

Communities of Refuge and Hope: A Bold Vision for this Season

Psalms 36:6-9, The Inclusive Bible

*Your justice is like the mountains in their splendor,
Your judgments like the great deep.
Whether human or animal, YHWH,
you keep us all in your care.
How precious is your love!
Whether creatures of heaven or children of earth,
we all find refuge in the shadow of your wings.
We feast on the bounty of your estate,
and drink from the stream of your delights.
In you is the wellspring of Life,
and in your light we become enlightened.*



Numbers 35:6-7 The Inclusive Bible

*The towns that you give to the Levites shall include the six **cities of refuge**, where you shall permit a slayer to flee, and in addition to them you shall give forty-two towns. The towns that you give to the Levites shall total forty-eight, with their pasturelands.*

Throughout scripture, the people of God are instructed to provide places of safety and security for those whose life is at risk, even for those who inadvertently take the life of another or are falsely accused. Many of the Psalms give thanks to God who provides refuge and safety. Jesus is constantly setting people free, from illness, from sin, from the threat of death, from exclusion.

How are our 48ish Central District Conference congregations called to be communities of refuge and hope? What if marginalized people knew that they would be safe in a CDC congregation? What if temporary lodging were available to refugees, queer folks kicked out of their homes, the single parent who can no longer afford their rent, the asylum seeker who had their legal status revoked, the racially profiled neighbor who is terrified to leave their apartment? What if there were a segue of safe passage, a network of neighbors, committed communities of compassion caring for the compromised?

What if CDC stood for "Come Discover Compassion" in a society oriented toward "Chaos Dissolves Community?" What if each CDC Beloved Community added 10% to its spending plan to create a Refuge Fund which could quickly be accessed when a stranger needs safety?

What if there was a network of Elders who could offer wisdom, practical advice, best practices, and encouragement to others across the conference?

When CDC conducted our Sacred Listening Process, we discovered some common themes. These include:

- ⌘ CDC congregations value being welcoming and providing care for their members and those in their communities.
- ⌘ We strive to keep our eyes and hearts open to the needs of our communities and the broader world including immigration, homelessness, (and others).
- ⌘ We're excited about what we might be called to next.

Being communities of refuge will likely look different for each congregation. What if each congregation listens to Spirit Wisdom's guidance and identifies ways we are called to be communities of refuge and hope for such a time as this?