

Preparatory Service at the Church of the Great Commission
Camp Springs, Maryland, February 1999
Nancy Coen's Apology as a White American

As the president said, there are not only those who bought and who sold, but those who ruled and destroyed. Many years ago, I was privileged to travel with an international group—about seventy of them were people of color from many nations—and when I came to the South (in the 60s), I was not allowed with my friends to come to a restaurant or stay in a hotel; they had to have separate drinking fountains, separate places for them to be. At that time, the Lord pierced my heart, and I was so ashamed for my own people.

And even as the president has come today to ask your forgiveness for selling your forefathers into slavery, I come to ask you likewise to forgive my people, who whipped you and beat you and abused you, who stole your identity, who separated fathers and mothers and children, for I believe many of the curses that still reign concerning your people are because of us and what we did, that they carry down even to this day. That is why so many of your families have no fathers, that fathers are still separated from children, because of this curse that was brought by my people. So I come today to ask you to forgive me and my fathers, who have sinned against you and brought this upon your people.

For as the president has said, as your pastor has said, this wall and this barrier that is between us *must come down*. [Applause]