



# FAITH IN ACTION

"God has combined the members of the body ... If one part suffers, every part suffers with it." —Corinthians 12:26

## When one part suffers

By Danielle Klotz

**W**hy is racial justice vital to mission? Because God desires to restore community.

"Diversity is a biblical imperative, not a political issue, or a human resource issue," Leroy Barber said, as he described John's vision in Revelation 7. "John looks out and sees every tribe, tongue and nation. For him to see that, there needed to be visual identifiers, like skin color. I am still going to be a Black man in heaven."

Eight years ago, Barber and his wife, Donna, started The Voices Project to strengthen African-American church leaders in their ministries, with a focus on helping them negotiate communication barriers with predominantly White organizational structures.

After the shooting death of Michael Brown by a Ferguson, Missouri, police officer, Barber visited Ferguson several times to support peaceful protests and to work with local leaders. The Voices Project has held similar gatherings throughout the United States, and recently in Elkhart, Indiana, with local African-American church leaders and staff at the Mennonite offices.

Barber calls for Christians to take up the tradition of resistance to empire-building, like the three boys who stood in a fiery furnace did, like Daniel in the lions' den did, and, most importantly, like Jesus did, when as a homeless

Rev. Leroy Barber encourages pastors from Elkhart, Indiana, to be proactive in promoting racial justice in their communities.

refugee, he was tortured and executed without a lawyer or a fair trial.

Barber is convinced that unity without confrontation of injustice

**Unity without confrontation of injustice perpetuates oppression.**

perpetuates oppression and affirms White supremacy. "Peacemaking can stir up a whole lot of trouble," Barber said. Nonetheless, he is adamant that it is at the heart of Jesus' good news.

Mennonite Mission Network partners with The Voices Project through the Breaking our Silence Fund, which supports African-American leaders working for social justice and reconciliation throughout the Mennonite Church and beyond. ■

**PRAY** that Jesus' body can be made whole through intentional invitations across the color line.

# Serve

### SOOP Okanagan Gleaner

SOOP—Oliver, British Columbia

Bring your tent or RV and help dry local fruits and vegetables for distribution to people in need around the world.

### At-risk children's program assistant

International Ministries—Lima, Peru

Aid local leaders in their children's programs through telling Bible stories, doing crafts, singing, and more.

### Service Adventure leader(s)

Jackson, Mississippi

Mentor a group of young adults as they grow in their faith and vocation. Open to an individual or couple.

### Refugee Aid project assistant

International Ministries—Germany

Work in a second-hand store sorting donations that serve refugees, as well as provide child care as parents attend language study and work through their visa process.

### Teacher(s) and counselor(s) at Bridge of Hope Girls School

International Ministries—Liberia

Assist classroom teachers across multiple grade levels in various subjects, and assist the school administration where needed. Open to two individuals or a couple.

# TAP A SHOULDER

Apply or find other placements at [www.MennoniteMission.net/Serve](http://www.MennoniteMission.net/Serve).

# 4 TIPS

## for Jesus-shaped practices for the anti-racist church

These suggestions have been distilled from *Trouble I've Seen: Changing the Way the Church Views Racism*, by Drew G. I. Hart (Herald Press, 2016). Used with permission.

1. **Soak in Scripture and the Spirit for renewed social imagination.** Listen to African-American preaching. Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s sermons are readily available on CDs and on YouTube. Better yet, attend services led by African-American and Latin-American pastors.
2. **Share life.** The second chapter of

Ephesians describes how Jesus' reconciliation breaks down walls of hostility. Begin by sharing meals with people you don't meet in your daily life. As relationships grow, move into more diverse racial settings and geographic locations. As you tear down walls, use the bricks to build bridges between your former social circles and your new more diverse gatherings.

3. **Practice solidarity in the struggle.** Drew Hart writes: "As we follow Jesus into the world, we must join

with racially oppressed communities. We must so deeply identify with them that their struggle becomes our struggle (p. 169)." Join what is already happening in your community, especially movements led by leaders of color. This will help avoid falling into pitfalls unseen by vision through the lens of White privilege.

4. **Seek first God's realm.** Identify as a citizen of God's nation before aligning yourself with the country of your birth, or your passport country.

Cut out or fold over, post, and use this verse for contemplation and prayer over the next month.



... with all **humility** and **gentleness**, with **patience**, bearing with one another in **love**, making every effort to maintain the **unity** of the Spirit in the bond of **peace**.

—Ephesians 4:2-6

**Be the Gospel.**



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