

SURJ  
"The Word Is Resistance"  
Episode 1  
Speakers: Reverend Anne Dunlap, Nichola Torbett, Margaret  
Ernst, Hosts

2.17.21 Ash Wednesday B

- [Joel 2:1-2, 12-17](#) or [Isaiah 58:1-12](#) •
- [Psalm 51:1-17](#) •
- [2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10](#) •
- [Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21](#)

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<<Music: "Building Up a New World," 1st verse, fade out under opening sentence.>>  
<<"We are building up a new world, builders must be strong.">

>> REVEREND ANNE DUNLAP: Beloveds, welcome back to "The Word Is Resistance," the podcast where we're exploring what our Christian sacred texts have to teach us about living, surviving, even thriving in the context of empire, tyranny, violence, and repression, the times in which we are living today.

What do our sacred stories have to teach us as white folks about our role in resistance, in showing up, and in liberation? What wisdom is there for us as white Christians in these pandemic times, the pandemic of COVID19 and the centurieslong pandemic of white supremacy.

This podcast is a project of Showing Up for Racial Justice, SURJ Faith, and is particularly designed for white Christians, white Christians talking to other white Christians about race and white supremacy. We believe white Christians like us, like me, have a responsibility to commit ourselves to resisting white supremacy, to speaking up and showing up, and disrupting white supremacy where we find it, including in our own Christian tradition.

And we do this work remembering we are building up a new world. This live recording of Dr. Vincent Harding's song for the freedom movement is of a multiracial movement choir practice in Denver, Colorado, in December 2014, being led by Minister Daryl J. Walker. We are deeply grateful to the Freeney Harding family for letting us use the song for this podcast, "The Word Is Resistance."

I'm Reverend Anne Dunlap with you today. I am the faith program coordinator for Showing Up for Racial Justice. I am a UCC ordained minister, and I live on land of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the piece of which is currently called Buffalo, New York.

For Lent we are offering some special conversations with our contributors, which we are starting with this special Ash Wednesday episode. So I'm actually here with Nichola Torbett and Margaret Ernst, and I'm so excited to be with you.

Nichola, do you want to greet our folks?

>> NICHOLA TORBETT: Yes. Hey, friends. Good to be back with you. My name is Nichola Torbett, and I'm a settler on unceded Ohlone land, part of which is called Oakland, California. And I'm deeply grateful to the long movement history in this town led by black folks, indigenous folks, and other people of color.

My primary communities of accountability are First Congregational Church of Oakland and Second Acts, which is a liturgical directaction group.

And also here with us is Margaret Ernst. Margaret.

>> MARGARET ERNST: Hi, everyone. This is Margaret, and you can call me by she and her. And I today I'm sitting at a wooden kitchen table in a house on Lenapehoking territory, which is close to where I live, also as a settler on this land. I have dwelt in the Philadelphia area for some of or most of my adult life and also spent time in Cherokee land in Tennessee, where I was deeply shaped by movement communities doing immigrant justice work and worker justice. And prior to that was shaped by Faith in Action, formerly known as the PICO Network, in Philadelphia.

Now I find myself an ordained reverend and movement chaplain and friend to the two people that are (Inaudible) [04:27] be speaking with on this call. Today I'm carrying with me changes in my life and some heartache and also deep gratitude for what

is possible when we lean into belovedness in our relationships and our friendships like these ones.

>> REVEREND ANNE DUNLAP: That's beautiful. And I think, yeah, the friendship of the three of us means we could be here all day to talk about the text for today and about this series. But, Margaret, don't you want to tell us about the series? Because this was really your idea that also came out of, like, long text threads over the last few months as we've been watching what's been happening in the country and with the pandemic. And what does it mean to be white in this moment and to be white Christian in this moment?

But this set of conversations that we'll be having over Lent is really a gift from you. So why don't you tell us about what this is.

>> MARGARET ERNST: Well, for a bit more about myself, I'm currently also in alignment with and working for Faith Matters Network, which is a womanist-led organization that focuses on social and personal transformation. And as a blackwoman-led organization, as my colleagues Reverend Jennifer Bailey as our executive director and Micky Scott-Bey Jones as our director of healing and resilience, as a white person on staff, I often make sure that what I do in alignment with Faith Matters Network is in the service that the work of Faith Matters Network, but that I also have a deep responsibility to doing work with and among other white Christians.

The work is SURJ Faith and our collective project and experiment over time in this podcast has been really important to me. And on January 6th, when there was the attack on the Capitol by white supremacists Christian militants, I remember staring at the screen with the "Jesus Saves" banner, but staring particularly at that "Jesus Saves" banner, I realized that all of this work that we've been doing is of deep importance towards the kind of thinking and strategizing and public leading that we really are called to do with other white Christians and that we only learn how to do it better and better by a conscious practice of self-reflection.

We've been doing the podcast for four years now. We have what Anne has called basically like a systematic theology for white Christians trying to do racial justice work. And I feel very proud of that. And I also know that going deeper with each other means going deeper also in our relationships and our collective thinking. There's only so much that our individual insights can do. And I really do believe that an enormous

amount of possible directions of our work, whether it's strategies or tactics or campaigns or tools or resources or, you know, what is needed in this time emerges from what we learn from each other.

So we want to do a conversation series, especially in Lent is a time of selfreflection, as white Christians who are trying to lean on each other to figure this out and acknowledging we just can't build the kinds of strategies, you know, in isolation, and we need each other.

>> REVEREND ANNE DUNLAP: Yeah.

>> MARGARET ERNST: So what you can expect from these conversations is that we'll be weaving the text, but you'll also just hear us feeling around each other's minds and hearts and experiences and stories. We hope to do this with humility, with looking towards the texts and hoping that there might be signposts towards strategies and answers, but we're we the humility is partly because this is Lent.

These two people, Anne and Nichola, have been signposts in my life. That's the word that Dr. Vincent Harding used to describe ways that we figure out the next path in our journey. And so we hope that these conversations can be signposts to you in ways that we will tell truths about ourselves, about what is not working about how we organize white Christians or what where we don't even perceive ourselves fully and what, like, the fullness of the work is to be done.

So it's an invitation into honesty and truth telling, into community, and asking in particular how as white Christians seeking to follow Jesus out of our own wounds to heal the wounds that this identity is unto ourselves and to others. So we'll be asking ourselves that question as we look at these texts and also what visions for the work of belonging and healing and mutual interests and racial justice we can find and what might that lead us into with our friends, our comrades, our communities, our churches, our families, our chosen families who share our experience of being in this history of being white and being Christian.

With that, I'll ask Nichola to start with our text.

>> NICHOLA TORBETT: Great. So for this Ash Wednesday episode, we are looking at the gospel text, which is Matthew, Chapter 6, Verses 1 through 6, and then Verses 16 through 21. And it starts like this: Beware of practicing your piety before

others in order to be seen by them, for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven. So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing so that your alms may be done in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

>> REVEREND ANNE DUNLAP: And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

>> MARGARET ERNST: And whenever you fast, do not look dismal like the hypocrites for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face so that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. Do not store up for yourselves treasures on Earth where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21.

<< *Music interlude, verse 2 of "Building Up a New World."* >>

<< *"Courage, sisters, brothers, people: don't get weary, though the way be long."* >>

>> MARGARET ERNST: So, friends, what is going on in this passage, and what stands out to us?

>> NICHOLA TORBETT: I find myself thinking about social media and ways that we curate our images on social media to make it very clear that we are woke. I don't know who it was who first coined the phrase "woke righteousness," but that definitely comes to mind reading this text. Like this concern about how we appear to others and appearing to know about antiracism and appearing to be doing something. And there seems to be a warning in here about focusing on how we look and sort of performing our righteousness before others. So that's my first thought.

>> REVEREND ANNE DUNLAP: I have lots of thoughts. I mean, I love that because it does -- like the kind of performance of wokeness I think is it doesn't help our movement, because most of what happens in the movement is done in secret, if we want to use the language of the text, or at least, you know, where people don't see and it's not sexy and you don't take a selfie, and it's, like, I'm filling out a spreadsheet for the 40,000th time to try to figure out, you know, whatever.

>> NICHOLA TORBETT: Right.

>> REVEREND ANNE DUNLAP: For me when I read this text, the first thing that I do and which I did this morning to get prepared is, like, well, who are these hypocrites? Because this is one of those texts that is used to critique Judaism. "Hypocrites" translates in our brains to Pharisees. That's who we assume Jesus is talking about, which then translates into Judaism. And so there's for me, there's a danger here in setting up this text to be this kind of like we're the Christians. We're the ones who are going to do it right because there's something inherently wrong with Judaism, and that's a problem.

And I think that it's a problem that's actually translatable into our current situation because it what happens in these gospels is when we think that everything is an attack against Pharisees or an attack against Judaism, like Jesus against Judaism, then we actually miss what is happening in their lives, which is the Roman Empire.

So one of the things I learned or was reminded of at least this morning when I was reading is this kind of critique of the hypocrite, of the one who seems to perform for kind of outward recognition. It was actually a critique that the Pharisees had of members of their own, like, religious practice. So Jesus is actually making an argument that Pharisees make, and there's some really juicy stuff in the essays of "The Jewish Annotated New Testament" about whether or not Jesus was actually a Pharisee, which I think is really fascinating, perhaps not relevant to today's conversation, but it gives it a whole different flavor when -- well, you can't be actually attacking those Pharisees that were there

>> NICHOLA TORBETT: Right.

>> REVEREND ANNE DUNLAP: as they (Inaudible) [16:49] or were there when they're making the same argument. It's all the same argument, this critique of hypocrites. There's also a really

interesting note in my "Oxford Annotated Bible" that Roman philanthropy included the public display of good works. So now we have a whole 'nother layer of what in the world was Jesus talking about? Who was this critique actually for?

>> NICHOLA TORBETT: Hmm.

>> REVEREND ANNE DUNLAP: Was it, you know for me it's, like, clearly not, like, Jesus and Christianity are the answer to the problems of Judaism, because that's, like, inherently a bad argument and a violent one. So then what's actually happening? Is there, like, actually a subtle kind of what we sometimes call in biblical studies a hidden transcript at play here about who's actually being critiqued and the kinds of public displays of wealth and good works that were intended to put the recipients of the good works in debt to the one who was doing it. Like that's how, like, Roman society worked. The people who were the elite and had the wealth would show off with these good works in order to make themselves look good.

There's language that creeps into later Christianity later into Christianity about, like, works of mercy and whatnot that Paul picks up on in Romans and tears down. And so all of that is to say what happens when we get the target of the critique wrong?

And in thinking about how you framed this conversation for us, Margaret, about, you know, white Christians who have some sense of commitment to antiracism and yet also what happened on January 6th, you know, and how white Christianity is being has been, continues to be weaponized, and where the blame for that falls so consistently on the people who it actually is not. You know, maybe some of y'all saw this after January the 6th, but it's been consistent in the whole kind of Trump era of, well, it's the fault of poor and working-class

>> MARGARET ERNST: Yeah.

>> REVEREND ANNE DUNLAP: white people, poor and working-class Southerners, you know, the backwards ones who don't actually get it. We're the saved ones. They're the ones who don't get it. And that's actually an incorrect analysis. And by distancing ourselves from them in the way that Christianity traditionally asks us to distance ourselves in text like today's does not actually serve our movement and help our movement become stronger because we've got the target wrong. The target is, like I would argue, you know, like, the equivalent of the elite wealthy Romans who were showing off to

show how great they are, so the elite wealthy white people who run the shit in this country I cussed. I do that. Okay. I'll keep going.

>> MARGARET ERNST: Yeah.

>> REVEREND ANNE DUNLAP: And not the folks that so many of us as the woke, if you will, the woke righteous white people hold at arm's length.

>> NICHOLA TORBETT: Mhmm.

>> REVEREND ANNE DUNLAP: Because it would mean very difficult conversations with people that we don't want to talk to. Right?

>> NICHOLA TORBETT: Right.

>> REVEREND ANNE DUNLAP: That's something that I have been examining in myself since we've kind of opened up this conversation since last fall. So that's kind of where I am with this text. It's not a super wellformed thought because it was, like, that little detail about the Roman piece just came in my reading this morning. Like, oh, there's something different going on here than what we've been taught, and what does that have to teach us about what we're you know, where do we go from here as white Christians in this movement/moment, if you will.

>> MARGARET ERNST: Yeah. That's for talking about how we distance ourselves from, quote, the other white Christians. It's very true about a lot of the local churches I've been a part of that are predominantly white and with whom I've shared deep connection kinship and community, that our tendency is to do a lot of virtue signaling. By that I mean the showing that we are we are not the bad Christians. We are not the

>> REVEREND ANNE DUNLAP: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

>> MARGARET ERNST: (Inaudible) [22:21] Christians. We are not the racist Christians. We are not the homophobic Christians. We are not the X, Y, and Z, you know, antiSemitic Christians. We are not the antiMuslim Christians. So there's a lot of positioning ourselves as what that we are not. And I think, like, what's coming to me right now, and I wonder how you would see this connection to the text is that, like, in my own experience, often when I'm positioning myself against what I am not is because I feel at a deeper level, okay, you know, of course, all of that is operative in me, and I'm just doing a really good job to hide it. But, also, I think pain and my own



hurt is present because ways that I have felt I have not belonged or ways I've been harmed by other white Christians.

>> NICHOLA TORBETT: Yes.

>> MARGARET ERNST: Or in which I did not fit in or in which I've experienced suspicion or anger or rage.

>> REVEREND ANNE DUNLAP: Oh, God, all of that, yeah.

>> MARGARET ERNST: I personally grew up attending quite wealthy white churches, which did speak a lot of sort of doing good towards those that we perceived as, quote, like less fortunate. Right? Less -- whatever language is used. And I would then read, like, you know, later on I would read the Bible and see these texts about justice, and so I would just be raging inside and so confused and disconnected from why from what I was experiencing in this worship space and sanctuary space felt so inauthentic to what I was hearing from the tradition.

My anger at that is what caused me to leave those spaces and to find more justiceseeking Christians, like I now commune with, and particularly in my work with Faith Matters Network, blackcentered and black womencentered Christian community. But where that leaves me, I realize, is both towards like towards more centrist and liberal, progressive denominations, predominantly white Christian spaces, and towards the religious right and conservative white Christian, there's this pain of familiarity or something. There's a pain of where I have been hurt that then is fuels the distancing and I believe fuels my own sense of my own righteousness and desire to be above or over and separate from in a way that then actually puts me out of any kind of context of any, like, entry point of a meaningful relationship.

>> NICHOLA TORBETT: You are preaching now, Margaret. I feel that. I really feel that.

>> REVEREND ANNE DUNLAP: Yeah.

>> NICHOLA TORBETT: And I feel the place where my own queerness intersects here, you know. Like we talk a lot about going to get our cousins, right, and calling in our family members, our wake family members, but the truth is I've been hurt by a lot of those very same people who maybe voted for Trump, you know. And so what it takes for me to go and talk to them, there's, like, a whole process. And, yeah, there is a part of me that wants to be selfrighteous, you know, like as a

way of armoring up.

>> REVEREND ANNE DUNLAP: Yeah.

>> MARGARET ERNST: Yeah.

>> NICHOLA TORBETT: Yeah. So I really appreciate you drawing that out.

>> REVEREND ANNE DUNLAP: Yeah. I was thinking about that, too, you know, also being queer, and we all share that, and that experience of having to leave in order to be able to survive and to hold some sense of space, some sense of boundary in order to be able to heal, in order to be able to be safe, those are legit choices. Right? And also yeah. I carry pain around that. I carry pain around, like, being in a denomination that claims to be so woke and yet so seriously does not resource, like, any kind of organizing. It doesn't resource, like, actual antiracist work well.

And then I think, also, because of the research that I've done for SURJ Faith, hasn't resourced the South or poor and working-class white communities either, and how has that helped to keep that divide, like, open and make it harder for us to be able to connect with folks? And there's so many things going on in my mind right now. I'm thinking about, you know, just that total lack of investment, my own choices around safety. Like it's complicated. The pain that's there.

I'm thinking about how, like, as a queer feminist southerner how it feels really difficult to be able to go back home to my home state of Arkansas. The kind of anxiety I feel when I go back to visit my family. Not because of my family so much, but, like, if I were to go to church or be out in public and not in their homes, like, how do I dress? Like I don't even like what am I going to be safe? Like are we going to be safe?

And then, also, like, lately realizing, like, just the layers on layers of this. It was, like, realizing, like, the shame I carry around also for being from the South, not so much because of the choices that my family made, you know, my ancestors made although that's a layer of things but thinking about what it felt like when we left the South for the first time and how I was treated and, like, the pain that is there.

So it's just there's a lot to work with in all of this. So where do we get off calling each other hypocrites? Like why are we even reading this text for today? Like I don't like how is

that helpful even, Jesus? Why would you do that?

>> MARGARET ERNST: I appreciate you, Nichola, naming it as armor, because I think there's a way in which I could just you know, we could just sit here and feel ashamed about all the ways that we distance ourselves, right, and then create even a distance towards ourselves, like, within that shame, but I think it feels helpful to recognize that, like, it when we're hurt, of course, we put on whatever armor we can so that we will not be hurt again or that we so that we can feel okay or we can feel certain or we can feel clear and, like, just have, like, some ground to stand on and, like, a place to call home. Like it's a spiritual home that works, that makes sense.

And I think your naming the kind of public display of piety in that way as armor and, like, piety is in this conversation context and conversation, like, public declarations of being the good white Christians essentially.

>> REVEREND ANNE DUNLAP: Yeah.

>> MARGARET ERNST: That when it I think what's clear about naming it is as a defense mechanism is that it helps me to see how we have to take responsibility for our own healing, for the ways that our tradition has harmed us so that we can get in the kinds of formations that take responsibility for how our traditions harm others.

>> REVEREND ANNE DUNLAP: Wow.

>> MARGARET ERNST: And I'll be honest that I don't think I would know that with as much clarity if I didn't work with black women. Right? Because I have seen within the womanist ethic of that I learned from my work with Faith Matters Network is that taking responsibility for one's own healing is essential is strategic. Right? Because otherwise you can't do the work. Right? Like when I was in more white male-dominated organizing spaces, anything related to healing was always considered, like, extra after the work, and I think it's because there seemed to be not a level of ability to grasp for access that healing was necessary to do the work, because otherwise we're showing up so internally, like, wounded all the time that we don't actually get the work done or do the work well --

>> REVEREND ANNE DUNLAP: Right.

>> MARGARET ERNST: -- or can't be in relationships that help the work to happen.

>> REVEREND ANNE DUNLAP: Yeah.

>> MARGARET ERNST: And so, like, I think this yeah, there's a clarity coming from what we've talked about so far that, yeah, there's this necessary responsibility and honesty about naming how we've been harmed that's important, because whatever that looks like, however that shows up for us and needs to happen is important. I think there's a way that I have thought I've thought that if I were to be I mean, I experienced this in organizing with SURJ in Nashville in working with a larger Church of Christ congregation Church of Christ, not United Church of Christ and there was a way that it was so different from my own religious upbringing, which was in the more, like, liberal mainline denominations, that I felt drawn towards this kinship of getting to know more conservative folk, and yet as soon as I entered into it, I quickly reached, like, the same heart like the same wounds that my friends who come from a more conservative background.

I was trying to lead and teach and speak publicly in a building in which women could not speak on a pulpit or speak, you know, as leaders in the church spiritually. And I was hiding my queerness, right, as much as I possibly could. Like dressing intentionally femme so that no one would know I was so, like, you know, I bumped into every mine like mine, and what healing I could have made or, like, kind of what belonging I could have felt in the context of building strategically against racism in that context was not possible.

And so I mean not possible, but, like, I couldn't show up with my fuller self. So I think that there's yeah, there's just something to, like, not looking for our healing there and yet knowing that there's something broader that happens when we do that work when we show up to it with not expecting it to be something that it's not. I don't know if that makes sense. Not expecting it in itself to be what is our balm, but that it is a part of this broader balm of collective work in service liberation, which heals does heal us all and that picks up our piece of the puzzle.

>> REVEREND ANNE DUNLAP: It makes me think -- I can't remember if you used this in your framing, but the language of mutual interest that we use in SURJ about not coming at the work of antiracism or more broadly dismantling white supremacy, like, somehow as the white people were the saviors and we're going to help these people over there, these poor folks who are experiencing oppression, but understanding we all live in a system that is harmful, including to white people, not in the

same way as to black and indigenous and other people of color, but it harms us.

>> NICHOLA TORBETT: Yeah.

>> REVEREND ANNE DUNLAP: And when we can begin to get at as white people the ways in which living under white supremacy actually harms us, it makes us better at doing the rest of the work, and we can come alongside instead of, you know, of our black and indigenous and beloveds rather than coming in from above with, like, the ideas of how it's going to happen or charity models or other kinds of more problematic formations that just sort of serve to reinforce the supremacy that we're trying to undo.

So what I hear, Margaret, is, like, similarly within white Christianity, when we're able to name the ways that white Christianity has harmed us, even if we're on the left or -- nobody can see me making the air quotes -- but the left within the church, that actually helps us to connect better, I think, when we recognize that white Christianity is actually harmful, and it's also harmful to us in some of the ways that we have named.

And mainline progressive white Christianity is not off the hook. We all kind of the three of us kind of come from that. You know, it's not off the hook in perpetuating that same kind of harm, the disinvestment in any kind of, you know, racial justice work, disinvestment in rural, poor, southern communities, blaming the South all the time for all the problems that are really the problems of white supremacy in all of its forms. And just the data shows, like, the majority of white Christians across the board voted for Trump, approved of Trump. That indicts all of us. Right?

Yeah. I think getting in touch with that, how has it harmed me? How has it harmed us? Like in part it helps us know how to, like, do what needs to be done better for collective liberation, but it keeps us in that place also I think of humility, of -- you know, if we're going to be in the practice of trying to connect to the ones that we've held distant and blamed, in many ways incorrectly, being able to perhaps find some common ground

>> MARGARET ERNST: Yeah.

>> REVEREND ANNE DUNLAP: around that.

>> NICHOLA TORBETT: Wow. Thank you, both of you, for everything that you're saying. It's really -- I have about 10,000 ideas exploding in my head right now, and we'll see which ones I can actually latch on to.

Yeah. I'm really thinking about how part of what white supremacy does is to erode systems of support and just the ways that as queer kids we didn't have. Like our church communities were supposed to be our communities of support and for many of us just weren't. You know, it just failed miserably at that.

>> REVEREND ANNE DUNLAP: Yeah.

>> NICHOLA TORBETT: And how I'm also thinking about how even in progressive Christian contexts there is, like, this idea that being Christian or following Jesus is about morality or, like, being a good person, right, like, and appearing to be a good person. There's something about that that feels really problematic to me. Not that we don't want to be good people and do the right thing and all of that, but that it's like this exterior overlay,

>> REVEREND ANNE DUNLAP: Yeah.

>> NICHOLA TORBETT: A laminate surface or something rather than an actual longing to come into integrity in our own lives. And I feel that in this passage, you know, and I really Anne, I was so grateful at the way you sort of redirected us toward, hmm, who's this really a critique of? Probably not the Jews. Maybe -- could it be Rome? You know, would it be?

>> REVEREND ANNE DUNLAP: What? That's my answer to everything. What?

>> NICHOLA TORBETT: But it made me think about, like, corporate giving. Right? Like what is corporate giving? Corporate giving is the appearance of doing something. It's like tobacco companies giving to smoking cessation programs, right, while selling the drug.

>> REVEREND ANNE DUNLAP: Yeah.

>> NICHOLA TORBETT: And it -- like, here in the Bay Area, we have all these big tech companies. Right? And so part of their maintaining of their image is to do this giving, but we had this big campaign last year around Salesforce, which, of course, is one of the platforms that supports ICE, and they decided that they were going to give \$30 million to study homelessness.

>> REVEREND ANNE DUNLAP: Oh, God.

>> NICHOLA TORBETT: They were going to do a study. And so, you know, anyone who's been following this podcast knows that, you know, some of the movement leaders I follow in the Bay Area are Tiny GrayGarcia and the Homefulness community, who are all either currently unhoused or formerly unhoused people. And they were, like, could you just maybe give us 1 million, one of those 30 million, so that we could build some housing? You know, because we actually already know what the solution to homelessness is; it's housing. But instead, you want to spend all your money on studying. It's, like, there's this way that Rome, right, the elite, want to, like, move money around in such a way that it looks like they're doing something without actually ever transforming the underlying structures.

And then the final point that was just kind of exploding in my head is like so one of the things that Tinny GrayGarcia was saying is, like, "Hey, any of you white folks or folks with formal education privilege, you know, can you work your connections to get to the executives of Salesforce and ask them to give us \$1 million?"

You know, but for me as a raised poor workingclass person, the idea of trying to talk to someone at Salesforce is, like, super intimidating and brings up all of my internalized classism and shame around, like, why would they listen to me? They're not going to listen to me. You know, and who am I? And I don't have the right words. And so there's a whole other piece of healing around that that would enable me to actually be of more service, you know, and have the brave conversations with people who have access actually shifting things.

>> MARGARET ERNST: I find myself also wanting to look more closely at taking responsibility for where I do have access. I think it's been easy for me, especially as I've gotten approved by the institutional church as a minister, even within it, even further want to distance myself as a leader because of frustration, but then I think about how, like, ultimately actually owning and claiming the positions of authority we think of in for, like, whether or not we, like, no matter how ambivalently we feel about them.

I mean mostly because I see that modeled, right, by black leaders, by indigenous leaders, by black women leaders, by black queer leaders, by black trans leaders, like, really never taking for granted what needs to be done with leadership and to (Inaudible) [44:30] leadership.

And so, you know, as I think about this through the lens of Lent, I'm, like, what do I need to put down? Right? We often put down (Inaudible) [44:41] in Lent. And I'm, like, I need to put down my sense of my own powerlessness.

>> REVEREND ANNE DUNLAP: Oh.

>> MARGARET ERNST: Yes. I need to put down my feeling that the work itself will be the healing because though I do believe the work is a healing, I also need to take I need to put down the belief that it is all of it. Every step I take has to be the healing. Every move I make has to be the healing. And, like, every breath I take has to be the healing.

What I was taught about from PICO and Faith in Action is that power is simply to be able, to be able to have autonomy and say in what happens to you and to what the world you live in looks like and what your community is like and who is hurt and who hordes power. And I want to put down whatever holds me back from claiming that responsibly. And I want to put down the belief that I could never do it right enough.

>> NICHOLA TORBETT: Yes.

>> MARGARET ERNST: And thus disavowing myself. And I want to put down the idea that I would want that I need to do it alone, that the only way that I can actually show up with a -- like, moving, like, holding all those contradictions of pain within me or, like, spaces, like, I am ashamed or don't feel like enough, I think the only way to actually be present with that all is to have enough relationships of love and belonging and connection. Right?

But I need to take them seriously enough those relationships seriously enough and the spaces that belong in seriously enough and myself seriously enough. I give myself a pass from my own healing because and maybe it has to do Christianity itself, right, that has told me that it doesn't matter, like, to feel good in oneself. Right? We've gotten that message a lot. Anne says our ancestors got that message a lot, especially women ancestors.

>> NICHOLA TORBETT: Yeah.

>> REVEREND ANNE DUNLAP: Wow.

>> MARGARET ERNST: They were told they were pieces of crap, so no wonder we often feel like pieces of crap. You've got



generations and generations and generations and generations of being told that we're crap and thus making us powerless to change anything.

>> REVEREND ANNE DUNLAP: Yeah.

>> MARGARET ERNST: Because when you have a whole bunch of people who are told that they're crap, it's a lot harder to rise up and see who benefits and to do things together.

>> REVEREND ANNE DUNLAP: That's great.

>> MARGARET ERNST: Build relationships together.

>> REVEREND ANNE DUNLAP: Well, let's lay that shit down for sure.

Yeah. I want to second, like, for myself the laying down of, like, feeling alone or that I have to do it all by myself. Like that was a good coping skill when I was a teenager because that was the truth that I was living in, but it doesn't actually serve me in this moment and probably the rest of the moments in my life, and I think it's a way that white supremacy tries to keep us separated from each other. And because if it's just me by myself all alone, wow, it's easy to fall into despair. Wow, it's easy to feel like this is never going to be enough to fix all the problems of the world. I can never be enough.

And this has been something I've been, like, practicing with since the fall, I think. And one of the first ways I did that was reach out to the two of you, right, like, a little text group, like, I actually need to have people in my life. I mean, I have friends. I have a beautiful, wonderful relationship of, you know, 26plus years. I have friends, but like some -- like I want a daily sense that I am not in this alone. I don't have to figure it all out by myself. I don't have to figure out my healing all by myself.

>> MARGARET ERNST: That's true. That's true.

>> REVEREND ANNE DUNLAP: You know? And I'm thinking back to this text and this, like, go in your room and shut the door and be in secret.

>> MARGARET ERNST: Right.

>> REVEREND ANNE DUNLAP: I'm, like, that's dangerous, actually.

>> MARGARET ERNST: Yeah.

>> REVEREND ANNE DUNLAP: Which makes me think that's not what Jesus actually meant. I hope that he didn't actually mean you're on your own --

>> MARGARET ERNST: Yeah.

>> REVEREND ANNE DUNLAP: -- in the face of the empire. Like I don't think that's what he meant at all.

Now I want to, like, do a whole, like, podcast just on this, like, what are you doing? Because everything else that he does is so collective. Right? Feed each other, touch each other, heal each other, like all of that.

So, you know, you know, the one group that he actually names is the gentiles, so that should be a clue in Verse 7, which we didn't read. Don't be like the gentiles. So there might be a little hint. Something different going on here. I really want there to be something different going on here than go in your closet and figure it all out by yourself. Like as a queer person, obviously, that's a problem. But in general, I think within white supremacy

>> MARGARET ERNST: Yeah.

>> REVEREND ANNE DUNLAP: we need each other.

>> MARGARET ERNST: Yeah.

>> REVEREND ANNE DUNLAP: Yeah. So I want to lay that down. I want to keep laying that down.

>> MARGARET ERNST: Right. I know we're almost done, but (Inaudible) [50:34]. And I think, you know, find enough of your own space and your own bounded place of solitude to be able to hear what is yours and yours alone. Right?

>> REVEREND ANNE DUNLAP: Oh, sure. I'm the world's hugest introvert, so (Inaudible) [50:53].

>> MARGARET ERNST: But, like, I would only have I'm only able to be here with you all now having this conversation because I did take some time, right, like just working with myself. So I think that, yeah, there's a there's these pulls, right, of either being entirely enmeshed in a community in which we cannot find ourselves, and then there's the other pull of the -- that's isolation and shame for you and needing to reach out

for each other. So I think

>> REVEREND ANNE DUNLAP: To hell with binaries.

>> MARGARET ERNST: Yeah.

>> NICHOLA TORBETT: Right.

>> MARGARET ERNST: I'm so grateful for what has unfolded from us looking at this text together. So grateful to both of you. So grateful for all of you who are listening, and we hope that there is something here for you that you'll be taking with you on your own journey and you'll have some clarity on what you want to put down and also how you will find the power that is within you, a sacred power.

>> REVEREND ANNE DUNLAP: Yes.

>> MARGARET ERNST: (Inaudible) [52:00] and sacred power.

<<*Music interlude, verse 2 of "Building Up a New World."*>>

<<*"Courage, sisters, brothers, people: don't get weary, though the way be long."*>>

>> REVEREND ANNE DUNLAP: So if you've been listening to this podcast for a while, you know that we always end with some kind of call to action. We've given you a lot of possibilities for, like, internal or perhaps not all on your own collective work. Have these kinds of conversations, take these questions that we're asking, and talk with your people. Find your people and have these conversations together with them.

We also want to continue to raise up as an action, you know, to access the Community Safety for All Toolkit, because I think there's so much in there, I say with humility, as one of the, like, main creators of it, although both of you actually helped an immense amount. There is stuff in there about, you know, if we're not relying on police, then we are actually relying on one another in whole new ways and figuring out that kind of growth together and that reliance on one another, which to me also feels resonant to some of the things that we talked about today.

So that's your call to action for this week, for the Ash Wednesday. Lay some stuff down, divest from the police. Those are always good answers.

So thank you. Thank you all for joining us wherever you are on this good Earth today. We'd always love to hear from you. You can comment on our SoundCloud or Twitter or Facebook. And,

also, we'd love to hear about how we're doing, especially from folks of color and non-Christian folks who may be checking us out.

Next week we'll have a resistance word from -- actually, a whole 'nother conversation with a whole different crew that Margaret is putting together from our awesome contributors. So be excited and be ready for that.

You can find out more about SURJ at [showingupforracialjustice.org](http://showingupforracialjustice.org) and our podcast lives on SoundCloud. Search on "The Word Is Resistance." You can give us a "like" on or rate us on iTunes, Stitcher, or wherever you listen to our podcast.

Transcripts are available as well on our website, although I don't think because of the conversational nature of these that we'll have transcripts for these. We'll have to talk about that in a minute, I think. But the transcripts will include references and resources and action links, so we'll make sure you at least have that.

And, finally, a huge thanks to our sound editor this week, who is Matt Reno. We're really grateful for you, Matt, for stepping in for us for this special episode.

>> NICHOLA TORBETT: So as we close out this episode, I would just remind all of you that you are not alone. We are with you. You are loved and lovable. And we're in this together.

So many blessings to you for good health, deep transformation, and loving connection as we build up a new world. Until next time, this is "The Word Is Resistance."

<<Verse 3 of "Building Up A New World, Verse 1 repeated.>>

<<"Rise, Shine, Give God glory, Children of the Light"

*We are building up a new world, builders must be strong.>>*

#### REFERENCES:

Anne particularly referred to the commentary on Matthew 6 from:

*The Jewish Annotated New Testament, NRSV.* Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler, editors. Oxford University Press, 2011. (Check all the amazing essays in the back!)

The New Oxford Annotated Bible, Augmented Third Edition, NRSV. Michael D. Coogan, Editor. Oxford University Press, 2007.

See also this Twitter thread regarding the “hypocrites” being a critique the Pharisees also had:  
<https://threadreaderapp.com/thread/1016098849864241152.html>

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