

## “Beloved Community,” Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

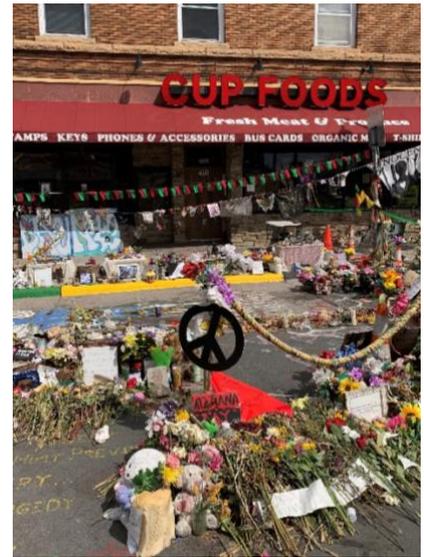
Written by Rev. Miriam M. K. Bunge, May 2021



Place-and-White Mural.

On Tuesday, May 4, 2021, in Minneapolis at George Floyd Square, God in community found me, and I found God in community. I was not "expecting" this visit to be a spiritual experience, but then, when do we really "expect" an event to be a spiritual experience? MPLS weather was pleasant that Tuesday and my husband, Gary, sister, Ruth, and I walked outside in George Floyd Square for about two hours.

This spiritual experience manifested itself in the sights, sounds, smells, tastes and relationships of community, a “Beloved Community,” as Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke of. George Floyd Square encompasses an area of about four blocks with various active and inactive businesses and homes. For about a block, written on the pavement are hundreds of names of other BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Color) killed by police.



Location of George Floyd’s death.

There were two main areas honoring black George Floyd, one by Cup Foods where, on May 25, 2020, he was killed, I mean lynched. Both areas were showered with flowers, stuffed animals, writings and artwork. I heard a black woman and black man talking loudly, expressing their anger about people littering in this place of honor for George Floyd and lovingly picking up trash.

My first inclination was to become a part of their conversation, expressing my anger for those disrespecting George Floyd in this way. I did not because I did not want to be a pushy white woman interrupting their space.



Raised Fist Sculpture.

We talked with a black man and shared that the three of us were from Michigan and Minnesota. He thanked us profusely for coming and he and I did a step dance separately, yet together. As we walked on the street, two young white women came up to us and asked if we wanted to get a vaccine for COVID 19. The church in the area was serving as a site for vaccinations. We thanked them and said we all had our vaccinations. I overheard a young white man talking with a group and saying that he used to work with George Floyd.

Walking toward a wonderful barbecue aroma, we found a small take-out restaurant and while waiting for our lunch, had a great conversation with a black woman who worked for a landscaping company. She had lived in a house across the street. When we left with our food, we met a self-appointed medic, a white man, taking care of any physical needs that might come up in this community. We heard music coming from a parked vehicle. God was finding me, and I was finding God in this community.

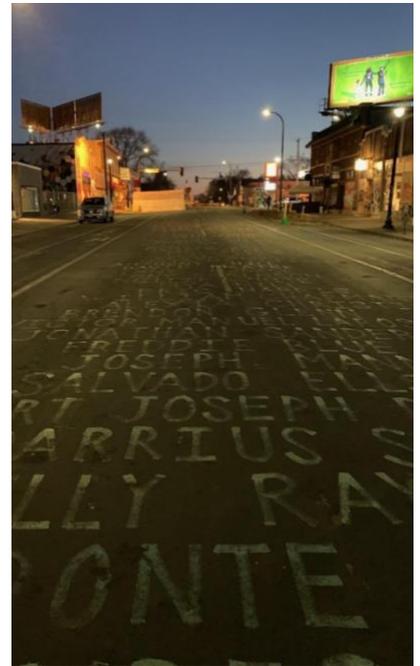
George Floyd Square also included a Speedway gas station not being used to fuel cars, but to fuel people. Where the pumps “were” was a bonfire pit, burning daily from morning until night, with benches encircling it. I asked a young white woman if

we could eat our lunch around the bonfire. "Sure," she said. "Everyone is welcome!" All are welcome to visit or sit in silence, honoring George Floyd and supporting this community.

Feeling the wooden bench beneath me, I ate my delicious catfish nuggets, greens and coleslaw. Gary, Ruth and I began talking with this woman and two young men, all sitting around the bonfire. As we talked, one young white man would add more wood to the bonfire. The woman who welcomed us shared some of her food with the white man who was barefoot. I noticed many cases of plastic water bottles, of which I imagine anyone could enjoy. We all talked about where we were from. In our conversation, I said the words "institutional racism" and one of the young men said with gladness, "Wow, it is great to hear someone who is old caring about institutional racism!" We had a wonderful conversation and exchanged titles of books about racial justice. God was finding me, and I was finding God in this community.

This May 4, 2021 at George Floyd Square was a spiritual experience for me in that God found me in a myriad of ways and I found God in a myriad of ways through this "Beloved Community." Amid this site of the horrible act of the lynching of George Floyd was a precious, welcoming and loving community honoring Mr. Floyd. I was honored to be met by and to meet this community. I mean God.

In our Evangelical Lutheran Church in America congregations and ministries, how does God in community meet people and how do people meet God in community? Are we a "Beloved Community?"



Names of BIPOC Killed by Police.