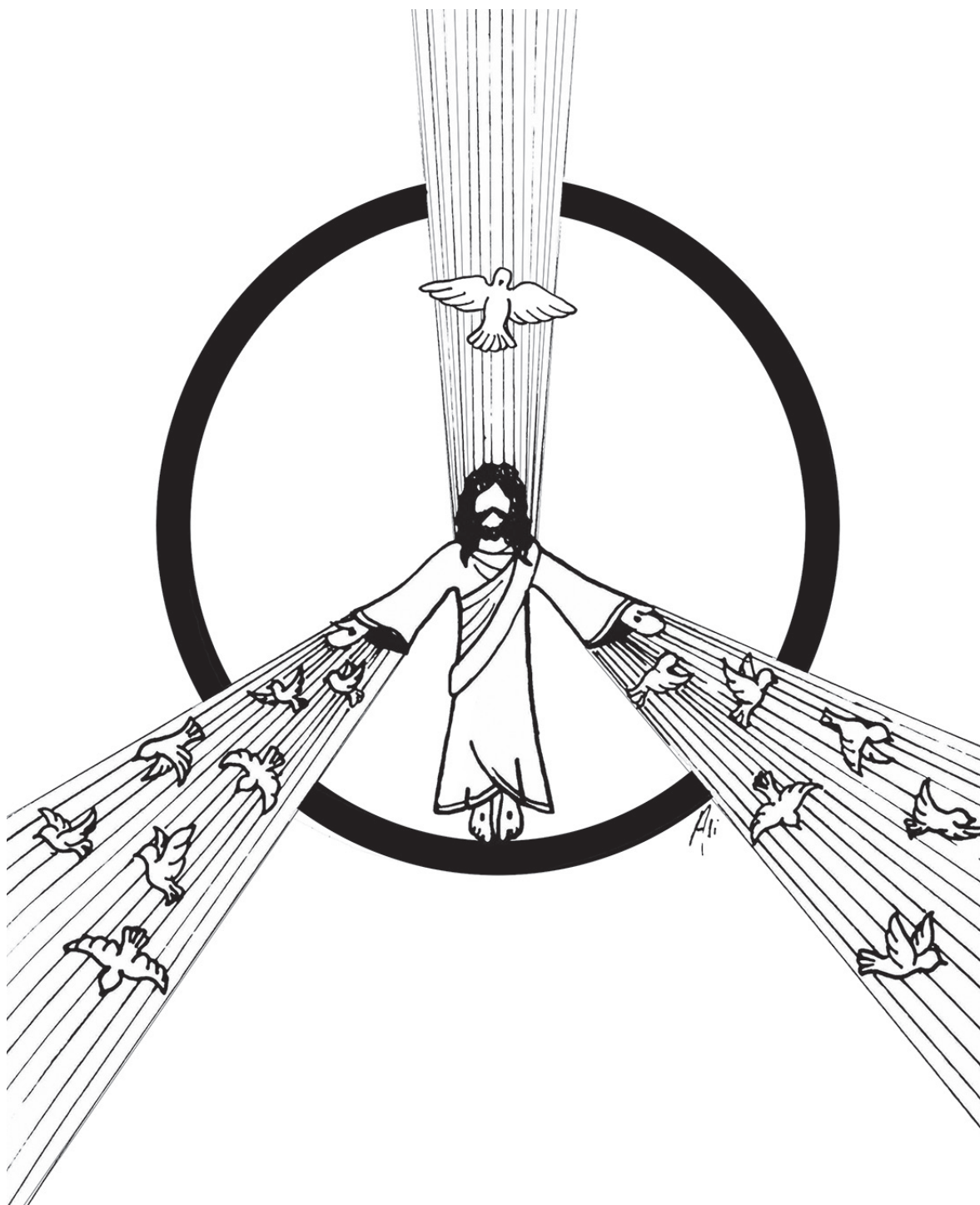


RENEWED
HEART
MINISTRIES



αwakenings

∴ THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF RENEWED HEART MINISTRIES ∴ NOVEMBER 2019 ∴



Inside This Issue:

Page 2

*A Primer on
Self-Affirming,
Nonviolence (Part 10)*

Page 4

*A Shared Table:
Fundraiser for Renewed
Heart Ministries*

Page 5

*Make Your Support of
RHM Go Twice As Far*

*Book of the Month
for November*

Page 6

*RHM's
Social Jesus Blog
on Patheos*

RHM's Free Resources

Page 7

*Budget Thermometer
Jesus for Everyone
Podcast*

Page 8

Featured Presentation

RENEWED HEART MINISTRIES

P.O. Box 1211, Lewisburg, WV 24901

Phone: 304.520.0030

Email: info@renewedheartministries.com

Follow RHM!



@RenewedHeartMin



Renewed Heart Ministries

Follow Herb!



@HerbMontgomery



Herb Montgomery



A Primer on Self Affirming, Nonviolence

(Part 10)

Photo by Jonny McKenna on Unsplash

“Jesus’ form of nonviolence was an act of self-affirmation in a society where one’s self was already being sacrificed. When we interpret nonviolence as self-sacrifice, irreparable harm, even lethal harm, is done to those who survive and those who are victims of violation.”

by Herb Montgomery

Thank you for journeying with us through this series on self-affirming, nonviolent resistance. This is our tenth and final installment. Leaving the objections we’ve addressed, I want to wrap up our time together by summarizing what we’ve learned. I believe that understanding the Jesus of the gospels as teaching self-affirming, nonviolent resistance is a life-giving interpretation.

Let’s begin by summarizing nonviolence itself.

Nonviolence

In Jesus’ vision for social change (what the gospel authors refer to as “the kingdom”), Jesus had certain options. He had seen the results of both violent and nonviolent resistance to Roman oppression. As he weighed the success and failure rates of both approaches, Jesus rejected violence. As the late Walter Wink reminds us:

“The issue, however, is not just which [violence or nonviolence] works better, but also which fails better. While a nonviolent strategy also does not always “work” in terms of preset goals—though in another sense it always “works”—at least the casualties and destruction are far less severe.” (Walter Wink. *Jesus and Nonviolence: A Third Way*, Facets, Kindle Locations 316-318).

Also, the social goals that Jesus was endeavoring to plant the seeds for in his own community cannot be achieved through violence: “Violence can beget fear, stalemate, annihilation, dominance,

or more violence, but it cannot beget love, justice, abundant life, community, or peace.” (Rita Nakashima Brock & Rebecca Parker; *Saving Paradise: How Christianity Traded Love of This World for Crucifixion and Empire*, p. 13)

Others have also recognized the impossibility of using means that contradict the ends we are trying to achieve. As Audre Lorde wrote:

“For the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change.” (Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, p. 112)

The 1st Century Judea and Galilee had both seen violent and nonviolent acts of resistance. Jesus’ gospel was not only a gospel of liberation but also one of surviving and being able to achieve a quality of life once that liberation was accomplished. What good is liberation if your entire people and culture and way of life are wiped out in the process?

Jesus’ supreme value was not simply the rejection of violence but, more, the goal of arriving at a just society. Correcting the societal roots of systemic injustice was his passion. This is important. If rejecting violence is your highest moral goal, and justice is secondary, this has too often led to a passive response to injustice rather than acts of resistance and non-violent noncooperation.

“Violence is not an absolute evil to be avoided at all costs. It is not even the main problem, but only the presenting

symptom of an unjust society. And peace is not the highest good; it is rather the outcome of a just social order.” (Walter Wink. *Jesus and Nonviolence: A Third Way*, Facets; Kindle Locations 493-495)

Lastly, nonviolence is rooted in the value of maintaining a love for one’s enemy. Love for one’s enemy should not be interpreted as accepting enemies’ behavior, actions, or choices. Love of enemy is the choice to hold on to your enemy’s humanity. As human beings, we are all still part of one another. We still belong to each other. Nonviolence enables us to find a balance where we stop or obstruct our enemy’s actions but remain characteristically unlike our enemies in our methods. Love of one’s enemy also holds space for and adds pressure towards our enemies making better decisions than they are presently making:

“With one hand we say to one who is angry, or to an oppressor, or to an unjust system, ‘Stop what you are doing. I refuse to honor the role you are choosing to play. I refuse to obey you. I refuse to cooperate with your demands. I refuse to build the walls and the bombs. I refuse to pay for the guns. With this hand, I will even interfere with the wrong you are doing. I want to disrupt the easy pattern of your life.’ But then the advocate of nonviolence raises the other hand. It is raised outstretched – maybe with love and sympathy, maybe not – but always outstretched...With this hand, we say, ‘I won’t let go of you or cast you out of the human race. I have faith that you can make a better choice than you are making now, and I’ll be here when you

continued on page 3

are ready. Like it or not, we are part of one another.'" (Barbara Deming, *Revolution & Equilibrium*, page 224)

Resistance

As we covered in Part 4, Jesus' teachings on nonviolence were rooted in an attempt to provide nonviolent forms of protest, noncooperation, and resistance to injustice, both personal and systemic. Culturally, turning the cheek was a refusal to accept one's marginalized or lower social class position and treatment. Handing over your remaining article of clothing was using public nudity as a form of protest, and going the second mile was a refusal to play by the rules of one's oppressors. Today, ignoring tone-policing or respectability politics is a similar refusal to play by the rules of an unjust status quo.

Self-Affirming

Finally, Jesus' form of nonviolence was an act of self-affirmation in a society where one's self was already being sacrificed. When we interpret nonviolence as self-sacrifice, irreparable harm, even lethal harm, is done to those who survive and those who are victims of violation. As we've said, defining Jesus' nonviolence as self-sacrificial is rooted in interpreting Jesus' cross as an act of self-sacrifice, as a submission to death rather than a defiant refusal to let go of life.

Remember, those in positions of power and privilege use both metaphorical and literal crosses to keep those who are being violated silent. Jesus taught us not to remain silent, but to speak our truth even if threatened with a cross. Far from being passive or submissive, Jesus' call to take up the cross was the call to join him in self-affirming resistance to injustice regardless of dire threats. Again, to quote Brown and Parker:

"It is not the acceptance of suffering that gives life; it is commitment to life that gives life. The question, moreover, is not Am I willing to suffer? but Do I desire fully to live? This distinction is subtle and, to some, specious, but in the end it makes a great difference in how people interpret and respond to suffering." (Brown & Parker, *Patriarchy, Christianity and Abuse*, p. 18)

Jesus' cheek defiance, naked protest, and refusal to play by the rules of oppressors were not self-sacrificial, but a means of reclaiming and affirming one's humanity when those in power ignored or denied it.

Jesus' teachings on nonviolence should not be interpreted as self-sacrifice but as self-affirmation in the face of violence.

Over the last ten installments, I've shared my belief that Jesus' form of nonviolence is much more life-giving when we interpret it as self-affirming, nonviolent resistance. Thank you to each of you who read, listened, wrote in, or commented online about how this series was making a difference for you. I'm so glad you have been here.

We must allow more destructive interpretations of Jesus to give way to more life-giving interpretations. This I believe is in harmony with the spirit of his life and teachings. The movement born out of his life once gave hope to the most marginalized and discarded of his society. May all those who take his name today reject violence, including the violent forms of religiosity that have been created in his name. May we work toward healing and reparations for all those whom certain strands of Christianity have harmed.

Jesus taught the rejection of violence.

Jesus taught self-affirmation for the marginalized.

Jesus taught resistance for those whose humanity was being violated.

May those who follow this Jewish Galilean prophet of the poor today do the same.

HeartGroup Application

Share with your group how this series has affirmed, challenged, or deepened how you presently follow Jesus.

Are there any new practices that this series has brought to your attention that you are implementing in how you live out the ethics of love, justice, and compassion? Share with your group.

How has your HeartGroup itself grown in its collective understanding of nonviolence? Has it changed even some of the ways you communicate with each other?

Wherever you are, keep choosing love, compassion, action, and reparative and distributive justice.

Another world is possible if we choose it.

Don't forget, we need your support here at RHM to continue making a difference.

To do so, please go to renewedheartministries.com and click "Donate."

I love each of you dearly.

Thank you for your support. ■



Photo by Chloe S. on Unsplash



It's time for our second annual *A Shared Table: A Fundraiser for Renewed Heart Ministries!*

I recently received this note from one of our listeners:

"I have been listening to you for several years. You were placed in my life as I was reclaimed by a God of Love. Now years later, your activism, highlights of others, and work on LGBTQIA has helped me as I have gone through a traumatic year. Resilience is born in struggle, I have seen both deep compassion and deep violent responses born from deeper trauma poured out in my life over the last year. After a year of turmoil filled with deep conflicts on how to live out life maintaining lovingly understanding in one area and actively lovingly fighting violence with appropriate limits. I count you as a voice that has actively blessed me in this struggle. Now I can also count you as an advocate for my children who I strongly believe will be able to hold in there hearts that God loves them no matter where on the spectrum they express the image of God. Thank you for your work."

It's real lives like these, real hearts being renewed and encouraged, that your support enables us to impact. What you're making possible is the gift of hope for so many.

You're also helping Christians be better humans.

In the gospels Jesus modeled for us a way of practicing community

in the shape of a shared table. With a preferential option for the most vulnerable among us, this way of living is rooted in a posture of caring and listening. We believe the result will be a world that becomes a safer, just, more compassionate home for everyone. These pottery bowls are a symbol of Jesus' shared table.

You can use this pottery bowl and be reminded of the shared table as a means of healing the hurts in our world. Or you could simply place it on your side table or work desk as a conversation starter. When asked about it you can share with them Jesus' shared table, and even direct them to RHM to find out more. That way you can partner with us in even more ways to spread the message of love, compassion, justice, sharing and taking care of one another.

To get your own RHM Shared Table Pottery Bowl (made by Crystal and myself) all you have to do is become one of our sustaining partners by setting up an *automated reoccurring monthly donation* on our website *during the months of November or December.*

To do this, go to renewedheartministries.com/donate/. There's no minimum amount. And of course, you can pledge as

much as you'd like, as well. Just make sure you select "Check this box to make it a monthly recurring donation", or if you are using Paypal, check "Make this a monthly donation." These types of subscriptions sustain our work throughout the year and allow us to make ministry plans for 2020.

And if you are *already* one of our sustaining partners making a monthly automated donation each month, you don't have to do a thing. We want to honor your existing continual support of Renewed Heart Ministries.

At the end of December we'll send you one of RHM's *Shared Table Pottery Bowls* so you can join in sharing the message of a shared table, too.

Thank you in advance for your support. Now you'll be able to help us even more by putting your RHM Shared Table Pottery Bowl on display, and when the conversation comes up, tell folks all about Jesus' vision for a world shaped in the form of a shared table and send them our direction to find out more.

Crystal and I are so excited to be offering these bowls again this year as a visual representation of a safer, more compassionate, and just world. We, here at RHM, believe that following Jesus creates such a world.

Get your *Shared Table Pottery Bowl* today by going to:

renewedheartministries.com/donate





Photo by Priscilla du Preez on Unsplash

Make your support of RHM go twice as far!

November and December are traditionally months within our year for gratitude and thankfulness to be expressed. This year, a group of our supporters want to express their gratitude for RHM once again in a concrete and tangible way.

"I believe in the work RHM is doing, and we want to make sure this work continues."

These were the words of one of these very kind and generous supporters whom I spoke with on the phone recently. They wish to remain anonymous, and they have together pledged to match every donation during the month of November made to Renewed Heart Ministries, dollar for dollar, up to \$40,000.

Seeing in our monthly newsletter *Awakenings* that RHM was facing a potential budget shortfall this year, they not only wanted to help, they want to see us *grow*.

What does all of this mean for you as someone who is also a supporter and

partner with RHM? It means that for the months of November and December, you can make your support go **twice as far**.

Thanks to this generous offer, every one dollar you give to Renewed Heart Ministries during November and December, will be doubled!

Here at the end of 2019 you can make your support of RHM's work go further than it does at any other time of the year!

Help us reach our budget goals for 2019 and be able to plan for 2020. For those of you who will also sign up to be one of our automated donors during our second annual *A Shared Table: A Fundraiser for Renewed Heart Ministries*, your contributions for November and December will also be matched.

We are beyond thankful for all of our supporters who believe in our work and partner with us to continue being a voice for change both within the church and in our larger society!

Thank you in advance for taking advantage of these very generous offers for RHM.

Make a contribution today.

Every amount helps.

Together we are making a difference.

Another word is possible if we choose it.

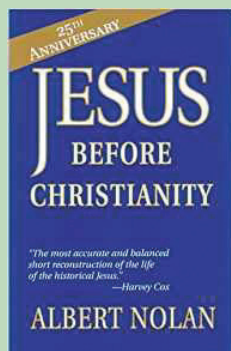
Book of the Month for November 2019

Jesus Before Christianity

by Albert Nolan

Nolan's portrait introduces readers to Jesus as He was before He became enshrined in doctrine, dogma, and ritual, a man deeply involved with the real problems of His time, which are the real problems of our time as well. In a new preface, Nolan reflects on recent work in Christology and how a book written in South Africa in 1976 still has a message for people today.

[If you order this book through amazon.com, 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.]



RHM's "Social Jesus" Blog on Patheos

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/



Jesus' Gehenna in the Context of Social Justice

We are to oppose injustice and resist oppression. Let's do it together in a way that isn't suicidal but could allow us to survive to enjoy that liberation. There are no guarantees. And remaining passive is not an acceptable option.

Read more at: patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2019/10/jesus-gehenna-context-social-justice/



When Truth Comes To Light, It Doesn't Do So On Its Own

It is in our "speaking in the light" what we have "heard in the dark" that we make true the statement, "Nothing is covered up that will not be exposed."

Read more at patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2019/10/when-truth-comes-to-light-it-doesnt-do-so-on-its-own/



This Generation Will Be Held Responsible For It All

What would it mean in our context today to hear Jesus saying those same words to Evangelicals today: "This generation

will be held responsible for it all."

Read more at patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2019/10/this-generation-will-be-held-responsible-for-it-all/



It's Easier to Build Monuments

It is easier to build monuments than to work toward the kind of world these visionaries envisioned could be. Christianity, too often, has done just that.

Read more at patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2019/10/easier-build-monuments/



Prioritizing Justice and Compassion for the Marginalized

This means that my actions toward others are my faith. They don't just reflect it. That means that, in this life, the closest I will ever come to the Divine, is YOU! I want my faith to bear fruit and my focus to be right here on Planet Earth with you.

Read more at patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2019/10/prioritizing-justice-compassion/



How We See Others

When we choose to neglect this basic step in how we are seeing others, it does not matter what we claim to be—light bearer or reflector—the light we claim to possess is not life-giving, but destructive.

Read more at patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2019/10/how-we-see-others/



Beatitude for Those Who Perceive God in the Othered

But all of this drives home the point. This reformulation is the result of what the vulnerable see! Those in positions of privilege and power in our society are so indoctrinated and socialized that they don't even see what is so wrong and dangerous about the traditional description of love-as-atoning sacrifice.

Read more at patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2019/08/god-othered/

Are you getting RHM's *free* resources in your inbox?

Sign up today so you don't miss a thing! Visit renewedheartministries.com and click "Sign Up!"



2019 Full Year Budget Goal:
\$185,000.00

Jan.-Sept. Budget Goal:
\$138,753.00

Jan.-Sept.
Contributions Received:
\$63,208.89

Sept. Contributions Goal:
\$15,417.00

Sept. Contributions Received:
\$5,850.04

Renewed Heart Ministries is a nonprofit organization working for a world of love and justice. We need your support to bring the kind of resources and analysis RHM provides.

Intersections between faith, love, compassion, and justice are needed now more than ever.

Help Christians be better humans.

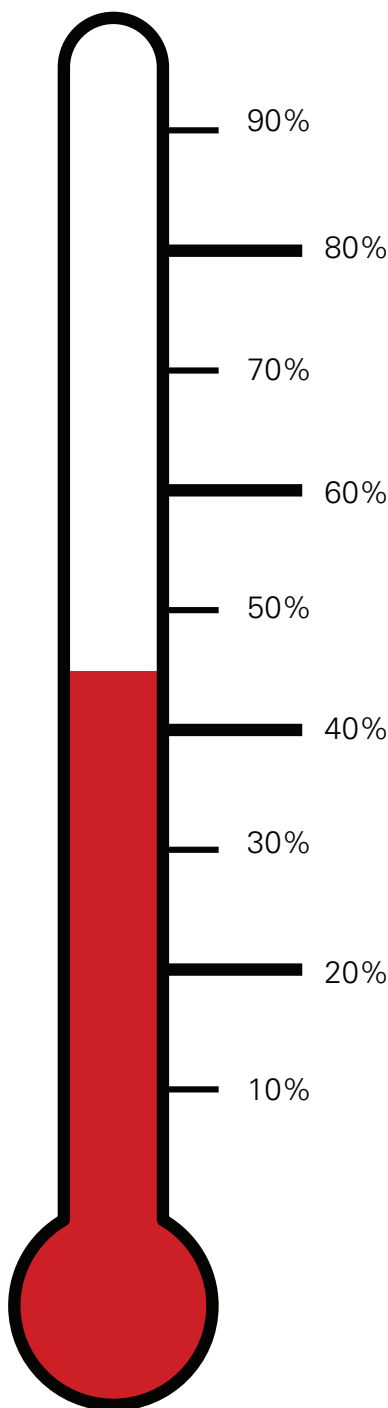
Please consider making a tax-deductible donation to Renewed Heart Ministries, today.

To do so online go to renewedheartministries.com and click "Donate." Or if you prefer to make a donation by mail, our address is:

Renewed Heart Ministries
PO Box 1211
Lewisburg, WV 24901

**Whether you give
\$5 or \$5,000,
every amount helps us
continue our work.**

And to those of you out there who are already supporting this ministry, I want to say thank you. We could not continue being a voice for change without your support.



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

Quotable Quotes

"Jesus' entire ministry of healing the sick, caring for the poor, and forgiving sinners can be said to be a demonstration of restorative justice."

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

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
HEART
MINISTRIES



Featured Presentation

Jacquelyn Grant, in her classic *White Women's Christ and Black Women's Jesus* rightly states, "Theology as developed in Europe and America is limited when it approaches the majority of human beings." Much can be learned when we learn to listen to the perspectives and wisdom of those who exist on the margins of

our present society. This month, it is our hope that your heart will be renewed and that you will be inspired to participate in following Jesus more deeply alongside those already doing so on the edges.

Jesus From The Edges by Herb Montgomery.



**"FROM MY OWN LIFE
EXPERIENCE, I CAN ATTEST
THAT WE HAVE COME A
LONG WAY TOWARD
UNIVERSAL JUSTICE IN
THIS COUNTRY, BUT WE
ARE NOT THERE YET."**

REP. ELIJAH EUGENE CUMMINGS
JANUARY 18, 1951 - OCTOBER 17, 2019

RENEWEDHEARTMINISTRIES.COM