

## **Pastor Roy's Cover Letter (Oct/Nov Newsletter)**

Desmund Tutu was a powerful spiritual leader at the end of apartheid as South Africa transitioned into a time of reconciliation and equal rights for the native blacks in that country. He was once asked about his most profound experience. He was 9 years old and walking down a path with his mother. A tall white man in a black suit approached them. It was the custom for blacks to step off the path and nod their heads in a gesture of respect. Before they had the chance to do so, the tall man stepped off the path. As they passed he tipped his hat toward his mother as a gesture of respect toward her. His name was Trevor Huddleston and he was an Anglican priest who strongly opposed apartheid. When his mother explained that he stepped off the path because he was a man of God, Tutu decided at that moment that he too wanted to be an Anglican priest and a man of God. Huddleston became a mentor for Tutu and taught by example that all are created equally in the image of God.

On Wednesday September 2<sup>nd</sup>, at the general invitation of Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, Martin Zimmann, pastor of Trinity, Mechanicsburg and I went to Washington DC to be with and listen to the pastoral leaders of three African American Methodist denominations. We heard them express their grief for family members and friends taken by gun violence which plagues their youth and community. We also heard their deep sadness over being mistrusted, feared, and suspected simply because of their appearance. It was a great privilege and honor to be in their presence and to speak with a few.

As the day came to a close, I was disturbed by the suffering of our fellow sisters and brothers in Christ, their children, and grandchildren. We are often not aware of our privilege, and all the more so as we have few relationships with people of other races and cultural backgrounds. When we see the difficulty of Black America, we are tempted to blame them or suspect them of having some kind of agenda to take advantage of us. The same is true for immigrants who wish to start a new life in the US by working hard much like our foremothers and fathers worked to forge a good life in a new land.

Despite these shared sources of patriotism, I often hear political language of mistrust and hatred, seizing on the instinctive fear of those different from us. Unfortunately, we sometimes are swayed by negative opinions when they are spoken forcefully, regardless of whether they are founded upon gracious abundance or a mindset of scarcity. Ultimately, as individuals, as community, as church, as a nation, we must ask, "What will be our legacy?" Will it be that we protected what was ours, and it turned into dust? Or will it be that we graciously shared, gave opportunity to the vulnerable, and were rewarded with friendship and self-respect? The choice lies before us. The decision is ours. The way we spend our time and resources will provide the answer. We have many untapped resources. May we answer Christ's call to take up our cross (faithful sacrifice) and follow. It sounds painful and disturbing, but the cross is truly our path to freedom and joy.

Please join me in praying for minority and immigrant communities, and for refugees who seek safety and wellness for their families. Let us act, as we are able, to support them and be reminded how much we share in common. It is an ongoing struggle to set aside our instinct to fear those who are different from us. God give us courage to step off the path and tip our hat in faith to those whom we might fear and mistrust.

Peace, Pastor Roy