
Teach Your Children Well

**An article from the Cathedral Times
by the Rev. Canon Lauren Holder**

Two days after protests began in Atlanta, Jay and I packed up the car and our children to make our way to Virginia. We had planned this trip weeks before, eager to give my mom the first hug she'd had in three months. The change of scenery was good for my mountain-girl soul and a welcomed "classroom" change for our children who spent hours playing in the creek and learning about tadpoles. Those were the easy lessons.

We faced hard lessons that week as well. Jay and I woke up to the truth that despite our best efforts to make intentional choices about buying a home in a racially diverse neighborhood, sending our children to a religiously diverse preschool, purchasing books and toys representing oppressed populations, and supporting anti-racist causes with our time and money... we still didn't know how to talk to our kids about race.

I agonized over how to tell our daughter that people with black skin, like her favorite baby doll Cathy, were often mistreated by people with white skin like us. Would she see baby Cathy differently? Or how to respond to our son proclaiming, "but I like how I'm made!" sullen faced, like we had implied something was wrong with him. Or how to make sure our children feel safe when they return to school and see Officer Jackie, an avid Eagles fan who loves to talk football with our little Packers.

We attended a non-violent gathering in my hometown as a family, each child choosing the words for their protest signs. We visited the R. E. Lee memorial in Richmond, talking about all the colorful words people had painted to express their pain in the face of oppression. I am sure we made countless mistakes, but we're doing the best we can.

Throughout the week, I thought continually about the children and youth of the Cathedral of St. Philip, and the adults—parents, teachers, mentors—raising them.

As followers of Jesus, we are called to share God's redemptive love boldly and abundantly. We are called to enter into uncomfortable spaces and uncomfortable conversations for the sake of being transformed into something closer to the likeness of God. This requires a lifetime of learning, meaning we have to teach our children, youth and adults well.

If you have attended Canon Maxwell's Old Fashioned Sunday School classes these past several weeks, I hope you have felt moments of transformation and equipping for these days of reckoning. If not, you can listen to the podcasts and receive food for the soul. I hope our midday meditations and Sunday sermons help provide moments of centering oneself on the life and love of Christ as the Holy Spirit calls us forward.

During July, I will offer a 3-week study of Jennifer Harvey's book *Raising White Kids*. This adult Sunday School class will be offered both Sunday mornings and Sunday evenings. If you are a parent of littles, you may have seen Dr. Harvey on Sesame Street's Town Hall Meeting. I heard Dr. Harvey speak at Emory years ago, and I took copious notes as she spoke uncomfortable truths with humility, scholarship and love. I commend her to you! And I hope all people who contribute to raising children will join me in this 3-week conversation.

I also want to share with you how we are equipping the saints among us—the volunteers who teach our children and youth throughout the year. Director of Children's Ministries, Lisa McNamara, and Associate Priest for Youth and Young Adult ministries, Nate Huddleston, will join me in providing anti-racism trainings for all our volunteers this August and September. These trainings will be required, no matter how schooled volunteers may already be, because we learn from each other in community. We learn every day of our lives.

I thank you, Cathedral of St. Philip, for all the ways you are teaching me well. I pray the things we teach one another will help answer our daily prayer that God's kingdom would come on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

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