

# NEW CHURCH HACKS DECOLONIZING THE CHURCH



There are some assumptions that I make about us as The Church that I probably should articulate briefly. When I read about our history as The Church, one of the harsher, more disquieting truths is that The Church has been an imperialistic colonizing entity since well before the times of Columbus venturing from Europe to conquer the “new territories.” That history is not a version of history, or a perspective, but is a deeply embedded element of our history. Included in that history of The Church is the sense of that the people of The Church, or Christians, are superior, better than, above others who are not Christianized. That sense of superiority remains with The Church today. And it is difficult to imagine that there is a manifestation of The Church who are not a Colonized and Colonizing Church – maybe even at the same time.

While there is much that needs to be said, below are the four “hacks” that I offered during the October 13, 2021 Webinar hosted by New Church Ministry, and Rev. Terrell McTyre. As you listen to the hour-long video you will hear Rev. Naomi Washington Leapheart from Philadelphia share a hack, then me, then Rev. Terrell McTyre, and then Rev. Brandon Wrencher. And we continue going around in that order sharing our hacks, while also engaging one another in conversation about things that one another said. This was probably one of the liveliest, engaged conversations I have been a part of in years, and am grateful to our host, Rev. McTyre and his staff (Wes King and Nadine Compton) for their courage in addressing the colonizing history of The Church.

1. Generosity – as a Christian, I seek to be hospitable and gracious and caring and kind, but what I often find myself, and other Christians doing, is using God-language to wrap my good deeds in so that I can feel better about myself, my faith, and my actions. My hope is that I can return to the practice of generosity; a spirit of opening myself to the unfolding of life, and being vulnerable in each moment – to ask questions, to not re-center the conversation, and to offer my thoughts more as reflections and less as instruction.
2. Humility – as a white person, I swim in the “dominant culture’s” assumptions about how things ought to be, including how church ought to be – *repenting*, I turn towards God and ask God how things ought to be, recognizing that I still carry with me all sorts of assumptions in my unconsciousness --- so *repentance* also means that I turn towards others to help me to see the water I’m swimming in/assumptions I’m carrying. Particularly listening to people who have been harmed by this dominant culture’s assumptions – People of Color, women, people who identify as LGBTQI, people living in poverty and on the margins economically.
3. Reverence – not having been raised in the Church I often find myself critiquing and even ridiculing the Church, particularly for its/our history – but that history has been a series of traditions that have been built upon a reverence for nature, and beauty – look at the Church buildings around the world! They are beautiful expressions, not of art, but of God’s majesty. Yet! They have become something else for most of us today. How do we return our attention to God’s majesty, whether captured in a building, or a piece of art, or a poem, or a forest, or a large body of water, or a camp? How do we turn from our need to be fed to a place where we share our faith stories and grow with one another – with leadership that *exegetes* with us and facilitates our own insights?
4. Silence – there is a time for people who are of Euro-descent to be quiet and listen, particularly to People of Color, Indigenous Peoples, and Hispanic/LatinX people. But that silence becomes a violence when it enables people of Euro-descent to hide from potential consequences for openly saying what they are thinking and feeling.

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