

To: Spring 2020 Restorative Justice Group #2

Title: *Small Acts of Kindness*

It is hard to believe how much has changed in a week. Even the small activities---mailing a package, picking up milk, having dinner with friends has all but disappeared. So, we look for new ways to stay busy and connect...cleaning neglected areas in our houses, vacuuming behind the bed, reading a book via the internet to grandchildren, calling up an old friend.

And, for those of you who reside at Fox Lake, these times must feel especially challenging, understandably filled with anxiety and fear for your families and yourselves. While it might not be your first instinct, we want to offer you the opportunity to reach inside and think about the role that kindness can play when we are in these stressful situations.

We asked Rev. Jerry Hancock, who is responsible for bringing Restorative Justice to prisons in Wisconsin to write something about kindness in the context of Restorative Justice. Here is what he said...

“The end is reconciliation; the end is redemption; the end is the creation of the Beloved Community. It is this type of spirit and this type of love that can transform opponents into friends.”

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

In Restorative Justice, we often talk about RICH: Respect, Information, Community, and Hope. The Community created inside prison walls by Restorative Justice comes closer than anything I know to Martin Luther King’s “Beloved Community.” We come together as individual victims, offenders, and community members, and through the power of our stories, leave reconciled and redeemed. But, we do leave the prison, and the challenge becomes how to create ripples of reconciliation and redemption in the wider world and the smaller world of prison.

When we ask the question, "What will you do now?" at the end of our time together, people often offer up small acts of kindness they can do. In this time when we are all beyond anxious, those small acts of kindness are even more important ripples to send out into the world, large and small.

Rev. Jerry Hancock

We offer this poem and some questions on which you can reflect.

- *What is something that you have done to show kindness to someone else?*
- *What is something that someone has done for you to show kindness?*
- *What is something that you can do in the future to show kindness to a friend or family member?*

Small Kindnesses

By Danusha Lameris

I've been thinking about the way, when you walk
down a crowded aisle, people pull in their legs
to let you by. Or how strangers will say "bless you"
when someone sneezes, a leftover
from the Bubonic plague. "Don't die," we are saying.
And sometimes, when you spill lemons
from your grocery bag, someone else will help you
pick them up. Mostly, we don't want to harm each other.
We want to be handed our cup of coffee hot,
and to say thank you to the person handing it. To smile
at them and for them to smile back. For the waitress
to call us honey when she sets down the bowl of clam chowder,
and for the driver in the red pick-up truck to let us pass.
We have so little of each other, now. So far
from tribe and fire. Only these brief moments of exchange.
What if they are the true dwelling of the holy, these
fleeting temples we make together when we say, "Here,
have my seat," "Go ahead—you first," "I like your hat."

*Danusha Lameris is a poet and author of two collections of poetry: *The Moons of August* (2014) and *Bonfire Opera* (2020).*

Back to you next week...

~ Ms. Caro-Bruce