

Sacred Stories

By Lenore Three Stars, Jim Sequeira, Cathy Norman Peterson, and Erin Chan Ding, p. 14

Covenant family share the stories of their identity as indigenous people, deepening our understanding of who we are as a family of faith.

1. What tensions did Lenore Three Stars experienced between her Christian faith and her Lakota culture?
2. Because of shame and guilt, TJ Smith's family never discussed their heritage. Why is it important to pass along family stories, even when they are hard?
3. What is the significance of Anna Ross returning to Turtle Mountain to plant a church with her husband, Roger?
4. Curtis Ivanoff invites the denomination to practice solidarity with Native communities. What practical ways do you see to do that?
5. How does Jim Sequeira's story help you better understand the Doctrine of Discovery?

Pardoned

By Stan Friedman, p.36

How a life sentence in prison became the place of call for Smiley Parham

1. What part of Smiley Parham's story was most troubling to you?
2. Do you think Smiley should have pled guilty in order to get a lighter sentence?
3. Does your state have discretionary parole? What do you think about that?
4. Smiley says he is "representing" guys who are still incarcerated at Stateville. What do you think that means? What could we learn from his perspective?
5. The partnership between Stateville Correctional Center and North Park Theological Seminary is called the School of Restorative Arts. What is the significance of the name of the program?

Stay with Me

By Jan Bros, p. 44

Accepting Jesus's Lenten invitation to vulnerability, loss, and grace

1. Do you engage personally with the season of Lent? How, or why not?
2. Had you heard of the practice of “burying the alleluia” before reading this article? What do think is the significance of this tradition?
3. How do visual and sensual Lenten practices help you interact with the story of Jesus more deeply?
4. What does this article call you personally to do to experience Lent more fully?
5. What activity, song, or tradition connects you most to the celebration of the resurrection?

The Perfection Heresy

By Robert Rife, p. 48

What an A.A. meeting can teach us about our expectations

1. In the midst of Robert Rife's darkest moment he says he would eventually feel gratitude for what was happening—but not yet. What experiences in your life have made you feel a similar delayed gratitude?
2. Why do you think there is more pressure surrounding the Easter sermon than other sermons throughout the year?
3. Rife contends that preachers face pressure to deliver a masterpiece of wit and wisdom every week. What craft or task do you repeatedly perform that includes a similar pressure?
4. Why do you think the article was titled "The Perfection Heresy"?
5. How does the vulnerability of Rife's story shape your perception of leaders in ministry?

Back to the Heart of Ministry

By Richard Lucco, p. 52

After two decades serving in denominational leadership, one pastor returns to his first love.

1. What did you learn about pastoral ministry from this article?
2. What pastoral gifts or roles do you most appreciate in your pastor(s)?
3. How can you be “a living reminder of Jesus Christ” in your occupation or activities?
4. Howard Thurman says, “Don’t ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who come alive.” Do you agree? How does this quote inform how you live out your days?

I Promise This One Is Worth Reading (Maybe)

By Jelani Greenidge, p. 35

Are we making promises in our own power or in God's?

1. Why is keeping a promise important?
2. What happens when someone breaks a promise?
3. How would you define a “bad” promise? What makes people tempted to promise things like “God will never give you more than you can bear”?
4. How does music “form us, inform us, and reform us in powerful ways” in relationship to God’s promises?
5. What song or hymn can you think of that proclaims a promise from Scripture? Is it a “good” promise?

Our Place in the Race

By Leeann Younger, p. 54

The wild, amazing, and frankly, impossible story at the center of our faith.

1. What is the longest distance you have ever run—either as exercise or in competition?
2. What might be the problem with a “finish line faith” or having an end goal of getting people to profess faith in Jesus?
3. What do you think the difference is between a ministry of relief and *zzzzza* ministry of transformation?
4. What do you think Leeann Younger means when she says the new life Jesus offers is an invitation to take our place in the race?
5. Younger says, “Our call is to run our part of the relay with perseverance.” What might that look like in your context?