

Letters to Our Community

Guidelines for letters are on page 31.

Disclaimer: The information and opinions expressed in Letters to Our Community are the responsibility of the letter writers and should not be interpreted as the views of OCN even if the letter writer is an OCN volunteer.

Walking with purpose: thoughts on BLM in Colorado Springs

Yesterday, at one of the peaceful protests organized in downtown Colorado Springs, I saw a sign that resonated with me: "BLM The Church Cannot Be Silent!"

Growing up in Colorado Springs and in the United Church of Christ tradition, I am no stranger to hardships and social justice work. Being a Black child, and now a Black woman, in Colorado Springs (especially northern Colorado Springs) is hard. I was 8 years old the first time kids really started targeting me for my race, and I've been having to fight with family, friends, and strangers

in defense of my human rights ever since. I was afraid to wear my Black Lives Matter (BLM) bracelet to my high school because I knew that people would try to fight with me about it (and I was right). This week has really brought me back to 2016, the year of the Baltimore "riots." At school, a white person that I thought was friendly spent an entire lunch period telling me that the riots in Baltimore were "unwarranted" and that police brutality against Black people is "population control."

So, let's circle back to that sign. It resonated so deeply with me because it is true. The struggle for justice is one that is deeply rooted in Jesus' teachings, and yet the church has historically assisted in or been silent about the oppression of Black folks. I was lucky to be raised in a church community and tradition that was focused on fighting injustice of all kinds, because that's what Jesus would have done. He would be walking side by side with

the protesters in defense of Black people and Black lives.

The church cannot stay silent in situations of injustice. Now is the time to speak up, to march, to donate, to educate on and pursue anti-racism work, because this work is integral in defeating injustice and inequality in the U.S. This work is uncomfortable—it will challenge beliefs you've held for a long time; it will force you to deeply examine the internalized racism that we all have—but it is nothing compared to the discomfort of being Black in America. The time has come: Everybody needs to speak up and take a stand for real, systemic change in pursuance of a life "On Earth as it is in Heaven."

Amelia Kemp

Summer communications specialist intern
Black Forest Community Church ■

Between the Covers at Covered Treasures Bookstore

Get out there!

By the staff at Covered Treasures

"In the presence of nature, a wild delight runs through the man, in spite of real sorrows."

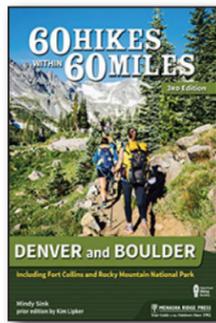
—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Now is a wonderful time to get outside, especially as a safe way to spend time with family and friends.

60 Hikes within 60 Miles: Denver and Boulder: Including Fort Collins and Rocky Mountain National Park (Revised 3rd Edition)

By Mindy Sink (Menasha Ridge Press) \$22.95

Blending popular trails and hidden gems, this full-color edition features trails that transport you to scenic overlooks, wildlife hot spots, and historical settings that renew your spirit and recharge your body. Each hike description features information on distance, difficulty, scenery, traffic, hiking time, detailed directions, GPS-based trail maps, elevation profiles, tips on nearby activities, and more.



Colorado Day Trips by Theme

By Aimee Heckel (Adventure Publications) \$16.95

Jam-packed with more than 170 of Colorado's best destinations, this guidebook helps you take a simple day trip or string together a longer vacation of activities that catch your interest. Destinations are organized by themes, such as annual festivals and outdoor adventures. Discover hot springs, mountain peaks, museums, national parks, and more.

Thrasher's Fly Fishing Guide: An Essential Handbook for All Skill Levels

By Susan Thrasher (Menasha Ridge Press) \$16.95

Expert angler Susan Thrasher provides your all-in-one resource on fly fishing with success. Covering beginner to advanced knowledge, various methods, tips and techniques, how to teach kids, and so much more, you will find this an essential guide.

Colorado Journey Guide: A Driving & Hiking Guide to Ruins, Rock Art, Fossils & Formations

By Jon Kramer and Julie Martinez (Adventure Publications) \$16.95

This resource helps you discover some of Colorado's best: majestic mountains, ancient ruins, secret canyons, hidden waterfalls, and exotic places. The author's rating system for significance in archaeology, geology, and paleontology ensures that you find the places that are right for you and your interests. Illustrations by Vernon Morris depict pottery, prehistoric animals, and more.

Family Camping: Everything You Need to Know for a Night Outdoors with Loved Ones

By Charlie and Cheryl Ess (Falcon Press) \$24.95

This just might be the ultimate camping handbook, whether you're with family or friends, camping or in your backyard. Part inspiration, part practical knowledge, this book is a whole lot of fun, offering up food and drink recipes, family activities, nature hacks, expert know-how, and more.

Mountain Biking Colorado's Front Range: A Guide to the Area's Greatest Off-Road Bicycle Rides (2nd edition)

By Stephen Hlawaty (Falcon Press) \$21.95

Featuring 45 off-road bicycle rides along Colorado's Front Range, this guide includes rides from Fort Collins south to Boulder, Denver, Colorado Springs, and everywhere in between. Readers will find maps, route directions, vivid descriptions, and much more. A mountain biking atlas to the Front Range region, this one-of-a-kind

guidebook details each trail in relation to local history, geology, archeology, legend, and lore.

Night Sky: A Field Guide to the Constellations Revised and Expanded (with Card Flashlight)

By Jonathan Poppele (Adventure Publications) \$16.95

Revised and expanded, this award-winning book takes a simple approach to finding 64 constellations by focusing on one constellation at a time, teaching how to locate any constellation in relation to the Big Dipper, the North Star, and the top of the sky. It also introduces mythology, facts, details about the planets, solar system, and more.

The Daring Book for Girls

By Andrea Buchanan and Miriam Peskowitz (William Morrow & Co.) \$16.99

For every girl here is a hands-on guide to adventure, imagination, and fun. Have fun, take risks, learn a variety of skills, activities, games, how to put up your hair with a pencil, whistle with two fingers, build a good campfire, make paper airplanes, clubhouses and forts, public speaking, famous women in history, and more.

Dangerous Book for Boys

By Gonn and Hal Iggulden (William Morrow & Co.) \$22.99

Now a Prime Original Series, this bestselling book for every boy from 8 to 80 covers essential skills such as building tree houses, learning how to fish, tying knots, skimming stones, and stories of incredible courage. It's a wonderful collection of all things that make being young or young at heart fun—building go-carts and electromagnets, identifying insects and spiders, and flying the world's best paper airplanes.

Until next month, happy reading.

The staff at Covered Treasures can be contacted at books@ocn.me.

Perspective on Our Community

The stone soup of yard work

By Elizabeth Clancy

In July 2018, my family escaped the domestic violence that hid behind the solidly respectable front door of our home for 20-plus years. Since then, our lives have revolved around healing the physical, emotional, and financial damage that was left behind. Our yard seemed like the best place to start so that we could reap immediate, visible rewards in assessing our progress each day. That August, we began to clear our property of the extensive physical damage and debris and to re-establish the character, nature, and integrity of the original footprint of our home. This process has been symbolic of the journey we have taken over the last two years to establish the character, nature, and integrity of our lives. All of this, though, it is fair to say, has come, "with a little help from our friends."

During that first summer, emotions ran high and we were grappling with new realities, as well as learning to understand and process old traumas. One afternoon, I was working in the yard when I overheard a couple of neighbors talking. They were discussing the disheveled state of a neighbor's yard. Their observations of the neighbor's property weren't kind and included discussing whether it was time to contact the homeowner's association to complain. In the past, I had received complaints from the association regarding the dogs getting off of the property and where our garbage cans were

stored. This, though, took the proverbial "cake" in my mind. There we were, just starting to clean up our lives through the slow process of picking up the yard and these folks were knocking it. Did they have any idea? Of course not! Would I give them an idea?

"Excuse me," I interrupted, tears of indignation streaming down my face. "Do you have any idea of what has been going on?" Well, not to go off on a tangent, but I went off on a tangent. These neighbors heard about what went on behind many closed doors in "solid" middle-class neighborhoods. Although they had no idea about what was happening in the home just beyond their own properties, they heard how they could curb the judgment about the yard, as our lives were as destroyed as that yard. My tirade waned once I realized how I had gone on. Although one neighbor immediately responded defensively to my tirade, the other extended a thoughtful apology that very day, referring regretfully to a family member who had been in a similar situation.

Thankfully, time passed as it does, and summer became fall. The second neighbor offered to help us with blowing out our sprinklers. And the cleanup slowly continued as the seasons changed. Over this time, while monetary problems were a constant worry, the neighbors directly behind our home and across the street both sent groceries to us to help us make ends meet. Again, in the spring, the second neighbor extended his kindness

by offering the use of an aerator that he had rented for a couple of hours so that we could care for our property. By this time, the first neighbor had apologized for any misunderstanding resulting from the overhead conversation of the prior summer and had indicated that he would like a positive neighboring relationship. Things were turning around.

By 2013, my family moved to Gleneagle from New York City in search of a life away from the sensory overload of a city that never sleeps and a family history of generational domestic violence (with which I was just beginning to grapple) to a place of what we hoped would be calm appreciation. Our journey to that place, though, began thanks to my neighbor and dear friend who made a Safe-to-Tell phone call in 2014 to alert authorities that domestic violence was occurring in my home. Thanks to both small and large gestures from our many generous, thoughtful, and kind Gleneagle neighbors, our yard and our home are beginning to thrive, and we are looking forward to a life of more than just surviving our flight from domestic violence.

For information about The Fourth Judicial District Domestic Violence (DV) Court, see https://www.courts.state.co.us/Courts/County/Custom.cfm?County_ID=6&Page_ID=529

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