

**Witness Stones Project Teacher Appreciation**  
**June 10, 2023**

There is an expression: “You can’t unring that bell.” It’s an analogy used to suggest the difficulty of forgetting something once it is known. The Witness Stones Project has exposed in a purposeful way the shadowy truth of our past: the institution of slavery, with its unimaginable, *lawful* mistreatment of African (*and* indigenous) people, which endured in this country for nearly 250 years. The intentional redaction of the particulars of this history from our common history books and basic vital records has now been unsealed for us, revealing this great stain, and opening our eyes in head-shaking bewilderment. We had no way to prepare for what we have learned.

We cannot unring that bell.

We cannot remove the great stain. It is our birthmark, the blemish on our country’s face that we have tried to cover up with foundational make-up since our founding. We *can* stop hiding it now. We need to point it out and talk openly about it when people question it, uncomfortable and terrible and embarrassing as it is. It is the only way to remember and restore the worth and dignity of the all-but-forgotten.

We cannot unring the bell, but today, we can point out our birthmark, leave it bare, bring our full attention to it. John C Wally, bell ringer, help us ring the bell noisily, like an alarm.

I am grateful for those leaders from our respective congregations who have been ringing the bells the past few months.

**From St. Matthew’s:**

Becky Hudspeth  
Sharon Pearson

**From UU Westport:**

Janet Luongo  
Lisa Donohue-Olvieri  
Ravi Sankar  
Sudha Sankar Janet Luongo  
Ellie Grosso  
Nathan Pawelek

A special thanks to Sharon Pearson for the coming up with the idea to initiate this project. We found each other, and now, I believe I can speak for Sharon, we will always ring that bell.