



### Grain

“...you seek only to defeat evil systems. Individuals who happen to be caught up in that system, you love, but you seek to defeat the system.”

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

### Field

"I think the biggest challenge facing us in this current moment is taking the time to engage and listen to people who are ideologically different from ourselves. Jesus tells us in the text for Reformation Day (Romans 3: 19-28) that we will know the truth, and the truth will set us free. Whatever our dwelling place, ethnicity, religion or political belief, the truth is that we are all beloved children of God, worthy of care and compassion. The law of faith compels us to love those whom we may not like. The law of faith urges us to listen compassionately to those with whom we will disagree on all sorts of matters. The truth sets us free from the fear of reaching across that divide where true where true reformation *and* transformation begins. And for this reforming, radical command, thanks be to God!" Martin Otto Zimman

**Submitted by Judy Staszczuk, Eau Claire, WI**

Who hasn't wanted to run for the hills rather than talk about a hot topic with someone you think will completely oppose your views? In some circumstances it may be good to avoid certain issues. When isn't it? When do we have something to learn from another's perspective? When are we wasting our energy? Maybe we need dialogue about entering into dialogue. Try writing a list of obstacles to discussing difficult issues. Which ones do you think are good reasons not to engage? Which ones are barriers for you? Here are some examples:

- I have already tried and know it won't end well.
- I personally hate dealing with conflict.
- I'm afraid if I listen too much I might start to normalize things that I disdain.
- There is something wrong with that person.
- I don't want to risk division.
- I'm okay with conflict but have to hold myself back so that I don't offend anyone.
- I don't like to face any possible ways I can think differently.
- I think I already know what that person's thinking.
- I want to deepen my conversations with them but will get to know them better first.

You might want to ask how you can strategically create space for dialogue about difficult issues. Maybe you have already. If so, are you sharing your experience with others? Or do you know of someone in your area who has had success at creating space for dialogue? **Pastor Carolyn Sellers of Kingo Lutheran Church** in Shorewood led her congregation in a dialogue about the November 2016 presidential election. She is willing to share her experience and resources: [pastorcarolyn@gmail.com](mailto:pastorcarolyn@gmail.com) An ELCA oldie but goodie is **Talking Together as Christians about Tough Social Issues: [www.loppw.org](http://www.loppw.org)** (under Advocacy Ministries – scroll to the bottom)

Whatever our experiences strategizing or stumbling as we try to do the right thing, we pray for the grace to love our neighbors and see them as beloved children of God.

### Prayer

Highly recommended.

### Share

Send any quotes you'd like to share with our network to [cindyc@loppw.org](mailto:cindyc@loppw.org)

Many blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy