. He hoped to send them secretly on their way at dawn the next day. But what happened that night was terrifying!



"Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn." (Luke 2:4-7)

"The two angels arrived at Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of the city. When he saw them, he got up to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground. 'My lords,' he said, 'please turn aside to your servant's house. You can wash your feet and spend the night and then go on your way early in the morning.' 'No,' they answered, 'we will spend the night in the square.' But he insisted so strongly that they did go with him and entered his house. He prepared a meal for them, baking bread without yeast, and they ate. Before they had gone to bed, all the men from every part of the city

of Sodom—both young and old—surrounded the house. They called to Lot, 'Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them.'" (Genesis 19:1-5)

Typically, Christians use this story to marginalize those who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual. I believe these interpretations miss the mark and are extremely destructive. This story has nothing to do with sexual orientation and everything to do with responding to strangers with violence, in this case sexual violence, when their lives depend on your welcome and hospitality (see Judges 19:11-30; Ezekiel 16:49). The laser beam of conviction in these ancient tales should be directed toward the actions our government is carrying out on our southern border today.

The Jewish followers of Jesus carry on the tradition of hospitality toward strangers, and we find the call to hospitality toward migrant strangers in the Christian scriptures too:

"Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some

people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it." (Hebrews 13:2)

In Matthew's gospel, Jesus names hospitality toward strangers as a mark that distinguishes those who are genuinely following him and those who do so in name only.

"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in." (Matthew 25:35)

Jesus stands in the Jewish tradition of

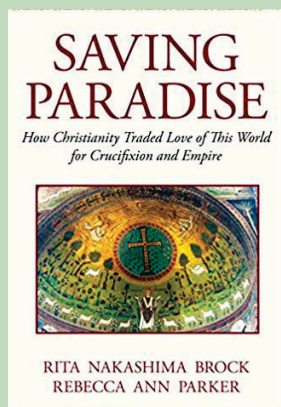
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RHM's 2018 Annual Reading Course Book for December

As we enter the holiday season, I can't think of a more perfect book to finish up our reading course for 2018.

Saving Paradise: How Christianity Traded Love of This World for Crucifixion and Empire
by Rita Nakashima Brock & Rev. Dr. Rebecca Parker

Saving Paradise: How Christianity Traded Love of This World for Crucifixion and Empire restores the idea of Paradise to its rightful place at the center of Christian thought. Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Ann Parker offer a fascinating new lens on the history of Christianity, from its first centuries to the present day, asking how its early vision of beauty evolved into a vision of torture, and what changes in society and theology marked that evolution.



"Brock and Parker urge readers to see church history in a new light, with an eye to-ward social justice. By reemphasizing early Christian's focus on paradise, on the kingdom of God on Earth, the authors are convinced they are reclaiming authentic 'traditional' Christianity. It's a controversial thesis, deserving of debate and study." – Douglas Todd, *Religion News Services*

"Only rarely is a single book an event. This book is such a rarity." – Daniel C. Maguire, author of *A Moral Creed for All Christians*

"Every Christian theologian and preacher should read this book and be profoundly challenged." – James H. Cone, author of *Martin & Malcolm & America*

*You don't have to order this book through Amazon.com, but if you do, please consider using Amazon Smile (smile.amazon.com) and selecting Renewed Heart Ministries as your designated charity for a portion of your purchase to be donated to RHM at no additional cost to you.

present day xenophobia toward contemporary immigrants, including those seeking asylum.

"The *foreigner* residing among you must be *treated as your native-born*. Love them as yourself, for you were *foreigners* in Egypt. I am the LORD your God." (Leviticus 19:34, emphasis added.)

The cherished Sabbath commandments also include the foreigner, and a problematic mention of enslaved people:

"Six days do your work, but on the seventh day do not work, so that your ox and your donkey may rest, and so that the slave born in your household and the *foreigner* living among you may be refreshed." (Exodus 23:12, emphasis added.)

But there are many other instructions about welcoming foreigners too:

"Do not oppress a foreigner; you yourselves know *how it feels* to be foreigners, because you were *foreigners* in Egypt." (Exodus 23:9, emphasis added.)

"Do not mistreat or oppress a foreigner, for you were foreigners in Egypt." (Exodus 22:21, emphasis added.)

"Do not oppress a foreigner." (Exodus 23:9, emphasis added.)

"Cursed is anyone who withholds justice from the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow.' Then all the people shall say, 'Amen!'" (Deuteronomy 27:19, emphasis added.)

"Do not deprive the foreigner or the fatherless of justice, or take the cloak of the widow as a pledge." (Deuteronomy 24:17, emphasis added.)

"YHWH defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing." (Deuteronomy 10:18, emphasis added.)

"The people of the land practice extortion and commit robbery; they oppress the poor and needy and mistreat the foreigner, denying them justice." (Ezekiel 22:29, emphasis added.)

Those people now migrating from

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No Room At the Inn cont'd from page 3

hospitality to strangers in both the Torah and the Hebrew prophets.

"When you have finished setting aside a tenth of all your produce in the third year, the year of the tithe, you shall give it to the Levite, the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow, so that they may eat in your towns and be satisfied." (Deuteronomy 26:12, emphasis added)

"When you are harvesting in your field and you overlook a sheaf, do not go back to get it. Leave it for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. When you beat the olives from your trees, do not go over the branches a second time. Leave what remains for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow. When you harvest the grapes in your vineyard, do not go over the vines again. Leave what remains

for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow." (Deuteronomy 24:19-21, emphasis added)

"At the end of every three years, bring all the tithes of that year's produce and store it in your towns, so that the Levites (who have no allotment or inheritance of their own) and the foreigners, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns may come and eat and be satisfied, and so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands." (Deuteronomy 14:28-29, emphasis added.)

"And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt." (Deuteronomy 10:19, emphasis added.)

Today, many in the U.S. (not all) are participating in the same irony of being decedents of immigrants themselves, while participating in

Continued Matching Contributions for the Month of December

All contributions will continue to be matched throughout December!

We've had such a tremendous response to November's matching contribution drive, our anonymous and very kind supporter wants to extend this rare opportunity throughout December as well, including all year-end contributions.

What does all of this mean for you as someone who supports RHM? It means that as we approach the end of 2018, all contributions through December 31 will be matched. Thanks to this generous offer, every one dollar you contribute to support Renewed



Heart Ministries' work throughout the rest of this year, will be turned into two.

Help us reach our budget goals for 2018, avoid a potential budget shortfall this year, and be able to plan for 2019.

We are beyond thankful for every one of you who support our work.

Make a contribution today.

Every amount helps.

Visit renewedheartministries.com and click "donate."

or mail your contribution to:
Renewed Heart Ministries
P.O. Box 1211
Lewisburg, WV 24901

With much love and gratitude,
Herb Montgomery



Shared Table Pottery Bowl Update

I want to share with each of you a quick update on our Shared Table Pottery Bowls. (see <https://renewedheartministries.com/news/A-Shared-Table-A-Fundraiser-for-Renewed-Heart-Ministries>) They've been bisque fired and glazed. Above you can see Crystal waxing the bottoms just before the glaze was applied. They're going in the kiln this week and we'll be shipping them out shortly!

Wishing each of you a very happy holiday season.

Thank you so much for being a sustaining supporter of RHM's ongoing work.

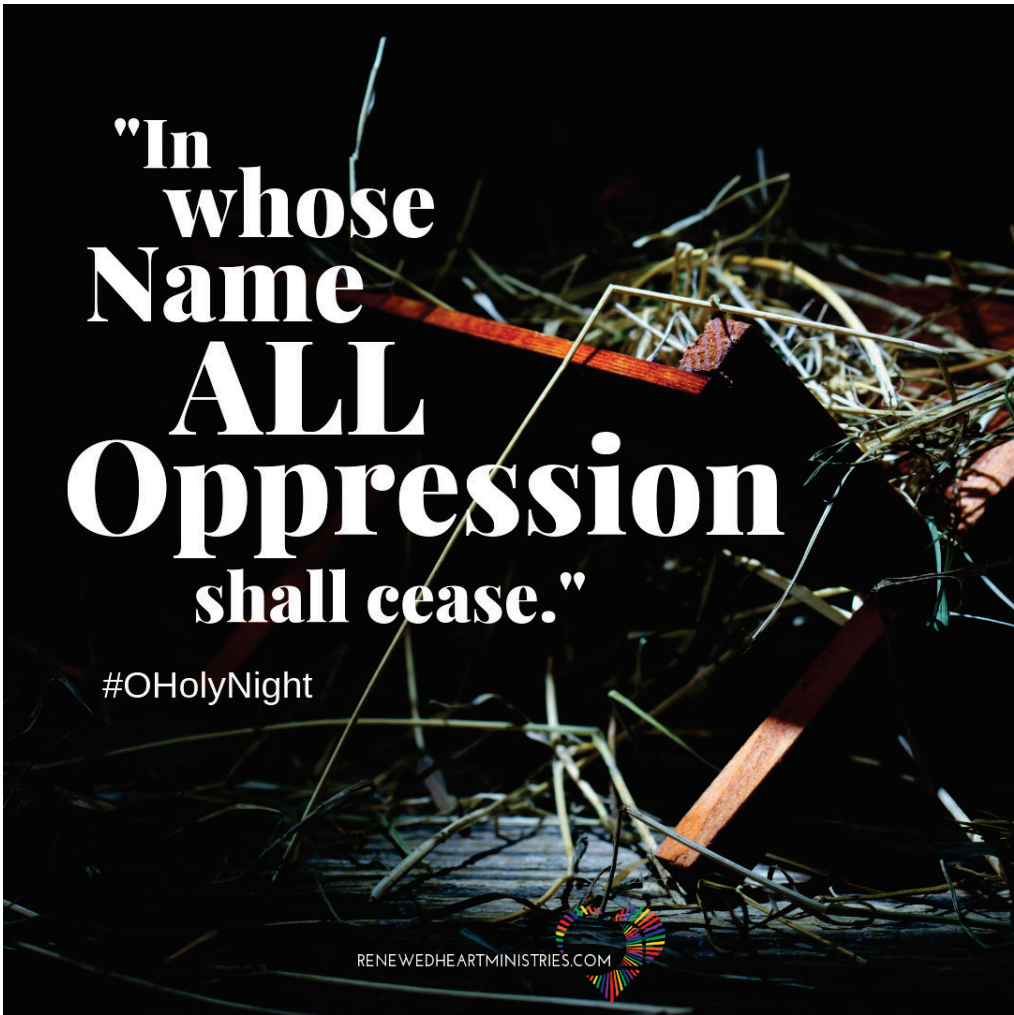


The Jesus For Everyone podcast.

New episodes every Friday!

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.

renewedheartministries.com/Podcasts



"In whose Name ALL Oppression shall cease."

#OHolyNight

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***No Room At the Inn* cont'd from page 4**

Honduras are trying to escape a destabilized society that we created. The U.S. has a long history of destabilizing any country that leans toward socialism or possesses resources we desire.

We also have a long history of creating immigration policies that maintain a White majority. This is a concern born from the myth of White supremacy, which in the U.S. is the mythology of Anglo-Saxons. In the book *Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and the Justice of God*, the Rev. Dr. Kelly Brown Douglas shows how the stand-your-ground values that lead to the murder of citizens of color like Trayvon Martin are the same values at the heart of our racist immigration policies. She quotes historical figures like President Theodore Roosevelt who "became so obsessed with the number of 'new stock' immigrants compared to the low birthrate of 'old stock' Anglo-Saxons that he feared 'race suicide'" (p. 28). President Woodrow Wilson wrote that "our Saxon habits of government" are threatened by the

"corruption of foreign blood" (p. 29). And in 1882, Henry Cabot Lodge wrote, "The question of foreign immigration has of late engaged the most serious attention of the country, and in a constantly increasing degree. The race changes which have begun during the last decade among the immigrants to this country, the growth of the total immigration, and the effects of it upon...the quality of our citizenship, have excited much apprehension and aroused a very deep interest" (p. 29).

Dr. Douglas continues:

"In an article titled 'Whose Country Is This?' President Calvin Coolidge provided a lengthy rationale for restrictive immigration laws. He argued that even though America was an immigrant nation, it could not allow sentimentality to get in the way of it accepting the 'right kind' of immigrant. He explained that it was in the nation's best interest 'to require of all those aliens who come here that they have a background not inconsistent with American institutions.' By now we

know, as Coolidge's readers surely knew, that 'American' meant Anglo-Saxon. Coolidge made this clear when he said, 'Such a background might consist either of a racial tradition or national experience.' He went on to say that just as there was no room in the country for the importation of cheap goods, there was 'no room either for cheap men.' Thus, America was obliged 'to maintain that citizenship at its best.' This meant, for Coolidge, erecting some kind of quota system. He substantiated his bigotry with science. He said, 'Biological laws tell us that certain divergent people will not mix or blend. The Nordics propagate themselves successfully. With other races, the outcome shows deterioration on both sides... Observance of ethnic law is as great a necessity to a nation as immigration law.' The argument put forth by President Coolidge reflected the long-standing fear that was sweeping across the country, one expressed by presidents before him. It was the fear that the Anglo-Saxon would be wiped out in America. (pp. 31-32)

Racist xenophobia is at the heart of what we are witnessing on the southern border of the United States. Yet we are about to celebrate a holiday centered around a baby boy born in a dirty stable rather than a room because an innkeeper wouldn't so much as give up his own bed for a poor man and his pregnant wife. Instead he looked at their state and said, "We have no room." Thank goodness he didn't have tear gas.

"And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn." (Luke 2:7) ■



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<http://bit.ly/RHMSignUp>

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

January-October's

Budget Goal:

\$152,670.00

January-October's

Contributions Received:

\$89,240.11

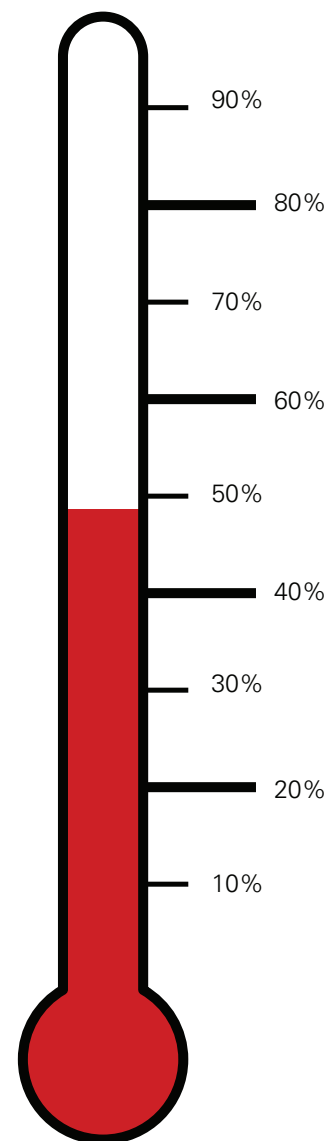
September's Budget Goal:

15,267.00

September's Contributions

Received:

\$9,473.06



**To support the work of RHM and help us grow,
go to renewedheartministries.com and click "donate."
And remember, *during December all donations are being
matched so you can make your support go twice as far!***



#GIVINGTUESDAY™



#GivingTuesday 2018

Thank you for your support during this year's #GivingTuesday. With all of our matching funds donors we raised just under \$6,000 to help Renewed Heart Ministries grow and I can't thank you enough. Our work resonates with so many of you and I'm so thankful for your support. We are looking forward to doing even more in this coming new year.

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 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
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Featured Presentation

This holiday season, as we wrap up 2018 and begin looking ahead toward a new year, we are reminded once again of the work Jesus calls us to engage in making our world distributively just, compassionate and safe for all. Jesus taught us to both work and pray for life to be "on earth as it is in heaven."

This month we are featuring the first presentation in our series on the Lord's prayer by that same very title. It's our hope that your heart will be renewed and your feet inspired to action as we not only celebrate the blessings of this past year, but also deepen our dedication to following Jesus in the year to come. This month's featured presentation – ***On Earth as it is in Heaven*** by Herb Montgomery

