

# Editorial: Ostriches, wedges or healers: What will we be in these turbulent times?

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I spent time away last week.

That sentence seems absurd.

I pray for pastors and other leaders throughout Texas every month and email them when I pray for them. Last month, I prayed they would receive a Sabbath that would rejuvenate them for continuing ministry. Several wondered if I would take my own “advice.”

Though I did not check email, texts, voice mail or social media last week, I did see the news. What a week to be away.

It can be difficult to think through all that is happening in our country. We may be trying to push it out of our mind. But we mustn't.

Here are some events in recent headlines:

- [Breonna Taylor](#) was shot and killed by police.
- [Ahmaud Arbery](#), while out for a jog, was shot and killed by a white man.
- [George Floyd](#) was killed by police.
- A white woman in Central Park was afraid of a black man and called 911, accusing him of threatening her and her dog.
- President Trump created concern with a tweet that included, “ ... [when the looting starts, the shooting starts.](#)”

- Twitter flagged tweets by President Trump with [“fact-check warnings.”](#)
- Millions of people in hundreds of places around the world have been [protesting](#) against racism and police brutality.
- [Martin Gugino](#), a 75-year-old protester, was shoved to the ground—hitting his head—by police officers in Buffalo, N.Y., who then walked past him as he bled.
- President Trump said that to deal with “professional anarchists, violent mobs, arsonists, looters, criminals, rioters, antifa and others,” he “strongly recommended to every governor to deploy the National Guard in sufficient numbers that we [dominate the streets](#). Mayors and governors must establish an overwhelming law enforcement presence until the violence has been quelled.”

Trump went on to say, “If a city or a state refuses to take the actions that are necessary to defend the life and property of their residents, then I will deploy the United States military and quickly solve the problem for them.

...

“America needs creation, not destruction; cooperation, not contempt; security, not anarchy; healing, not hatred; justice, not chaos. This is our mission, and we will succeed 100 percent. We will succeed. Our country always wins. That is why I am taking immediate presidential action to stop the violence and restore security and safety in America. I am mobilizing all available federal resources, civilian and military.”

He concluded his address by saying, “And now I’m going to pay my respects to a very, very special place.”

- [Protesters in Washington, D.C., were cleared](#) from between the White House and St. John’s Church.

- Shortly after protesters were cleared, President Trump walked from the White House to St. John's Church, where [he held up a Bible in front of the church's sign](#) for a photo-op.
- Behind all these events, in the United States we passed [100,000 COVID-19 deaths](#) and reached an [unemployment rate](#) not seen since the Great Depression.

And these are just some of the headline-making events.

Ignorance is bliss, but the times call for us to set aside our comfort and to pay attention.

## Stepping back to pay attention

I sat by the pool last week with all of these events on my mind. I watched bees work Vitex bushes and wind ripple the pool water. I listened to birds chirp and water pour gently into the pool. And I realized the natural world is oblivious to what keeps us up at night.

The natural world seems indifferent to our turbulent times, even as it [eagerly awaits its liberation](#) from the effects of our sin. What I observed in the workings of nature is that nature is not going to solve the problem. The natural world is waiting ... on us.

## Healers observe and then act

What will we be in response to these turbulent times?

To be an ostrich is easy. Just close our eyes. But we must understand, though we can't see the world, the world still can see us, and it looks like some of us are trying to hide. When Christians do this, we present a fraudulent gospel.

To be a wedge is easy. Just pick a side. Believe whatever our side tells us, be our nastiest selves in defending our side and lash out at all opponents. And when Christians do this, it is as though we are offering vinegar to the thirsty.

To be a healer is hard. Being a healer is the least natural for us and the most like Jesus. To be a healer means we take a kind of [Hippocratic oath](#) to do no harm or injustice. It means we pay close attention to everything so we can work toward the greatest good—not for the sake of the good, but as ambassadors of the Healer.

In paying attention, we will observe things that disturb us. We will see people suffer and be killed. We will see people flaunt the law and abuse justice. Just as a doctor must not look away in order to bring healing, we must not look away.

Our observations must lead, not merely to action, but to active healing, which is harder still. Some don't think they are sick. Some are more afraid of the pain of healing than the pain of dying. Some have found advantage in their sickness and will not let it go easily. There will be resistance to healing, and that resistance may be very painful.

But as children of God who are creative, compassionate and courageous and who believe every person is created in the image of God, we can face this pain.

Successfully being creative and not destructive, cooperative and not contemptuous, healing and not hateful will not be because we are American. It will be because the children of God are alive in God's Spirit, [seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness](#). When Christians do this, they shine with the light of Christ.

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