



Reconciliation Season came into being in 2000 when the racial dialogue group came to the worship committee saying, “racism is alive and well in the United States and what is Redeemer going to do about it?” With that, the Worship Committee looked at the work of Bishop Desmond Tutu and Nelsen Mandela as they created the peace and reconciliation process that was to define the healing to take place in South Africa following the collapse of apartheid. We created an entire liturgy to name and define the reality of a world that did not live in equality, respect and love for every human being. The initial focus was on black/white racial issues, but the season came to be so much more as we named the inequities of society within the Hispanic community, the Native American community, the people who do not worship as we do nor look like we do.

We intentionally name, “In a world where prejudice and power have joined hands to elevate one people at the expense of another, in a world where the heritage of slavery is still active in people’s lives, In a world where unequal access to health care disproportionately endangers the lives of those who have been marginalized because of race or ethnicity. In a world where the evils of hatred and fear infect both public discourse and private thought, in a world where women and girls live with overt and subtle violence at the hands of others and the vulnerable are left in danger, In a world where lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and gender non-conforming people are denied the freedom to live, to love, to work and to create a family, In a world where we see only disability, and the person remains invisible, In a world where it is too easy to look away from those who may be homeless, undocumented or refugees, In a world where people, just because they are different, evoke fear and contempt, **We pray for reconciliation.**”

In today’s America this season matters more than ever. We are called to stand with all those named above. This year, the worship committee chose to invite leaders from other faith traditions and action groups to empower us to see the world through their eyes and open our hearts to hope and action. Father Willie will lead off the season with a celebration of Martin Luther King Sunday. In turn, Ayse Ozdemir and Kurba Karaqoz from Peace Islands Institute (PII) will join us. You may have joined them at Iftar last year. PII “envisions a world becoming an island of peace in the ocean of our universe; a community in which people from all walks of life interact with each other and cooperate to serve their communities.” Rabbi Deb Smith will join us one week. Rabbi Deb has worked extensively in the interfaith community over the past decade or more and is a former co-chair of the Morris County Chapter of the Sisterhood of Salaam-Shalom. Rosie Grant of this diocese advocates for restorative justice, interfaith programs, and personal healing for prisoners, their families, and communities. She will share her perspectives with us.

Colleen Hintz for the Vestry

Read on, if you like, for a very brief tour of the season’s vestments created based on The Secret Quilt Code of the Underground Railroad which led slaves to hope and freedom. I would posit the story and images within, could lead us today to a world of hope and freedom if we would just follow the code.



The **Monkey Wrench**, the tool of the blacksmith, urged them to gather the tools they would need: shoes with soles, beef jerky, a compass and the mental fortitude it would take to survive.



The monkey wrench turns the **Wagon Wheel**. "Swing Low Sweet Chariot" was one of the code songs. Riding hidden in the back of a wagon could help you get farther in one day than you could walk.



On the **Bear's Paw** trail to the Crossroads. Follow the bear's trail to find food and water plus the bear's scent will throw off the dog's tracking you.



Once you get to the **Crossroads**, you dig a log cabin in the sand. The crossroads is your call to make the decision, will you run for freedom? or will you live your life in slavery?



You dig a **Log Cabin** in the sand. Log cabin quilts of the day would almost always have red in the center symbolic of the heart, hearth and home. But, if you were a safe house on the Underground Railroad, you would have had yellow in the center as safe beacon signaling you were there to help the runaway slaves on their journey. That is why it is on the altar at Redeemer to say very clearly ALL ARE WELCOME HERE.



Shoofly helps you dress up. Shoofly would have been one of those helping along the way, a Quaker, a Native American, A Prince Hall Free Mason... someone who would help you on your journey to freedom.



Shoofly helps you dress up in cotton and satin **Bow Ties**. After a long, hard journey, you looked like a slave. If you were to pass as a free Black person, you would need to dress up in appropriate clothes and, most importantly, in an appropriate attitude.



Follow the **Flying Geese** as they go north in the summer and can lead you to water ways.



Flying Geese stay on the **Drunkard's Path** and follow the Northern Star. The hounds will be tracking you. To avoid them, be prepared to double back on your tracks.



And follow the **Northern Star**. They were forced to be Christians, so this star became for them the star that led the Magi to the Christ child. They were headed north and knew how to navigate by the stars. Freedom was in the north!



On the **fifth knot of the tenth block**, you escape to freedom in Canada. This is Tumbling Blocks. Their world was about to be turned upside down for the night they saw this, they were to run. Five square knots ritually tied invokes the powers of the ancestors for protection on the journey. When they saw this, they knew their family members lost to the horrors of slavery, their children ripped from their arms, their parents allowed to die because they were too old to work anymore, their sister who died in childbirth, their brother beaten to death for disobedience... they would all be with them in spirit as they ran protecting them on the journey.



Last, but far from least, are **Flower Wreaths** and **Broken Dishes**. These are intentionally on the pulpit to honor all those who did not survive the journey; Martin Luther King, Oscar Romero, Matthew Shepherd, Steven Biko, and countless others who lost their lives because they would not hide, would not stay quiet. At a gravesite in some African traditions, a flower wreath is laid to honor the dead and when the grave is visited, broken dishes are left to say, "I have been here". There was no time to bury the dead when on the URR. You would dispose of the body as quickly and completely as possible or risk the lives of those who still traveled and so, periodically, they would leave behind flowers and broken pottery to honor those who did not survive.

So please gather the tools you need and make your decision at the crossroads. Know where your safe places are as you surround yourself with those who will help you dress up in cotton and satin bowties. Know you may have to double back over and over again as you follow the same star the Wise Ones followed to wholeness and hope. Walk with all those who have gone before you and honor their legacy. May it be so.