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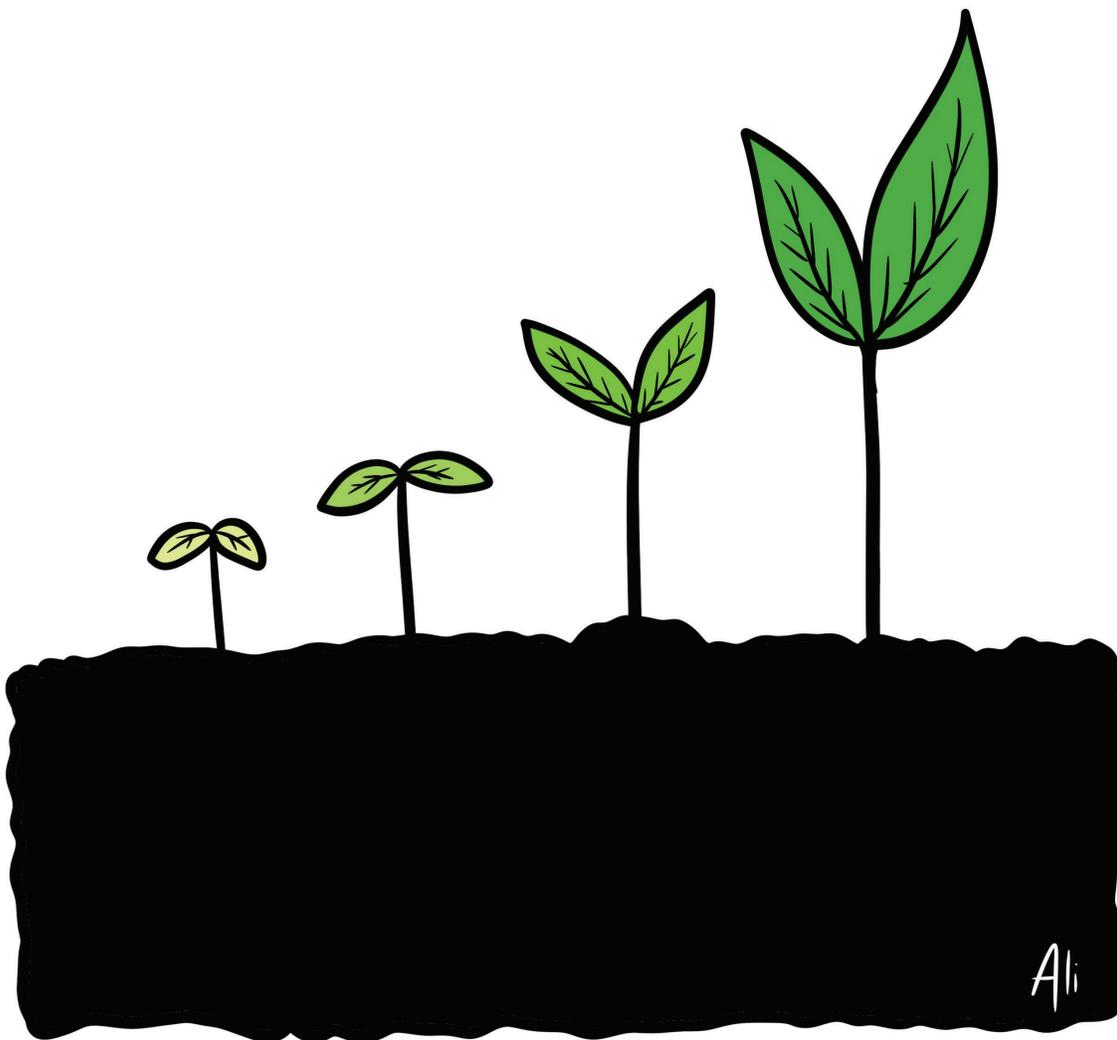
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We want to take this moment to express our heartfelt gratitude to all of our supporters for your invaluable role in the Renewed Heart Ministry community and for your dedication to our mission of fostering love, justice, compassion, and healing. Your support is the bedrock of our work. Your support empowers us to do what we do. At a time when ministries like ours are being asked to achieve more with fewer resources, **your support is incredibly important, and we want to simply say thank you.** Whether in our larger society or within our local faith communities, Renewed Heart Ministries remains committed to advocating for change, working towards a world that is inclusive, just, and safe for everyone, and being a source of love in our

world. From all of us here at Renewed Heart Ministries, thank you for your generous support. **We deeply appreciate each and every one of our supporters.**

If you'd like to join them in supporting our work, please go to: [renewedheartministries.com](http://renewedheartministries.com) and **click on "Donate"** or **you can mail your support to:** Renewed Heart Ministries, PO Box 1211, Lewisburg, WV 24901

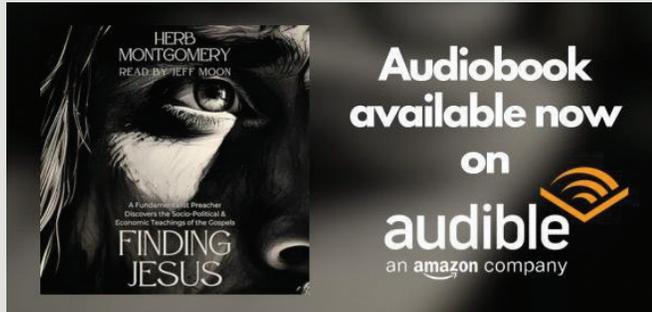


## HeartGroup on Zoom Every Wednesday Night!

Each Wednesday evening, Glendale City Church hosts a Zoom-HeartGroup led by Herb Montgomery. Our discussion each week will focus on the content in Renewed Heart Ministries weekly eSight articles and the *Social Jesus* podcast published each Friday.

Each Zoom session will be held on Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m. Pacific/10:00 p.m. Eastern.

To receive the link for the Zoom meeting, email us at: [info@renewedheartministries.com](mailto:info@renewedheartministries.com)



## Audiobook Now Available on Audible!

*Finding Jesus: A Fundamentalist Preacher Discovers the Socio-Political & Economic Teachings of the Gospels* (2nd Edition)

by Herb Montgomery

In *Finding Jesus*, author Herb Montgomery delves into the profound and often overlooked political dimensions of the gospels. Through meticulous analysis of biblical texts, historical context, and social discourse, this thought-provoking book unveils the gospels' socio-political, economic teachings as rooted in a profound concern for justice, compassion, and the well-being of the marginalized. The book navigates the intersections between faith and societal justice, presenting a compelling argument for a more socially engaged and transformative Christianity. Readers will journey

through the Gospel narratives, discovering the ways in which the Jesus of these stories challenged the political and religious establishments of his time. Herb Montgomery draws parallels between the societal issues faced by the people of Jesus' era and the challenges of the present day, sparking reflection on the role of faith in addressing contemporary political and social issues. *Finding Jesus* is not just a scholarly exploration; it is a call to action. It challenges readers to reevaluate their understanding of Christianity's role in public life and to consider how the radical teachings of the gospels can inspire a renewed commitment to justice, equality, and compassion. This book is a must-read for those seeking a deeper understanding of the social implications of Christian faith and a blueprint for building a more just and inclusive society.

Front cover artwork by Ali Montgomery.



## Hope Despite Appearances

by Herb Montgomery

Our reading is from the gospel of Mark: He also said, “This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.”

Again he said, “What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade.”

With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand. He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything. (Mark 4:26-34)

One of the only things scholars agree on about the historical Jesus is that he taught in parables. This version of this parable is only in Mark and is believed to be the earliest version. (Matthew adds the element of the enemy who sows the tares; see Matthew 13:24-30.)

The parable borrows from imagery in

the Hebrew prophetic justice tradition and puts a positive spin on it. In Joel, the imagery is used to explain how wickedness or injustice in our world grows:

“Swing the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, trample the grapes, for the winepress is full and the vats overflow—so great is their wickedness!” (Joel 3:13)

In the gospels, Jesus repeatedly uses this same imagery, and to illustrate how justice can grow as well. He also borrows other imagery from the Hebrew prophets. Consider this verse used to describe Egypt:

“The waters nourished it, deep springs made it grow tall; their streams flowed all around its base and sent their channels to all the trees of the field. So it towered higher than all the trees of the field; its boughs increased and its branches grew long, spreading because of abundant waters. All the birds of the sky nested in its boughs, all the animals of the wild gave birth under its branches; all the great nations lived in its shade.” (Ezekiel 31:4-6)

The prophets use this same imagery of Babylon too:

“Its leaves were beautiful, its fruit abundant, and on it was food for all. Under it the wild animals found shelter, and the birds lived in its branches; from it every creature was fed...The tree you saw, which grew large and strong, with its top touching the sky, visible to the whole earth, with beautiful leaves and abundant fruit, providing food for all, giving shelter to the wild animals, and having nesting places in its branches for the birds—Your Majesty, you are that tree! You have become great and strong; your greatness has grown until it reaches the sky, and your dominion extends to distant parts of the earth.” (Daniel 4:12, 20-22)

The book of Ezekiel takes this common imagery and uses it to inspire hope in a promise to restore the nation of Israel:

“This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself will take a shoot from the very top of a cedar and plant it; I will break off a tender sprig from its topmost shoots and plant it on a high and lofty mountain. On the mountain heights of Israel I will plant it; it will produce branches and bear fruit and become a splendid cedar. *Birds of every kind will nest in it; they will find shelter in the shade of its branches.*” (Ezekiel 17:22-23, emphasis added.)

This imagery describes a world where everyone has enough to thrive and feels safe. Micah describes that world as one where:

Everyone will sit under their own vine and under their own fig tree, and no one will make them afraid. (Micah 4:4)

The gospels take all of this prophetic imagery and apply it to Jesus’ vision for a society (the gospels refer to it as the kingdom or the reign of God) where his justice teachings if followed would create a world where everyone had enough, no one is marginalized, and everyone is safe and thrives. The vision is centered in transforming our present world, not getting to heaven. It’s meant to inspire hope in those who were endeavoring to follow Jesus’ justice teachings when Mark was written for those within the Markan community.

I also love how the seed that causes this

*continued on page 4*

# RHM's Recommended Reading for July

## *The False White Gospel: Rejecting Christian Nationalism, Reclaiming True Faith, and Refounding Democracy*

by Jim Wallis (Author),  
Eddie Glaude (Foreword)

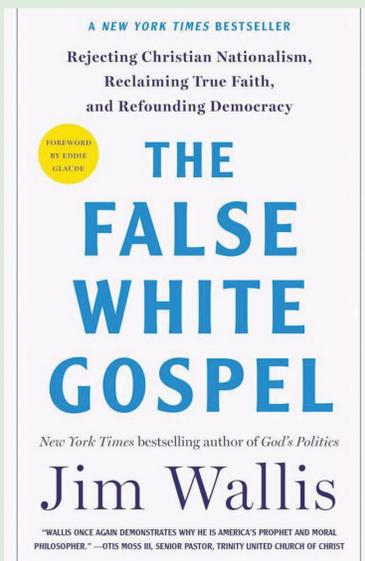
NOW A NEW YORK TIMES AND A  
USA TODAY BESTSELLER

*"Everyone who claims to be 'Christian' or else claims to be upset by 'Christianity' needs to read this book, especially politicians using people's supposed faith for their own ends." —Margaret E. Atwood*

*"Jim Wallis calls the nation to grow up and he calls us all to fight the love battle to save the soul of America." —From the Foreword by Eddie S. Glaude, Jr.*

A major new work by the New York Times bestselling author, arguing that the answer to bad religion is true faith that will help refound democracy.

It is time says Jim Wallis, to call out genuine faith—specifically the "Christian" in White Christian Nationalism—inviting all who can be persuaded to reject and help dismantle a false gospel that propagates white supremacy and autocracy. We need—to raise up the



faith of all of us, and help those who are oblivious, stuck, and captive to the ideology and idolatry of White Christian Nationalism that is leading us to such great danger. Wallis turns our attention to six iconic texts at the heart of what genuine biblical faith means and what Jesus, in the gospels, has called us to do. It is time to ask anew: do we believe these teachings or not?

This book isn't only for Christians but for all faith traditions, and even those with no faith at all. When we see a civic promotion of fear, hate, and violence for the trajectory of our politics, we need a civic faith of love, healing, and hope to defeat it. And that must involve all of us—religious or not. Learning to practice a politics of neighbor love will be central to the future of democracy in America. And more than ever, the words of Jesus ring, "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

farmers were diligent in removing it from their fields, it would eventually take over the entire space. This nods to the way those in power viewed Jesus' teachings of equity, justice, inclusion, and wealth redistribution prioritizing the poor as negative and something to be weeded out. Jesus and his teachings were not looked at as good news by this powerful, propertied, and privileged group. They viewed Jesus's teachings and those who followed those teachings as a threat.

In the story, Jesus is eventually weeded out. He is crucified. But his teaching, like the mustard seed, still continue to grow and spread from the actions of his followers. This reminds me of how the late Peter Gomes described the gospel as not good news for everyone. It was good news to those in a certain social, political, and economic location, but deeply problematic for others.

"When the gospel says, 'The last will be first, and the first will be last,' despite the fact that it is counterintuitive to our cultural presuppositions, it is invariably good news to those who are last, and at least problematic news to those who see themselves as first." (Peter J. Gomes, *The Scandalous Gospel of Jesus: What's So Good About the Good News?*, p. 42).

Again, this vision is strikingly focused on changing our present world, not escaping it. It illustrates the difference between what is too often a gospel about Jesus and the gospel that Jesus himself actually taught. If Jesus' gospel was only about obtaining heaven in an afterlife, the hope of one day escaping this world, but being resigned to this world the way it presently is, then Jesus' gospel would truly have been good news for everyone. If it had only been about grace and faith and heaven, those benefiting from an unjust status quo would have felt no threat.

But what we perceive in these parables is that Jesus' teachings were about more than grace, faith, and heaven. They were about shaping and transforming our present world into a safe, compassionate, just home for everyone. This gospel focused on changing our present world and this is why it was so threatening to those benefitting from the unjust shape of their society.

Lastly, what I love about the parable in our reading this week is how the seed grows. How justice grows is often mysterious. Sometimes you can trace the cause and effect, but not always. How seeds became large plants was a mystery to those who lived before science could explain such things. (Although, those who garden today may still acknowledge some mystery, even with science.)

*continued on page 6*

**Hope...** continued from page 3

growth is a "mustard" seed. Mustard doesn't grow into large trees where birds inhabit its branches and people sit for shelter. Jesus is using irony by describing a just and safe world being started from the most impossible of sources: a mustard. It's unexpected, but there is also more.

In Jesus' world, the mustard plant was not considered a plant but a weed. It was such a pervasive weed that, unless

# SOCIAL JESUS

*A Blog Exploring the Intersection of Faith and Societal Justice*



## Last month's "Social Jesus" Blog on Patheos



### ***Preferential Options and Patriarchy, Part 1***

In our justice work, understanding our social locations in the society we have created is important. Social location affects everyone.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/06/preferential-optionspatriarchy-part1/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/06/preferential-optionspatriarchy-part1/)

### ***Preferential Options and Patriarchy, Part 2***

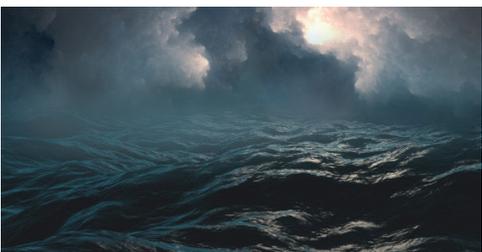
The story, at first, pretends to affirm the social assumption that if we practice preferential options there won't be enough for everyone.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/06/preferential-optionspatriarchy-part2/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/06/preferential-optionspatriarchy-part2/)

### ***Preferential Options and Patriarchy, Part 3***

By placing the woman alongside the little girl the story also calls us to reject preferential options practiced within patriarchy.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/06/preferential-optionspatriarchy-part3/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/06/preferential-optionspatriarchy-part3/)



### ***When the Wind and Waves Threaten Justice, Part 1***

Mark's gospel uses multiple boat journeys.

Some of these, like the one we are considering this week, are metaphors.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/06/when-wind-waves-threaten-justice-part1/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/06/when-wind-waves-threaten-justice-part1/)

### ***When the Wind and Waves Threaten Justice, Part 2***

There will be moments when the winds and waves of opposition to making our world a safer home for everyone rise up and threaten progress.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/06/when-wind-waves-threaten-justice-part2/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/06/when-wind-waves-threaten-justice-part2/)

### ***When the Wind and Waves Threaten Justice, Part 3***

Working toward justice continues to mean facing winds and waves from those who benefit from an unjust world.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/06/when-wind-waves-threaten-justice-part3/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/06/when-wind-waves-threaten-justice-part3/)



### ***Hope Despite Appearances, Part 1***

This imagery describes a world where everyone has enough to thrive and feels safe. It was used to inspire hope.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/06/hope-despite-appearances-part1/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/06/hope-despite-appearances-part1/)

### ***Hope Despite Appearances, Part 2***

This hope is strikingly focused on changing our world, not escaping it; a just and safe world sprouting from the unlikeliest beginnings.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/06/hope-despite-appearances-part2/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/06/hope-despite-appearances-part2/)

### ***Hope Despite Appearances, Part 3***

We don't have to understand how seeds work to plant seeds, we don't have to understand how our world is going to be put right to act in hope.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/06/hope-despite-appearances-part3/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/06/hope-despite-appearances-part3/)



### ***Labelling Social Justice as Dangerous, Part 1***

As complicated as this language is for us today, inspiring fear of social justice efforts is something we are familiar with.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/04/resurrection-injustice-undone-part1/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/04/resurrection-injustice-undone-part1/)

### ***Labelling Social Justice as Dangerous, Part 2***

Their tactic is nothing new: Inspire the masses with fear of the very social justice that could be the means of life-giving change for them

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/06/labelling-social-justice-as-dangerous-part2/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/06/labelling-social-justice-as-dangerous-part2/)

### ***Labelling Social Justice as Dangerous, Part 3***

These stories should move us to help, not oppose, the social justice work of those presently laboring to make our world safer and just.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/06/labelling-social-justice-as-dangerous-part3/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/06/labelling-social-justice-as-dangerous-part3/)

## *Just Talking* with Herb and Todd

Each week, we'll be talking about the gospel lectionary reading for the upcoming weekend. We'll be talking about each reading in the context of love, inclusion, and societal justice. Our hope is that our talking will be just talking (as in justice) and that during our brief conversations each week you'll be inspired to also do more than just talking.

If you teach from the lectionary each week, or if you're just looking for some thoughts on the Jesus story from a more progressive perspective within the context of social justice, check it out, you might like it.

You can find the latest show on **YouTube** @**herbandtoddjusttalking**.

Please Like, Subscribe, hit the Notification button, and leave us a comment. All of this will help us get this new YouTube channel off the ground.

Thanks in advance for watching!

## *What viewers are saying...*

"I'm definitely enjoying these discussions. Helps clearly bring the love and teachings of Jesus into focus for me."



### *Hope...* continued from page 4

The lesson is that, just as we don't have to understand how seeds work in order to plant the seeds, we don't always have to understand how our world is going to be put right to take the first steps in reshaping it. Many times, the road to justice is made as we travel it. How justice is achieved from the modest beginnings of grassroots movements is often a path with twist and turns that surprise us and could not have been predicted. There is mystery in how our combined justice efforts combine with others' justice efforts to create something that is often greater and more beautiful than the sum of all its parts.

You don't have to understand how our world is going to put right to be engaged in making our world right. Just plant the seeds. Just take action and then watch how those actions grow. Sometimes we allow our lack of understanding how something could possible even happen to rob us of the very hope that would inspire us to take the actions that would make that thing possible. But you don't have to understand how, just do it!

Hope doesn't require being able to explain the how. Hope can often only exist in the soil of mystery. Yes, there may be mystery about how justice will grow if we invest our efforts, but despite appearances, we can still take action, we can still have hope. Despite appearances, even if our effort is as small as a mustard seed and surrounded by mystery, justice can prevail.

### **Discussion Group Questions**

1. Share something that spoke to you from this week's eSight/Podcast episode with your discussion group.
2. What is giving you hope presently? Share and discuss with your group.
3. What can you do this week, big or small, to continue setting in motion the work of shaping our world into a safe, compassionate, just home for everyone?

Thanks for checking in with us, today.

I want to say a special thank you to all of our supporters out there. And if you would like to join them in supporting Renewed Heart Ministries' work you can do so by going to

[renewedheartministries.com](http://renewedheartministries.com) and clicking *donate*.

As always, you can find Renewed Heart Ministries each week on X (or Twitter), Facebook, Instagram and Meta's Threads. If you haven't done so already, please follow us on your chosen social media platforms for our daily posts.

If you would like to listen to these articles each week in podcast form, you can find The Social Jesus podcast on all major podcast carriers. If you enjoy listening to The Social Jesus Podcast please take a moment to like and subscribe and if your podcast platform offers this option, consider taking some time to leave us a positive review. This helps others find our podcast as well.

And if you'd like to reach us here at Renewed Heart Ministries through email, you can reach us at [info@renewedheartministries.com](mailto:info@renewedheartministries.com).

Right where you are, keep living in love, choosing compassion, taking action, and working toward justice.

I love each of you dearly. ■

# A Battle Cry For Palestine

by L. Hagan (HeartGroup Member)

I've been thinking of how fast  
A blast can take off an infant's head.  
And how sitting down to dinner  
Can cost you your house, or your life.

Ask yourself what is louder,  
The wail of a rocket or the keening  
Of a mother over her lifeless child?  
All of those images, thundering like  
The bombs that have blown them up.

But also deafening is the man crying  
An ocean away for kids who wake up  
To a world that looks like an empty crater,  
With no mother, father, sister, brother.

Blaring are the sounds of the protesters  
Although nobody seems to hear and  
No one joins those children, our children,  
When they stand up against the dark.

And piercing are the cries over eyes  
That burn from the fiery spray that's  
Like the phosphorus they condemn,  
With courage that should shame us all.

We look on as if murder doesn't matter  
As if far away is way too far to count.  
Because the giant waves of indifference  
Are constantly lapping at our shores.

Stand up, stand up while there is time  
To prove you are a part of humanity.  
Clench your eyes if you must, but also  
Clench your fists, tight like tiny mortars.

Just don't sit down to supper when you  
Know those people are starving, or  
Run yourself a nice hot tub when they  
Can't rub off the dirt or blood, or bruising.

Try giving voice to the wounded and  
broken.  
Throw your angry compassion into the air.  
March, march as if their lives depend on it.  
Because they do...they really do.

RENEWED  
HEART  
MINISTRIES



The work of helping people find life-giving ways to live out their faith through love, compassion, and justice are needed now more than ever. At Renewed Heart Ministries, we provide resources of faith and healing with the aim of renewing hope and inspiring action as we allow the Jesus story to inform each of us as we work together to shape our world into a compassionate, just and safe home for everyone.

Renewed Heart Ministries is a 501(c)3, grassroots ministry on the margins that prioritizes the needs of marginalized communities, especially those who have been the recipients of misinformed, faith-based harm. Your support enables us to be a life-giving, healing light in our faith communities and continue to be a voice for desperately needed change.

***You get to decide what shape our faith communities take and what voices get to be heard.***

You can support Renewed Heart Ministries with a one-time gift or by becoming one of our monthly contributors. Your donation can be made online at:

**renewedheartministries.com**

or by mail at:

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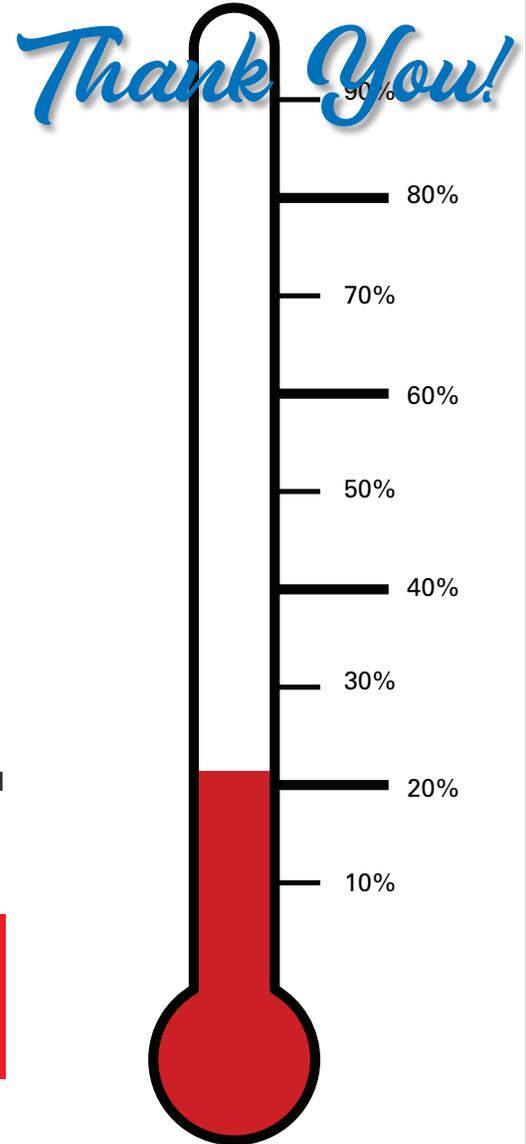
Please make sure you are receiving all of RHM's free resources by going to our website and clicking "sign up."

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

And **THANK YOU** for reading, listening to, sharing and supporting RHM's work. Thank you for the decisions you make every day to make our world a safer, compassionate, just home for everyone. Thank you for your dedication to engaging our world and the care you demonstrate, and for being such an important part of our community.

**2024 Projected Budget  
Goal: \$150,000.00**

**Donations Received  
as of end of June 2024:  
\$31,483.29**





## Upcoming Events

**JULY 20, 2024**

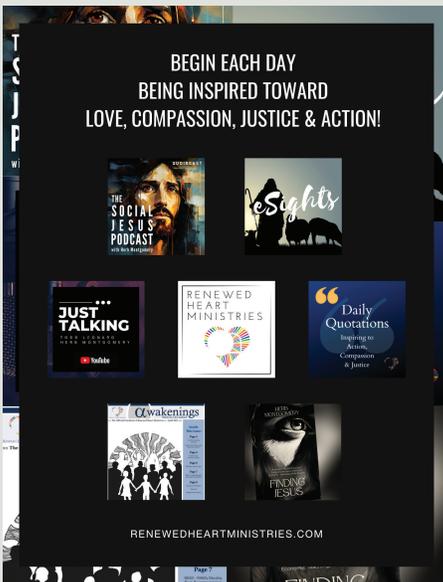
**Good News Fellowship**

Toronto, Ontario Canada

For more info or the Zoom link,  
email us at:

info@renewedheartministries.com

or call: 304.520.0030



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Follow Renewed Heart Ministries on X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, Instagram, and Threads for our daily posts. Our *Social Jesus* podcast can be subscribed to through the podcast platform you use. You can also receive inspiration in your inbox from RHM delivered to you email inbox daily or weekly.

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

Visit [renewedheartministries.com](http://renewedheartministries.com) and click "Sign Up!"

**"When we share rather than hoard, we find there's enough for us all. Rather than building bigger piles of hoarded resources we can build community, communities where each of us is committed to taking care of one another."**

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