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VITAL CONVERSATIONS ON RACE, CULTURE, AND JUSTICE

Series 1: Racism and the U.S. Church

*General Commission on Race and Religion
United Methodist Church*

A Facilitator's Guide



Preface

Conversations around race can be uncomfortable for most of us. The church is no exception.

The General Commission on Race and Religion of the United Methodist Church offers *Vital Conversations: Race, Culture, and Justice* as a way to begin a dialogue, face our misconceptions and fears, and move deliberately to spiritual, community, and social transformation.

The General Commission on Race and Religion offers resources to facilitate, resource, guide, and support discussions on how to move to efficacy, justice, and courageous positive action. Our vision is to invite and lead the church into new conversations about our relevance and our calling from God to serve a world that is far different than when we began our work.

The commission works to build the capacity of the United Methodist Church to be more relevant to more people, younger people, and more diverse people in order to nurture disciples of Jesus Christ who will transform the world for the better. Our ministry model provides resources for congregations and church leaders to increase intercultural competency, institutional equity, and vital conversations.

We recommend that Series 1: Racism and the U.S. Church be conducted in eight sessions:

- Session 1: Introduction
- Sessions 2–8: Videos and Discussion

The introduction and closing sessions may be shorter or longer in length, depending on the group. The seven core sessions are designed to last about ninety minutes, including the videos. Each video runs twenty minutes or less. Eight to ten people in the group are recommended for greater intimacy and participation.

The flow of the core meetings is:

- **Check-in**—how your week was and prayer requests
- **Prayer**—based in part on check-in
- **Video viewing**—of the seven presenters
- **Discussion**—based on questions
- **Next week**—expectations and what is to come
- **Closing prayer**—in unison

We are delighted that you have joined us to discuss the issues related to faith, culture, and fighting oppression in the church and world today through small groups.

The videos by the speakers are available on an enclosed DVD and also at <http://gcorr.org>.

Getting Started

Anyone who claims to live in God's light and hates a brother or sister is still in the dark. It's the person who loves brother and sister who dwells in God's light and doesn't block the light from others. But whoever hates is still in the dark, stumbles around in the dark, doesn't know which end is up, blinded by the darkness.

~ 1 John 2:9–11 (MSG)

The assertion that, “We are in this together,” sometimes sounds empty and inauthentic, overused and void of true feeling and real action, especially at a time when our society seems so divided along lines of ideology, race, class, nation, culture, and ethnicity.

Yet God calls us, as Christians, to come together and “get along,” be in relationship as sisters and brothers in the light, rejecting the darkness, rejecting the sin of racism.

Moving into the light, we ask church leaders and participants to come together in humility, vulnerability, and willingness to have open conversations about race and racism. The first steps of organizing a group and coming together may be one of the most courageous things many of us have ever attempted. Committing to eight weeks of conversation brings us closer to transforming the world for Christ by dismantling racism.

This guide is for the facilitators of the group who should prepare in spiritual and practical ways:

Prayer

Racism and segregation go back centuries in the United States in the form of enslavement of Africans, colonizing and exterminating Native Americans, forcing Japanese Americans into internment camps, and more. We face centuries of systemic and institutionalized racism, but do not be daunted by this history of racism. God can transform all. Small groups, modeled on Jesus' call to and teaching of the twelve disciples, are an important means for change.

Before your study group even gathers members and sets the first meeting date, be in agreement with at least one person to join you in praying for our nation concerning racism, for the upcoming group, and for each potential member.

Look to Psalm 7 as a foundational prayer for justice and a spiritual starting point, continuing to look to parts of the prayer throughout the sessions for the small group.

While praying as you start this study group, ask God to reveal other needs specific to members of the group. Pray that God will help:

- soften the hearts of the people in your setting who will be resistant to a small group that focuses on racial justice,
- ready people who would never join such a group but do so ultimately,
- prepare the hearts and spirits of facilitators and future members,
- grant wisdom to everyone directly and indirectly connected to the group,
- identify group members,
- knit the group together as the eight weeks go by,
- make the Holy Spirit central in directing and leading the group.

Audience

Racism is pervasive and destructive so the audience for this small group is anyone and everyone. That said, many specific groups and individuals would benefit: local church leadership, Sunday schools, young adults, Wesley Foundations/campus ministries, annual conference cabinets and staff, racially diverse mission and ministry groups, seminary classes, groups of lay leaders and local pastors in districts and conferences, affinity groups for people of all races/ethnicities, United Methodist Women, United Methodist Men, missions, and more.

Choosing or Deciding on Facilitators

Anyone can facilitate a group who is courageous enough to face and deal with the tensions, emotional struggle, and even possible recrimination that will come out of directly discussing racism as a group.

Suggested Reading for the Facilitator(s)

Some advance reading is recommended before launching a group:

- Ronald Takaki's *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America*
- Peggy McIntosh's *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack* (available at <http://nationalseedproject.org/white-privilege-unpacking-the-invisible-knapsack>)
- Shelly Tochluk's *Witnessing Whiteness: The Need to Talk about Race and How to Do It*
- Ta-Nehisi Coates's *Between the World and Me*

Inviting People to Participate in the Study

- **Pray**—ask God for direction on who and how to invite.
- **Be inclusive**—invite the people you know, who look like you, but also go beyond one's comfort zone asking new people who look and think differently.
- **Ask**—be bold taking a step of faith, asking an acquaintance or stranger to join.
- **Communicate**—a personal invitation in person, by phone, or via email is preferred. You may also promote participation with posters, eblasts, Facebook, Twitter, and in-person announcements at gatherings.
- **Be patient**—answers may not be immediate or come at all because people need room to pray and reflect on what will be a challenging journey, facing and acting against racism.
- **Trust in God**—by faith, a group will form, while continuing to prepare the details and content for the sessions.
- **Be flexible**—be willing to make changes midstream in planning, hearing from God, and listening to people around you and potential members.

Videos and Questions

As the group watches each video together, invite discussion based on questions provided for each session. Share thoughts, impressions, and ideas. Keep in mind it is easy to drift away from the difficult and uncomfortable topic of race and racism by deflecting and turning to other themes and issues.

When relevant, recognize possible parallels with other forms of bias, institution “isms,” and forms of oppression, but keep the group focused on the grappling with racism.

Session 1: Introduction

Check-in:

Ask about everyone's week, along with prayer requests for joys and sorrows.

Prayer

During the first week, the facilitator should pray rather than request a volunteer. The first day of a small group can be challenging and awkward. People may feel put on the spot being asked to pray. Focusing on racism further deepens the discomfort of the first days of small group. Consider the following parts of a traditional prayer that might make a difficult theme of racism and justice easier to embrace, keeping in mind that prayer requires no formula.

- **Adoration**—Praise God for being the Almighty One, for gathering the group to deal directly with the difficult subject of racism.
- **Confession**—Admit that we have all sinned, and that racism is also a sin.
- **Thanksgiving**—Express gratitude to God for the opportunity to have frank, safe discussions about racism as Christians.
- **Supplication**—Acknowledge joys and pray for sorrows group members shared at the start of the session.

Covenant

Small groups should create a covenant for the emotional and spiritual safety of each member and the group, along with concrete means of setting boundaries. Because of the sensitive nature of having conversations about racism, a group covenant becomes more important.

Consider the Following:

We join together to have new conversations about our relevance and our calling from God to serve a world that we pray will be far different as we begin our work fighting racism. We will build the capacity of our group to be more relevant to more people, younger people, and more diverse people in order to nurture disciples of Jesus Christ who will transform the world for the better. Our hope is that when our group comes to a close, some or all of us will begin new small groups, expanding the ministry of anti-racism. We will strive to get to know one another, pray together, learn together, serve and do outreach and justice together, keeping in mind that God is the leader and center of our small group.

Using the Vital Conversations: Race, Culture, and Justice videos and conversation, we will do all these things, developing a better understanding of racism and the tools to dismantle racism.

I agree to participate, faithfully attending the sessions, reading, contributing, and caring for the needs of the others in the group. I will hold in confidence any personal information that is shared in this group.

Signature _____

Name _____

Date _____

The group is encouraged to draw from this covenant or come up with something new. Specific themes based on group discussion can be used to encourage conversation in drafting a covenant: respect multiple viewpoints; own your intentions and impact; challenge in love; take risks; practice active listening and speak from one's own experience; assert opinions

without attacking other group members; affirm frustration, confusion, and fear; and maintain confidentiality.

Face Test: Do I Have the Full Picture?

Spend 15 minutes doing the "Face Test."

The Body of Christ is multicolored, made up of thousands of languages and experiences, multiracial and interclass. But our upbringing, family, friends, schools, and churches—from which we develop our worldview—are often not so diverse. Did your background expose you to the many textures of God's human family? Draw one component of a human face for every "yes" answer you get for the following statements (eye, eye, nose, mouth, ear, ear, and hair). If you can't draw a whole face, draw as far as you can, and be prepared to discuss the ones you could draw.

1. At least one member of my immediate family (parents, siblings, brother/sister-in-law, grandparents) is from a racial/ethnic group other than my own (meaning at least one of their parents is Asian/Pacific Islander, Latino/a, Native American/indigenous to the Americas, African-American, or of African descent or Anglo/White/European descent).
2. At least one family on my block is (one out of about ten homes) is of a racial/ethnic group other than my own.
3. At least one of my close friends (you know their parents and/or their phone number is programmed into your cell phone, etc.) is from a racial/ethnic group other than my own.
4. The church I attend is racially mixed (at least 10 percent of the members are of a racial group other than my own).
5. The schools I attend(ed) are/were racially mixed (at least 10 percent of the student body are from a racial group or groups other than my own).
6. Of my ten closest friends (i.e., the last people you want to see before you pass on), at least one is from a racial/ethnic group other than my own.
7. I grew up in a home where I never heard my parents or siblings say a negative word about groups of people by race or ethnicity (i.e., "Those dumb Puerto Ricans"; "Jews only care about money"; "She's poor White trash"; "Race-mixing is against the Bible, so you can't date a Black girl," etc.).
8. Of the friends my parent(s) socialize(d) with and regularly invite(d) to our home, at least one is/was from a racial/ethnic/language group other than their own.

Based on the Face Test, discuss how participants were able to create a full face or not. What does this test say about our worldviews and experience when it comes to cross-racial relationships?

Closing Prayer in Unison

Light a candle as a reminder of the Holy Spirit's presence.

Dear God, conversations about racism are difficult. Yet we come together, willing to do the hard work. We thank You, Lord, for this opportunity to enter this safe space to openly share about our national struggle, our global struggle, our church's struggle, and our personal challenges with racism. As we leave one another today, continue to draw our group together, continue to challenge us about racism, and continue to lead us to act. Amen.



Dr. Robin DiAngelo

Deconstructing White Privilege

Dr. Robin DiAngelo is a social scientist and anti-racism educator and the author of *What Does It Mean to Be White? Developing White Racial Literacy*. Director of equity for Sounds Generation in the Seattle, Washington, area, Dr. DiAngelo's previous book (with Özlem Sensoy), *Is Everyone Really Equal: An Introduction to Social Justice Education*, received the Critics' Choice Award by the American Educational Studies Association. Her work on white fragility has appeared in *Alternet*, *Salon.com*, *NPR*, *Colorlines*, *Huffington Post*, and the *Good Men Project*.

Dr. Robin DiAngelo is transparent about white privilege couched in explicit and implicit biases in the video *Deconstructing White Privilege*, the first in a series of *Vital Conversations on Race, Culture, and Justice*.

Dr. DiAngelo describes the most obvious and explicit aspects of racism and white privilege, while going beyond the surface of racism. Her video serves as a foundation on understanding racism and white privilege for the remaining six videos in the *Vital Conversations* series.

Video

Watch *Deconstructing White Privilege*, <http://gcorr.org/vital-conversations-racism-dr-robin-diangelo> (21:54).

Discussion Questions

1. What ideas presented by Dr. DiAngelo stood out for you? How does she describe her experience as one who recognizes herself as a white person, especially when it comes to interacting with people of color?
2. How does denying the existence of racism and white privilege perpetuate racial inequality and unequal outcomes? What are explicit and implicit biases? Give some examples from the video along with some of your own.
3. How can identifying the pillars—individualism, universalism, internalized superiority, good/bad binary, segregation, and miseducation—help in challenging racism? What are the next steps?
4. Dr. DiAngelo says we are not “operating in the spiritual realm” when it comes to racial issues? Is this true for Christians, and what does that mean concerning racism and justice both theologically and biblically? Based on our Christian experiences and the Bible, how can we begin to act against inequity and racism?

Closing Prayer in Unison

Light a candle as a reminder of the Holy Spirit's presence.

Most High God, You urge us to advocate for justice for the widowed and the orphaned. For our contemporary times, one form of oppression is against people of color through white privilege. Open our eyes to the impact racism has on the widowed and the orphaned . . . the African-American woman brutalized by the police . . . the Mexican-American student being told derisively to go back to Mexico. Use us to face white privilege and dismantle racism. Amen.

Session 2: Deconstructing White Privilege

The poor man and the oppressor have this in common: The LORD gives light to the eyes of both.

~ Proverbs 29:13 (AMP)

Check-in

Ask about everyone's week, along with prayer requests for joys and sorrows.

Open with Prayer

Introduction to *Deconstructing White Privilege* Video

All of us must seek the light of God and the light of truth in recognizing oppression. We begin to do so in this session, which focuses on the oppressive behavior that is born out of white privilege.



Dr. Miguel de la Torre

Building the Beloved Community

Dr. Miguel de la Torre is a professor of social ethics and Latino/a Studies at the Iliff School of Theology in Denver, Colorado. Born in Cuba and ordained in the Southern Baptist church, Dr. de la Torre is an engaging speaker, an inspiring scholar and activist, and a prolific author whose books and articles include the popular *Reading the Bible from the Margins* and his newest, *Liberating Sexuality: Justice Between the Sheets*. He has been an expert commentator concerning ethical issues related to Hispanic/Latino religiosity, LGBTQ civil rights, and immigration rights and has appeared in several local, national, and international media outlets. He is well known for his unique approach of religiously analyzing social issues from the perspective of the dispossessed and disenfranchised.

Session 3: Building the Beloved Community

The nonviolent resister must often express his protest through noncooperation or boycotts, but noncooperation and boycotts are not ends themselves; they are merely means to awaken a sense of moral shame in the opponent. The end is redemption and reconciliation. The aftermath of nonviolence is the creation of the beloved community, while the aftermath of violence is tragic bitterness.

~ Martin Luther King Jr., 1957

Introduction to Building the Beloved Community Video

Dr. Miguel de la Torre's approach to dismantling racism is religiously analyzing social issues from the perspective of the dispossessed and disenfranchised.

In his video *Building the Beloved Community*, Dr. de la Torre focuses on the church's role in embracing marginalized communities and cultivating a true spirit of multiculturalism. He names racism as a sin.

Video

Watch *Building the Beloved Community*, <http://gcorr.org/church-building-beloved-community> (16:44)

Discussion Questions

1. What are some of the barriers within the United Methodist Church to building the beloved community and combatting racism?
2. The United Methodist Church in the United States is 97 percent white. What barriers may prevent or discourage people of color from engaging in our ministries and attending our churches? How does our church (or ministry) rank in terms of bringing in people of color or people of other races and ethnicities?
3. What does Dr. de la Torre say about a "color-blind" approach to issues of racial inclusion and justice? What are the implications of racial color blindness in church?
4. What is the difference between individual versus broader social reconciliation?
5. What does the apostle Paul say about diversifying? What does the scripture mean for diversifying the church?

Closing Prayer in Unison

Light a candle as a reminder of the Holy Spirit's presence.

Loving God, we have all sinned. We come to You repenting of the sin of racism. God, raise the consciousness of those whites in power who benefit from racism in the world and the United Methodist Church. Transform all of us in this struggle without being defensive. Once minds are opened to sin and forgiveness, may we be reconciled one to another as the beloved community. Amen.

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone.

~ 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 (NRSV)



Reverend Chebon Kernell

Ongoing Acts of Repentance

The Reverend Glen Chebon Kernell Jr. is the executive secretary of Native American and Indigenous Ministries of the General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church. In this role, he spends half of his time serving as the coordinator for the United Methodist Council of Bishops' effort to fulfill the General Conference resolution mandating an ongoing process to improve relations with indigenous persons through dialogue, study, and local or regional acts of repentance. The other half of his time is spent raising awareness, increasing advocacy, and supporting the empowerment of Native American and indigenous communities globally. Reverend Kernell is an ordained elder in the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference.

Session 4: Ongoing Acts of Repentance

Bear fruit worthy of repentance.

~ Matthew 3:8 (NRSV)

Check-in

Ask about everyone's week, along with prayer requests for joys and sorrows.

Open with Prayer

Introduction to the Ongoing Acts of Repentance Video

Building upon the previous video by Dr. Miguel de la Torre, the Reverend Chebon Kernell calls the church to participate more vigorously in ongoing acts of repentance, justice making and truth telling about the historical and continuing impact of racism, specifically on Native American and indigenous people.

Video

Watch *Ongoing Acts of Repentance*, <http://gcorr.org/ongoing-acts-repentance-featuring-rev-kernell> (13:28).

Discussion Questions

1. What is the United Methodist Acts of Repentance movement? How have various groups, particularly indigenous people, reacted to this movement?
2. What forms of racism have indigenous people encountered? What is the meaning of "love thy neighbor as thyself," particularly for indigenous communities and people confronted by racism?
3. What is some of the history of racism against indigenous people? What has this racism meant to indigenous languages? Does history impact us today? What is the impact of spiritual violence?
4. What has your annual conference, district, congregation, or ministry done to follow up on the 2012 Acts of Repentance? If your group is not familiar with the "Acts," what can you do to learn more and inform others in your ministry context?
5. Some non-Native persons ask, "How many times do we have to apologize? When will you be satisfied?" What should be the church's response to these questions?
6. How does working against racism and for justice connect to our Christian discipleship?

Closing Prayer in Unison

Light a candle as a reminder of the Holy Spirit's presence.

Lord Jesus, we humbly come to You repenting of our sins. Let us hear and support our indigenous sisters and brothers who are suffering because of a long history of racism that impacts all of us today. In our relationship with the indigenous community, let repentance move to meaningful action. Amen.

Next Week

Remind group members to read Peggy McIntosh's *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack* in advance of next week's session: <http://nationalseedproject.org/white-privilege-unpacking-the-invisible-knapsack>.



Dr. David Anderson Hooker

Meaningful Conversations on Race

Dr. David Anderson Hooker is the professor of conflict transformation and peacebuilding at the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, part of the University of Notre Dame's Keough School of Global Affairs. A consultant with JustPeace, a conflict-transformation ministry within the United Methodist Church, Dr. Hooker is a lawyer, mediator, and facilitator who has worked with communities, governments, and international NGOs on justice making and peace building.

Session 5: Meaningful Conversations on Race

Happy are those who observe justice, who do righteousness at all times.

~ Psalm 106:3 (NRSV)

Check-in

Ask about everyone's week, along with prayer requests for joys and sorrows.

Open with Prayer

Introduction to the Meaningful Conversations on Race Video

Dr. David Anderson Hooker outlines elements that hinder and help fruitful dialogue on issues of race in the *Meaningful Conversations on Race* video. In doing so, he traces how myths about race define how we function in life, including work and school, in the form of institutional racism. Dr. Hooker says by avoiding the hard conversations about race, we short-circuit any meaningful dialogue that can result in transformation in our lives and across the country.

Video

Watch *Meaningful Conversations on Race*, <http://gcorr.org/meaningful-conversations-about-race-featuring-rev-dr-hooker> (19:36).

Discussion Questions

1. Dr. Hooker lists three main arguments people make to avoid talking about race and racism. How do these arguments reflect your own lived experience or perspective in life?
2. How do negative feelings affect our willingness and ability to discuss the tough topics of racism, racial injustice, and white privilege?
3. In his dandelion-bluegrass analogy, Dr. Hooker asserts that our systems are not neutral but shaped by biases, tradition, histories, and practices, which is one reason that dandelions are considered weeds to be destroyed, while bluegrass is prized as creating a beautiful lawn. Consider the following list, and discuss how our perceptions of race and racial identity influence what we consider as good/positive/appropriate/traditional appearance of:
 - a dating/marriage partner
 - a hardworking person
 - a safe neighborhood
 - beautiful hair and skin
 - a reliable world leader
 - a cute baby
 - the "all-American" couple
 - the kind of pastor I want in my church
 - a Sunday school teacher
 - artists' renderings of Jesus, Mary, or Moses
 - a stained-glass depiction of Jesus as "The Good Shepherd"
 - a person I would vote for as mayor of my town
4. Dr. Hooker tells his story at the end of the video concerning race and racism. Any similarities or differences in your own story?
5. How do your current local-church experiences in worship, outreach, mission, and witness prepare you to be in community with people of other races? What are some ways you are willing to work in your church to begin building ongoing relationships, Christian community, and space for honest dialogue across racial lines?

Closing Prayer in Unison

Light a candle as a reminder of the Holy Spirit's presence.

Our God on High! Make plain to us what remains invisible to many concerning racist words, actions, and behavior. We seek You, God, to lead us in dismantling institutional racism and inequitable realities based on so many of our false myths. May we join together as Christian sisters and brothers in agreement. Amen.

Come now, let us argue it out.

~ Isaiah 1:18a (NRSV)



Dr. Phillip Klinkner

Continued Struggles in Race Relations

Dr. Phillip Klinkner is a political scientist, blogger, and author. He is noted for his work on American politics, especially political parties and elections, race and American politics, and American political history. He is currently the James S. Sherman Professor of Government at Hamilton College in central New York. In his book, *The Unsteady March: The Rise and Decline of Racial Equality in America*, Dr. Klinkner and his coauthor Rogers Smith argue America's record of race relations cannot be categorized as consistent, gradual advancement toward equality but rather as a series of dramatic moments where multiple factors aligned to advance or hinder progress. The book was the winner of the W. E. B. Du Bois Institute's Horace Mann Bond Book Award and was named as a semifinalist for the 2000 Robert F. Kennedy Book Award.

Introduction to the Continued Struggles in Race Relations Video

In *Continued Struggles in Race Relations*, Dr. Phillip Klinkner confirms that the vestiges of racism for many people of color remain and have not been eradicated. Nor have the practices of institutions in the United States been aligned with democratic ideals of liberty for all. Dr. Klinkner argues that the advance of equality has been unsteady with brief and isolated periods of improvement and long steady stretches of stagnation and retreat.

Video

Watch *Continued Struggles in Race Relations*, <http://www.gcorr.org/video/continued-struggles-in-american-race-relations-2/> (11:48)

Discussion Questions

1. What were the three periods of improvement for racial equality in U.S. history? During these periods, what were indicators of progress in equality?
2. From the 1940s, how did advocates for equality make comparisons between the fight for democracy abroad and the lack of democracy for African Americans in the United States?
3. After the wars, how did retrenchment, retreat, and roll-backs increase inequality for African Americans? Why did racist ideology make a comeback after the wars? How was such racist ideology expressed?
4. Based on Dr. Klinkner's research and our own knowledge, what role has the U.S. Christian churches and other religious institutions in the struggles for racial equality? If you were grading the church on forwarding racial justice, what would that grade be? Why?
5. What lessons have the abolitionists taught us in the face of hopelessness in dismantling racism? What can we learn from William Lloyd Garrison, quoted at the end of this session?

Closing Prayer in Unison

Light a candle as a reminder of the Holy Spirit's presence.

Almighty God, thank You for opening our eyes to the relationship between history and our lives today. May we lengthen the stretches of advancements in equality. May we speak up, loudly fighting, and acting quickly, shortening the long periods in which little progress is made against racism. Amen.

On this subject, I do not wish to think, or to speak, or write, with moderation. No! no! Tell a man whose house is on fire to give a moderate alarm; tell him to moderately rescue his wife from the hands of the ravisher; tell the mother to gradually extricate her babe from the fire into which it has fallen; —but urge me not to use moderation in a cause like the present. I am in earnest—I will not equivocate—I will not excuse—I will not retreat a single inch—AND I WILL BE HEARD.

~ William Lloyd Garrison, 1831

Session 6: Continued Struggles in Race Relations

And you must be responsible for the bodies of the powerful—the policeman who crack you with a nightstick will quickly find his excuse in your furtive movements . . . You cannot forget how much they transfigured our very bodies into sugar, tobacco, cotton, and gold.

~ Ta-Nehisi Coates, Between the World and Me (2015)

Check-in

Ask about everyone's week, along with prayer requests for joys and sorrows.

Open with Prayer



Dr. Pamela Lightsey

Intersections of Oppression and Experiences in Ferguson, Missouri

Dr Pamela Lightsey is associate dean for community life and lifelong learning and clinical assistant professor of contextual theology and practice at Boston University School of Theology. She is a well-known scholar, social-justice activist, and military veteran whose research and work has focused on just-war theory, womanist and “queer” theology, and African-American religious history and theology. An ordained elder in the United Methodist Church, she was among the first members of the executive committee for the Soul Repair Project, which studies the role of moral injury on veterans. Her publications include *Our Lives Matter: A Womanist Queer Theology*.

Session 7: Intersections of Oppression and Experiences in Ferguson, Missouri

It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity.

~ W. E. B. Du Bois (1903)

Check-in

Ask about everyone's week, along with prayer requests for joys and sorrows.

Open with Prayer

Introduction to the Intersections of Oppression and Experiences in Ferguson, Missouri Video

Dr. Pamela Lightsey explores intersectionality—the overlapping of social categories including race, class, and gender—in the context of her life as a clergywoman, a lesbian, and an African-American woman. In her video *Intersections of Oppression and Experiences in Ferguson, Missouri*, she uses her own history and experience as a lens for analyzing and understanding the racial strife in Ferguson, Missouri.

Video

Watch *Intersections of Oppression and Experiences in Ferguson, Missouri*, <http://www.gcorr.org/video/the-intersections-of-oppression-with-rev-dr-pamela-lightsey-2/> (14:40).

Discussion Questions

1. What does Dr. Lightsey's anecdotal experience as a clergywoman, a lesbian, and an African-American woman say about the state of the church when it comes to the intersectionality of gender and ethnicity/race?
2. How can we embrace and act on the doctrine of the Imago Dei relationship to the sacred worth of all people?
3. What does it mean to oppress others when we are all of sacred worth, all part of God's created work?
4. Why are the implications of intersectionality based on social constructs in Ferguson? What have been some of the practical implications for people in Ferguson?
5. How is understanding intersectionality helpful as a tool for social justice activists?
6. How is patriarchy being addressed in leadership roles for African-American women in Ferguson? Why is the shift from patriarchy important, including the history of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement?
7. How has the lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender, queer (LBGTQ) community qualified the Black Lives Matter movement? What are some places of intersectionality with LBGTQ persons and their allies?
8. What can we do as Christians in response to the oppression of intersectionality?

Closing Prayer in Unison

Light a candle as a reminder of the Holy Spirit's presence.

Christ, our Savior and the Prince of Peace, we pray for all who are in the midst of civil unrest and violence in places like Ferguson. Continue to open our hearts to the implications of intersectionality to people of color oppressed by racism. May we continue to speak up and act on behalf of the oppressed. Amen.



Bishop Cynthia Moore-KoiKoi

Tearing Down Fences in Baltimore

Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi is episcopal leader of the Western Pennsylvania Conference of the United Methodist Church. She was elected in summer 2016, while she was superintendent of the denomination's Baltimore Metropolitan District. She played a key spiritual role in the city in 2015 during the unrest after the death of Freddie Gray in police custody, organizing churches to open their doors and minister to children and families whose schools were closed, and to meet other basic needs. She became the face of the United Methodist Church, and church volunteers in red T-shirts were visible walking through neighborhoods, praying for and ministering to people.

Session 8: Tearing Down Fences in Baltimore

Session 8: Tearing Down Fences in Baltimore

Happy are those who observe justice, who do righteousness at all times.

~ Psalm 106:3 (NRSV)

Check-in

Ask about everyone's week, along with prayer requests for joys and sorrows.

Open with Prayer

Introduction to the Tearing Down Fences in Baltimore Video

Bishop Cynthia Moore-KoiKoi shares her experiences in the broader context of racial strife in the video *Tearing Down Fences in Baltimore*. Through the lens of her service and experience as a United Methodist district superintendent in racially torn Baltimore, she challenges viewers to reach out and build relationships in their respective communities. She prophetically calls to all of us in the church to be sources of hope and redemption to communities in conflict. We are all called to be a witness to the love and justice of God in the midst of civil unrest and protest in embattled places like Baltimore.

Video

Watch *Tearing Down Fences in Baltimore*, <http://www.gcorr.org/video/building-bridges-to-community-with-the-rev-cynthia-moore-koikoi-2/> (14:12)

Discussion Questions

1. How can prayer walks be uplifting to those praying and those being prayed for in the community? How can we frame our prayers, including prayer walks, for ethnic-specific and multicultural communities?
2. What are the barriers that may be stopping the church from moving forward in urban communities?
3. How has the "fence," both figurative and literal, created barriers that led to and continues with civil unrest and protest against racism in Baltimore?
4. What role does the church play in erecting and supporting fences/barriers? How can we tear down those fences? What are the institutional fences in the United Methodist Church as a denomination?
5. How did fences come down when Christian leadership walked and prayed through Baltimore? How was community created? What was the importance of hope in one of the outcomes of prayer and community?
6. What are you prepared to do in response to racism in this nation and in our churches? How can we fully support urban ministries and the pastors in those ministries and by extension be a strong beacon for equality, identifying the fences?

Closing Prayer in Unison

Light a candle as a reminder of the Holy Spirit's presence.

Creator God, our provider, we humbly seek You as we agree to continue to speak up and be active against the sin of racism. Help us to be strong in what is a difficult journey. Lift up everyone in this group as we continue to learn about and act against racism and work toward reconciliation and justice. Amen.

You shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.

~ Isaiah 58:12b (NRSV)

Resources

Books

- Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow*.
- Brown, Kelly Douglas. *Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and the Justice of God*.
- Coates, Ta-Nehisi. *Between the World and Me*.
- de la Torre, Miguel A. *The Politics of Jesús: A Hispanic Political Theology*.
- Deymaz, Mark and Oneya Fennell Okuwobi. *Multi-Ethnic Christian Primer: An Eight Week Guide to Walking, Working and Worshipping God Together as One*.
- DiAngelo, Robin. *What Does It Mean to Be White?: Developing White Racial Literacy*.
- Harvey, Jennifer. *Dear White Christians: For Those Still Longing for Racial Reconciliation*.
- Irving, Debby. *Waking Up White: And Finding Myself in the Story of Race*.
- Johnson, Allan G. *Power, Privilege, and Race*.
- Lee, Enid et al. *Beyond Heroes and Holidays: A Practical Guide to K-12 Anti-Racist, Multicultural Education and Staff Development*.
- Takaki, Ronald. *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America*.
- Tatum, Beverly. *Why Are All of the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria: And Other Conversations on Race*.
- Tochluk, Shelly. *Witnessing Whiteness: The Need to Talk About Race and How to Do It*.
- Walden, Ken and Virgil L. Lattimore III. *Practical Theology of Church Diversity: A Guide for Clergy and Congregations*.
- Watson, Benjamin and Ken Petersen. *Under Our Skin: Getting Real About Race—and Getting Free from Frustrations That Divide Us*.
- Wise, Tim. *White Like Me: Reflections on Race from a Privileged Son*.

Websites

- Robin DiAngelo's website: <http://robindiangelo.com>
- GCORR resources: <http://gcorr.org/resources>
- Shelly Tochluk's website: <http://shellytochluk.com>
- Peggy McIntosh's "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack": <https://www.deanza.edu/faculty/lewisjulie/White%20Priviledge%20Unpacking%20the%20Invisible%20Knapsack.pdf>

About the Study Guide Author

Dr. Dianne Glave

Dr. Dianne Glave is coordinator of diversity development and inclusion for the Western Pennsylvania Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church.

She completed her master of divinity degree at Candler School of Theology at Emory University and earned a Ph.D. in history. She served as pastor of local congregations before taking her current position. She has also served as a professor in African-American and ethnic studies.

Her publications include *Rooted in the Earth: Reclaiming the African American Environmental Heritage* and *To Love the Wind and the Rain: African American Environmental History*.

VITAL CONVERSATIONS ON RACE, CULTURE, AND JUSTICE

Series 2: Race, Culture, Tribe, and the Global Church

*General Commission on Race and Religion
United Methodist Church*

A Facilitator's Guide

Introduction

Conversation—the exchange of ideas. The expression of opinions. The raising of questions—looking for answers but not necessarily expecting them. Conversation—the mulling of statements, heard and read. The pondering of thoughts in the mind and in the soul. Conversation—the interaction with written and heard words. Conversation—the search for meaning. The opportunity to veer from the given path. The courage to create a new trail, a new road.

Vital conversations are those experiences that occur in personal exchanges and public arenas where hearts and minds are open to the experiences and ideas of those whom we may not know but whose well-being may very well hinge upon our choices and decisions. Vital conversations are those opportunities where we allow ourselves to question what we think we already know or seek diligently to expand the knowledge to which we have access.

Vital conversations are those times where in the speaking and the listening we commit ourselves to not only wondering why there is a situation of pain, injustice, discord, unease but also to the struggle to improve the lives of those whose needs are the greatest.

Vital Conversations Series 2: Race, Culture, Tribe, and the Global Church invites all who would hear, all who would spend time to listen, all who would be willing to ask if a thing is right, if a situation is just, if a problem could be solved—to enter into a new experience. *Vital Conversations* provides an opportunity for those who are willing to spend time with people they may not know or ever meet to learn something new, to consider a new path for walking hand in hand with God's people everywhere. The issues may not be new. The issues may be painful. The issues may challenge one's sense of comfort, one's perceived beliefs. Yet it is in the listening and the offering of one's thoughts and questions in response to another's story or witness that the conversation indeed becomes vital and meaningful.

Vital Conversations 2 is a series of short videos that feature compelling voices speaking on issues of socio-economic justice, ethnicity and culture, and what has been described as the "rocky road toward truth, reconciliation, and peace." *Vital Conversations 2* offers anyone, who would have ears to listen, opportunities to learn, speak, and act. Come—join the conversation!

How to Use This Guide

This guide may be used in many ways to help people consider issues and challenges facing people worldwide. The primary structure of the guide is organized for use with small groups. It is the hope that cell groups, Sunday school classes, Bible study groups, and people meeting for a church retreat will use these videos and the accompanying study tips. The suggested time frame for the sessions is forty-five to sixty minutes. Each participant, however, is asked to initiate a conversation or share information beyond the group using social media, testimonies, video witnessing, and calls to prayer and action.

This guide also comes with suggestions for use in an individual, self-guided reflection experience. The understanding remains, however, that the person will find some way to share questions or new thoughts, acts of repentance and acts of commitment. History has shown us that a person praying privately or studying alone can be moved to action. In the New Testament, Cornelius (see Acts 10) first prayed alone, yet that vital conversation with God led to a vital conversation with Peter, which ultimately led to vital conversations with persons in his household and community.

While the videos are listed in a specific order, a group or a person may select which video to see first. Consider choosing the video that most interests you by subject or geography. Perhaps you have always wanted to travel to Brazil or Brazil is your native country, so you would listen first to Dr. Nancy Cardoso and hear what hurts her heart. The key is to be open to learning new information and challenging your thoughts and opinions about critical issues facing Christians worldwide.

Establishing a Covenant for Study Groups

When working in a small group, it is important to establish a covenant process. You may use the guidelines in the following sample or create your own:

Code of Confidentiality and Conduct

- Every class member is valued.
- Everyone has a right to speak.
- No one is to use her or his voice or actions to hurt another.
- No one is to dismiss the words and concerns of another classmate.
- What is said in class remains in class.
- No one's story shall be shared without that person's permission.
- Provide empathy and care where appropriate.
- Listen. Speak. Listen. Pray.

Tips for Facilitators

One of the joys of using these video reflections is that the leadership may be shared. Consider tag-leading with someone. Invite persons to select the session(s) that she/he would be most comfortable leading.

Note that the sessions do not have to be done in the order in which they are presented in this guide. Choose the topics that are most appealing—or most challenging—to you and begin there. Nor do you have to view the videos in eight consecutive sessions. Consider doing three sessions per month: meet for three weeks, then on the fourth week, practice living out the “mission possible” ideas that have come to mind. The group does not have to be strictly defined, i.e., the same ten to twelve people. Of course, this could be done in a Sunday school class where there is a fairly consistent group. However, the sessions can also be offered for people

who may not be open to Bible study but are concerned about social challenges and are willing to meet for a specified period of time without feeling as if they are joining a permanent class.

How to Use with Youth Groups

The sessions are designed to accommodate the learning styles associated with young people and adults. There are tactile experiences. There are meditative moments. There are opportunities to reflect through art and creative writing.

Because many youth groups have ongoing programs, it might work best to select two or three of the videos to present to the group, i.e., the video stories of Samantha Mukanganise, Joy Eva Bohol, and Dr. Nancy Cardoso.

Rather than copying and distributing a “Listening and Looking Guide,” (found at the end of each session), to each young person, consider putting the questions on individual slips of paper, placing them in a basket, and having youth draw one, which will be their intentional focus for the learning session. Offer to the youth time to make written notes about their question or statement. If someone is reluctant to share aloud, the group leader then can read the ideas that have surfaced. Use the pair-and-share model frequently. Even though two persons may have different questions or statements to consider, they can discuss and share their ideas. In fact, one reporting process actually involves one person giving a report about the topic that her or his partner was exploring.

Prior to beginning a group reflection process, another option to consider is to encourage youth and young adults to first individually view the video online (via their tablets or phone), and take the five-question quiz that accompanies the video.

Finally, encourage young people to respond to the voices in the *Vital Conversations 2* series through social media. Encourage them to create drawings, posters, speeches, and minutes for mission awareness. The visuals can be placed on walls in the church or in their homes. For speeches and mission minutes, they can share with friends and in worship.

Invitation to Conversation

Read aloud or silently at the beginning of every session.

More and more I begin to believe
The most important thing
We can do in life is to show up—
Just to be there
Present to whatever's going on.
If we're truly present we know
When to stand up and stand with folk
When to step in and intervene in support
When to hold our advice and interruptions
When to nod in support or stretch a hand
When to sit back and just enjoy
It's a delicate, nuanced art requiring practice
So many long to be seen and heard
We can offer Peace simply by being present.
It is simply what God asks of us. It is what God shows us.



Samantha Mukanganise

Why the Church Should Care about Sexual and Reproductive Health

Samantha Mukanganise is a recent graduate of United Methodist-related Africa University. She is passionate about changing the maternal and child health realities of African women. She is working on a research project on maternal and child health needs in Zimbabwean United Methodist Church institutions with United Methodist Women. She believes her passion is the work of God—to create safe spaces for young girls who get pregnant out of wedlock and are subject to criticism, ridicule, and condemnation.

Session 1: Why the Church Should Care about Sexual and Reproductive Health

Prepare for the Session

- Bring a picnic basket (preferably) with an assortment of baby items (blanket, bottle, powder, pacifier, disposable diaper) and set on a table with items spilling over the sides and spread around the basket.
- Copy of “Invitation to Conversation”
- Recruit someone to read aloud the invitation.
- Copies (4) of the dialogue “My Name Is Mary” (provided at the end of this session)
- Recruit three persons to serve as readers in the dialogue.
- A notebook or paper for capturing words, thoughts, ideas on paper (optional)
- For each participant, have a copy of “Listening and Looking Guide” (it is available near the end of the session).

Getting Started (10 minutes)

Ask someone to read aloud the Invitation to Conversation. Then read aloud John 8:2–11 from two different biblical translations. Ask everyone to spend a couple of minutes jotting down a reply to the following two questions (other thoughts that come to mind as a result of hearing the scripture may be added):

- How would you feel if this was you facing death by stoning?
- Whose voice is missing from the story?

Allow a time for prayer (can be a private moment or someone can lead the group in prayer).

Bring the group’s attention to the display of baby items and the picnic basket. Ask them to be prepared to understand how the church can be compared to a picnic basket.

Distribute the Listening and Looking Guide

Tell the group members that the guide is to help them focus on various components of the talk. Take quick notes—do not try to capture every detail. Record a statistic or an image that speaks to your heart. Say that the notes will be useful later in the session.

Play the Video (18–20 minutes)

Introduce the video, explaining that Samantha Mukanganise is an advocate for the sexual and reproductive health of young women in Zimbabwe. Ask participants to go to their Listening and Looking Guide and answer the questions: Why should the church care about the sexual and reproductive health of girls (youth and young adult) in the United States? In Zimbabwe? Once the question is answered, play the video. Encourage group members to watch the video and look for connections with their own lives.

Personal Reflection Time (2 minutes)

Ask participants to review their notes and complete the statement “What hurt my heart the most was”

Discussion Time, Part 1 (15 minutes)

Before sharing thoughts about the remaining questions on the guide, ask the group to listen to one more presentation, a dialogue entitled “My Name Is Mary.” Once the members have heard the dialogue, direct them to go through each question or statement and review their notes. Then ask for at least one or two persons to respond to each question. As group leader, be prepared to give reflections to the statements and questions, especially if no one volunteers to provide feedback.

Discussion Time, Part 2 (5 minutes)

Bring the group back together as a whole and say that there is a seventh question: “And now what?” Now that we have seen and heard, what can the church do? What should the church do? What should individuals do?

Have individuals “pair and share.” If the group is ten or more persons, have them share using “Lean In,” a version of “speed talk.” Line up chairs facing each other and ask people to sit across from a partner as close as possible (think knee to knee). Tell the group they will have one

minute to share as much as possible about their ideas for improving sexual reproductive health for young women. As a signal, simply say, “So what do you think should be done? Talk!”

After one minute, call time, ask people to sit back in their chairs, take a deep breath, and reflect on what they heard and what they said. Then ask people in one line of chairs to move down—to the right or left—(1 person or 2 persons; those at the end will get up and take the place vacated at the other end of the line). Once everyone has a different partner, repeat the process—lean in and talk.

Call to Commitment—When and Where I Enter (3–5 minutes)

Allow persons to return to their seats and get their Listening and Looking Guide. Read aloud the scripture Romans 8:1–2. Remember Samantha Mukanganise’s words at the end of the video: “Youth have so much to offer—all our gifts are right in the basket—let us figure out how to mend the gaps to protect the greatness within.” Enter into a time of personal discernment.

Ask each individual to think about what he or she has seen and heard. Encourage members to accept a “mission possible” task—that there is something that each of us can do—and record their “task” on their guide sheet.

Tweet This! (1–2 minutes)

Encourage participants to use social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) to share one thought, one fact, one challenge to the church around the issues of young women’s reproductive and sexual health.

Close with This Unison Prayer (make copies or project on a monitor):

Dear God, open our hearts and minds to the injustices and pain that young women face. Protect them from the evil that may surround them. Help them handle temptation. Most of all, let them know that Your love never fails them—Your love that is shown through us. Amen.

Session 1: Listening and Looking Guide

Why the Church Should Care about Sexual and Reproductive Health
Samantha Mukanganise

Why should the church care about the sexual and reproductive health of girls (youth and young adult) in the United States? In Zimbabwe?

What hurt my heart the most was

1. Why should the church be like a picnic basket?
2. What is the link between music videos and sexual and reproductive health?
3. What are some of the solutions that young girls seek when they find they are pregnant?
4. What are some of the consequences that they face if they become pregnant?
5. What does Samantha Mukanganise mean when she says “the church is guilty of the death of young women”?
6. What recommendations does she have for the church in Zimbabwe? As a whole?

My Commitment _____

Reach out to GCORR

- Twitter: @GCORR_UMC
- Facebook: General Commission on Religion and Race

My Name Is Mary (A Dialogue)

Reader 1 (R1): My name is Mary. I am twenty-five years old. I am pregnant and I am happy.

Reader 2 (R2): My name is Mary. I am fifteen years old. I am pregnant and not so happy.

R1: My friends gave me a baby shower—everyone wanted me to have a baby.

R2: My family is not speaking to me. They assume I wanted to have sex. No one ... no one has asked me what happened.

R1: A baby to love, a baby to cuddle; my mother is so happy.

R2: My mother put me out—she is ashamed of me. I did not mean to hurt her. My dad is mad—he is an elder in the church, says my pregnancy is embarrassing.

R1: At first I was scared I might not get pregnant; I began using the pill when I was a teenager; I hoped that it would not hurt my body. My parents insisted ...

R2: I wish we had access to birth control. My cousins and I talk about it all the time. Yes, we go to church, we love God, but it is hard. Our boyfriends pressure us for sex—they might be youth leaders but they still ask, demand.

R1: I am so glad that I did not have a baby when I was in high school. It is so nice to have a baby when I feel prepared and everyone is happy for me.

R2: A baby—how can I tell them that some man from church told me he needed another wife because his wife had died, that we should have sex to be sure that I can give him children ... then he married someone else last month.

R1: A baby ...

R2: A baby ...

Reader 3: My name is Mary. I am the mother of Jesus. I was unwed when I became pregnant. But God loved me and He loves all the Marys of the world. (*Looking at the other Marys*) He loves you, too. We all do!



Dr. Lisa Faulkner

Addressing Tribal Conflict and Moving Toward Reconciliation

Dr. Lisa Faulkner grew up at one of North Belfast's most contested peace lines until her late teens. She obtained degrees in social policy and gained practical experience volunteering in a restorative justice program. Currently, she is employed in a conflict transformation initiative that supports former Loyalist combatants in the post-ceasefire era, encouraging them to embrace new, positive leadership roles in their local communities.

Session 2: Addressing Tribal Conflict and Moving Toward Reconciliation

Prepare for the Session

- Copy of "Invitation to Conversation"
- Recruit someone to read aloud the invitation.
- Sheets of construction paper (brown preferred)
- Markers and pens
- Scissors (several pair, large enough to cut out footprints)
- Blue painter's tape
- Clear a space that can be used to create a path to reconciliation.
- Collection of clean or new pairs of socks (try for a variety), spread out on a table
- Option: if the group is one that meets regularly, ask each participant to bring a pair of socks (can be asked in the previous session or by email).
- A notebook or paper for capturing words, thoughts, ideas on paper (optional)
- "Listening and Looking Guide" (can be printed on newsprint or copied and distributed)

Getting Started (10 minutes)

Ask someone to read aloud the Invitation to Conversation. Then read aloud the scriptures Acts 7:54–8:3 and Acts 9:1–19. Have a time for prayer—can be a private moment or someone can lead the group in prayer.

Introduce the session by saying that the video asks us to consider a longstanding conflict in Ireland between people of faith, between people who share a country, between people who share a common history.

The video challenges us to consider: how can we make peace, how can we create reconciliation, how can we walk a new path toward the other? The passage tells the story of one man, introduced to us as Saul, a man known for his hostility against the fledgling band of people known as Christians. Yet he had a Damascus-road, life-changing experience. Is that experience still available for people? For communities? For countries? Let's see.

(If people have brought socks, ask them to bring the pair of socks to a designated space.) Call the group's attention to the display of socks and say that when we go walking or running or hiking, among our preparation is to wear proper footwear, which includes socks. Let's see what socks have to do with moving toward reconciliation.

Distribute the Listening and Looking Guide

Ask persons to review the guide in order to familiarize themselves with the questions and statements as a way of opening themselves to Dr. Lisa Faulkner's presentation.

Play the Video (15 minutes)

After the video is finished, in silence give everyone a sock (be sure to distribute the socks in pairs, although each person will have only one sock; eventually, people will find their matching sock for reflection time; if there is an odd number of participants, keep a sock for yourself.) Allow a minute or less to pass in quiet.

Then lifting a sock, say: Dr. Faulkner says if we are to walk in someone else's shoes, it can be very uncomfortable—bring new socks. While these socks may not be new, they represent a sense of comfort as we walk different roads, stony roads, bumpy roads, and long roads. Hold on to your sock as you review your Listening and Looking Guide to answer questions and make comments.

Personal Reflection Time (5 minutes)

Ask participants to respond to at least two of the questions/statements on the Listening and Looking Guide.

Discussion Time, Part 1 (10 minutes)

Go through each question or statement and ask for at least one person to respond. As group leader, be prepared to give reflections to the statements, especially if no one volunteers to provide feedback.

Create a Path to Reconciliation (15 minutes)

Distribute two sheets of (brown) construction paper and a marker to each participant. Have scissors available. Ask each person to trace her or his feet on the paper and cut out their footprints. After completion, ask them to write a scripture or words on their cutouts that they believe can help create reconciliation (words can be as basic as “I’m sorry” or “justice for all”). With their footsteps, ask the group to find their matching sock, then pair ‘n’ share with that person about what it might take to bring about reconciliation.

Allow a few minutes for sharing, then ask persons to tape their footsteps in the designated space so they create a “path” to reconciliation.

Group Reflection (3–5 minutes)

Pose the question “And now what?” Now that we have seen and heard, what can the church do? What should the church do? What should individuals do? Allow group members to share randomly. Be sure to issue an invitation for each person to speak but do not force a verbal response from anyone.

Call to Commitment—When and Where I Enter (3–5 minutes)

Enter into a time of personal discernment. Ask group to individually think about what they have seen and heard. Encourage them to accept a “mission possible” task—that there is something that each of us can do. Ask each person to record their “task” on their guide sheet as well. Invite a couple of persons to share.

Tweet This! (1–2 minutes)

Encourage participants to use social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) to share one thought, one fact, one challenge to help others know about the move toward reconciliation in Ireland.

Close in Reflection and Prayer

Invite people to prayerfully walk the path to reconciliation that the group has created (if feasible, ask persons to remove their shoes and walk in socked or bare feet on the paper footprints). While walking, participants may pray aloud or silently.

After everyone has had a chance to walk, close with a prayer for Dr. Faulkner and all those who seek to bring reconciliation around the world—invite group members to lift up specific prayer concerns. Conclude by praying that participants will find ways to live out the commitments they have made.

Session 2: Listening and Looking Guide

Addressing Tribal Conflict and Moving Toward Reconciliation

Dr. Lisa Faulkner

Recall a time when you experienced reconciliation in your life. What steps did you or another take to mend a fence, end a disagreement, work for peace?

- What is the “Good Friday Agreement”?
- What is the role of poverty in the conflict?
- In the ACT Initiative, former Loyalist fighters and ex-political prisoners work on making reconciliation. What kinds of steps do they take?
- What are three learnings in the quest for reconciliation?
- What are some “uncomfortable conversations” you are having right now?
- Dr. Faulkner defines reconciliation as the willingness to engage with the enemy, the outsider? What do we do if the enemy does not want to engage?

My Commitment

Tweet This/Post on Facebook

Reach Out to GCORR

- Twitter: @GCORR_UMC
- Facebook: General Commission on Religion and Race



Joy Eva Bohol

Younger, More Diverse People in Mission

Joy Eva Bohol is a missionary with the General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church assigned as an advocate for young adults in the Missionary Services unit of the agency. She is a former mission intern and was commissioned to her present work in October 2015.

Session 3: Younger, More Diverse People in Mission

Prepare for the Session

- Have pictures of young adults (from magazines or personal photos—print or on cell phones).
- Copy of “Invitation to Conversation”
- Recruit someone to read aloud the invitation.
- Assorted pairs of shoes (at least 4 pairs—work boots, sandals, sneakers, etc., perhaps purchased from a thrift store) placed on a table in view of the entire group
- Band-Aids (assorted sizes)
- Construction paper or plain white paper
- A notebook or paper for capturing words, thoughts, ideas on paper (optional)
- “Listening and Looking Guide” (can be printed on newsprint or copied and distributed)

Getting Started (10 minutes)

Ask someone to read aloud the Invitation to Conversation. Then read aloud Mark 6:7–9; 1 Timothy 4:12–16; and Galatians 3:28. Ask everyone to spend a couple of minutes jotting down thoughts that come to mind as they hear the scriptures. Have a time for prayer—can be a private moment or someone can lead the group in prayer.

Bring the group’s attention to the display of shoes. Pick a couple of the shoes and pass them around the group. Ask participants to imagine who might have worn these shoes and what that person might have done while wearing the shoes (i.e., person wearing workboots might be on a construction site). Once you return the shoes to the display, ask people to capture in their notebooks any thoughts that came to mind about the shoes.

Second, distribute pictures of young adults and ask group members to share photos of young adults they have with them (perhaps on their cell phone). After a couple of minutes, ask people to share randomly what they “saw” in the pictures of young adults (i.e., vitality, energy, enthusiasm). Introduce the video, saying that Joy Eva Bohol is a young woman who is an advocate for young adult mission service, encouraging the service of diverse people (age, ethnicity, and experience) in God’s work throughout the world. Ask for one or two volunteers to identify people whom they know are advocates for mission.

Frame the context by using a statement such as “Who is the person in your church or in your community who asks people to serve—to be involved in prison ministry, to help at the homeless shelter, to be part of the street witnessing team?” After a couple of people have shared, encourage group members to listen to Joy Eva Bohol’s story and look for connections with their own lives.

Distribute the Listening and Looking Guide

Ask persons to answer the question “What would a mission journey look like in your neighborhood?” Then ask them to familiarize themselves with the other statements/questions as a way of preparing to hear Joy Eva Bohol’s presentation.

Play the Video (18–20 minutes)

Encourage participants to jot short notes on the guide but as much as possible remain focused on listening to and experiencing the video.

Personal Reflection Time (5 minutes)

Ask participants to respond to at least three of the six questions/statements on the Listening and Looking Guide.

Discussion Time, Part 1 (10 minutes)

Go through each question or statement and ask for persons to respond. As group leader, be prepared to give reflections to the statements, especially if one or two group members do not volunteer to provide feedback.

Create a Prayer Card (10 minutes)

Distribute sheets of construction paper, markers, and Band-Aids. Remind participants of the healing work that the young people shared in Laos (i.e., free medical check-ups, home visit to a man injured in an industrial accident).

Ask participants to briefly describe on the construction paper (in writing or artwork) a situation in their lives (family, church, community, job) that could benefit from a healing touch. Ask them to place their name on the card and bring to the front—place the cards among the display of shoes.

Discussion Time, Part 2 (5 minutes)

Bring the group back together as a whole and say that there is a seventh question: “And now what?” Now that we have seen and heard, what can the church do? What should the church do? What should individuals do? Allow group members to simply meditate on these questions.

Say that one thing that we all can do is pray. Invite the group to share in a ministry of healing by coming to the shoe display and taking one of the cards (not their own). Ask each person to place a Band-Aid on the prayer card, along with her or his name, and commit to lifting up this concern in prayer. Encourage participants to connect with that person before leaving the session and assure them that their concerns will be prayed for.

Call to Commitment—When and Where I Enter (3–5 minutes)

Enter into a time of personal discernment. Ask the group to individually think about what they have seen and heard. Encourage them to accept a “mission possible” task—that there is something that each of us can do. Ask each person to record their “task” on their guide sheet as well.

Tweet This! (1–2 minutes)

Encourage participants to use social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) to share one thought, one fact, one challenge to encourage young people to consider the call to be in mission.

Close with This Unison Prayer (make copies or project on a monitor):

Dear God, we sit here in Your presence praying for more willing workers in Your “vineyard.” We pray for the young adults who have already responded to Your call. We pray that young people from everywhere will be sent out as Jesus’ disciples. We pray that young people will go everywhere with the boldness and strength that Paul nurtured in Timothy. We pray for the work of Joy Eva Bohol, that her story will inspire others to simply say “Send me, Lord.” Amen.

Session 3: Listening and Looking Guide

Younger, More Diverse People in Mission

Joy Eva Bohol

What would a mission journey look like in your neighborhood?

- When was Joy Eva Bohol’s heart “strangely warmed”?
- What do people need to “surrender” in order to participate in God’s work?
- What are some of the divisions that Ms. Bohol described that they faced?

She described tough social barriers they had to cross. What tough social barriers do you face in your life as you share Christ?

If we want a church that is vibrant, relevant, and on the move for Christ, we in leadership must

Identify new opportunities for ministries with and among young adults.

My Commitment

Tweet This (or a statement of your choosing)

Attention young adults, ages 20–30. Consider becoming a Global Mission Fellow—serve for twenty months and help change the world!

Reach out to GCORR

- Twitter: @GCORR_UMC
- Facebook: General Commission on Religion and Race



Thomas Kemper

Mission Workers in the
Twenty-First-Century Church

Thomas Kemper is the general secretary and top executive of the General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church, responsible for personnel, projects, and mission partnerships in more than 130 countries. A native of Germany, Kemper previously served as mission leader for the German Central Conference of the United Methodist Church and director of ecumenical learning at the Lippische Landeskirche, a regional church of the Association of Protestant Churches in Germany. Kemper spent eight years in Brazil as a missionary where he taught in the Brazilian Theological Seminary in Sao Paulo and engaged in ministry with the poor and new church development.

Session 4: Mission Workers in the Twenty-First-Century Church

Prepare for the Session

- Watch the video and capture answers to the questions on the “Listening and Looking Guide.”
- Have a copy of “Invitation to Conversation.”
- Recruit persons to read aloud the scriptures and the invitation.
- Have the following passages marked in a Bible (Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8, 16:9, 10:1–31)
- Bring a basket (or bag) with these items: toy horse, devotional book (*Upper Room*), small book of hymns or choruses (i.e., *The Faith We Sing, Songs of Zion*)
- Prepare for activity “Mix ‘n’ Match for Mission” by creating index cards (or slips of paper) on which various directions have been placed; at a minimum have five cards—if possible have at least one for each participant. (See the end of the session.)
- Use a notebook or paper for capturing words, thoughts, ideas on paper.
- Have a copy of the Listening and Looking Guide for each person (or questions can be printed on newsprint or projected on a screen).

Getting Started (10 minutes)

Ask someone to read aloud the Invitation to Conversation. Then read aloud one or more of the listed scriptures: Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8, 16:9, 10:1–31. Have a time for prayer—can be a private moment or someone can lead the group in prayer.

Sensory Moment (touch, taste, hear; 2–3 minutes)

Bring out the basket of items (horse, devotional book, etc.). Ask group members to observe silence while passing each of the items, holding and examining each for three to five seconds (allow one item to pass to at least one other person before sharing the next one). After items have fully circulated around the room, ask persons to write down on a slip of paper what “connects” each of those items to United Methodist mission work (i.e., horse signifies Wesley’s ride; songs are a way in which we can connect with people—sharing our songs, learning others’ songs).

Distribute the Listening and Looking Guide

Ask persons to review the guide in order to familiarize themselves with the questions and statements as a way of opening themselves to Reverend Kemper’s presentation.

Watch the Video (18–20 minutes)

Encourage participants to jot short notes on the guide but as much as possible remain focused on listening to and experiencing the video.

Personal Reflection Time (5 minutes)

Ask participants to answer at least three of the ten questions on the Listening and Looking Guide.

Discussion Time (15 minutes)

Have the group work in teams of two or three persons. Using the guide, invite participants to answer the questions and discuss ideas and images that stand out for them. Give a ten-minute signal and ask each team to share one thing that has been part of their discussion—only one comment per group until all have shared. Then ask, is there one more burning comment that someone (or team) would like to make? Allow for sharing from at least two or three teams.

Mix ‘n’ Match for Mission (10–15 minutes)

Bring the group back together to sit in a circle (if possible). Ask persons (at least 3–5 persons) to draw an index card or slip of paper from the basket. Share the context for the activity by saying that mission work often calls us to leave our “comfort zones” and to connect with persons we do not know (or do not know as well as we thought).

Explain that the index card represents their mission assignment. One at a time, persons are to read their task (to her/himself—not aloud) and to carry it out.

Once assignments have been completed, invite a time of sharing as a group using questions such as What did it feel like to be sent? How did it feel to be on the receiving end? What was comfortable? What was challenging? How might you have prepared if given more time? How is this activity similar to any experience viewed on the video?

Call to Commitment—When and Where I Enter (2–3 minutes)

Enter into a time of personal discernment. Ask the group members to individually think about

what they have seen and heard. Encourage them to accept a “mission possible” task—that there is something that each of us can do; we just need to ask for God’s guidance. On the guide sheet, capture that idea, that thought.

Tweet This! (1–2 minutes)

Encourage participants to use social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) to share one thought, one fact, one challenge to help others to be “open and grateful” as the Holy Spirit sweeps the church into a new mission age.

Close with Prayer

Ask for a volunteer to pray for Thomas Kemper, the mission workers of the United Methodist Church, and for those who need to hear God’s Word in their region, in their context, in their language. Pray for the group in order that participants will find ways to live out the commitments they have made.

Session 4: Listening and Looking Guide

Mission Workers in the Twenty-First-Century Church

Thomas Kemper

1. Define: Who is a mission worker?

2. What does John Wesley riding a horse have to do with mission?
3. What is our mission identity?
4. Who is the first United States missionary? Give name and where s/he served.
5. Where and when was the first missionary conference held? What does it mean to be “people from the margins”?
6. Who are Global Mission Fellows?
7. What are two challenges that impact the mission goal “from everywhere to everywhere”?
8. What does being “sent” mean, originally and currently?
9. What image(s) or people’s stories were most powerful?
10. Where did you see an experience that mirrors something in your community?

My Commitment

Tweet This

Reach out to GCORR

- Twitter: @GCORR_UMC
- Facebook: General Commission on Religion and Race

“Mix ‘n’ Match for Mission”

Directions: Type and place these mission directions on an index card, one per card (or copy and cut these apart). You may use all of them or a few of them, depending on time and physical space. And feel free to create your own scenarios that make sense for your group and your classroom space.

1. Find a person wearing glasses and share your favorite Bible verse with him or her.
2. Search for a person who has visited another country (for 3 weeks or less) and ask what they enjoyed most.
3. Search for a person who speaks a language in addition to her or his native tongue (ability to speak a phrase is fine).
4. Find a person wearing an outfit most different from yours and ask about where it was obtained and its significance to the wearer; be sure to compliment the person on the outfit.
5. Search for someone who has lived in more than three states (countries or continents); find out the names of those places and the reason why that person lived there.
6. Find someone who is wearing the same color as you (could be a shirt, pants, hat) and try to find something else that you have in common (i.e., job, number of children, number of siblings).
7. Search for someone who has gone horseback riding at least once and ask what she or he liked about that experience and/or found challenging.
8. Strike up a conversation with someone and share John Wesley “stories,” something that you know/like about the founder of the United Methodist Church.
9. Look for someone who has had a mission “experience” (i.e., volunteer in mission, serve in local community at a mission or help center, support the mission work of someone else).
10. Find someone and ask them to sing with you their favorite (or your favorite) song or hymn that talks about serving others (e.g., “Here I Am, Lord,” “O Zion Haste,” “Help Us Accept Each Other,” “Until All Are Fed,” “The Harvest Is Ripe”).



The Reverend Stephan Twardowski

Welcoming the Stranger: Refugees and the
German Church

The Reverend Stephan Twardowski is pastor of the Braunschweig/Clausthal-Zellerfeld United Methodist churches in the North Germany Annual Conference, where he leads ministries of welcome and advocacy with refugees in Germany. In 2011, Reverend Twardowski represented the denomination as a delegate and workshop facilitator at the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation of the World Council of Church.

Session 5: Welcoming the Stranger: Refugees and the German Church

Prepare for the Session

- Copy of “Invitation to Conversation”
- Recruit someone to read aloud the invitation.
- Pitch a tent (small/children’s tent is fine); surround with empty water jugs.
- White strips of paper (that can be taped around a person’s wrist)
- Markers (assorted colors)
- Scotch tape
- Construction paper
- Make copies of the four questions/topics (one per page) to be used in the mini-discussion groups
- A notebook or paper for capturing words, thoughts, ideas on paper (optional)
- “Listening and Looking Guide” (make a copy for each participant)

Getting Started (10 minutes)

As participants gather, ask each one to make a paper bracelet for her or his wrist with the word welcome on it. If persons know “welcome” in more than one language, encourage them to use that language on their bracelet.

Ask someone to read aloud the Invitation to Conversation. Then read aloud the scripture Matthew 25:34–40. Have a time for prayer—can be a private moment or someone can lead the group in prayer.

Introduce the session by saying that the video issues a call for churches to develop action plans that will create peace and justice, particularly in consideration of concerns and challenges of immigrations and refugees.

Distribute the Listening and Looking Guide

Ask persons to review the guide in order to familiarize themselves with the questions and statements as a way of opening themselves to Reverend Twardowski’s presentation.

Before watching the video, ask everyone to respond to the first question:

- When you hear the words *immigration* or *refugees*, what comes to mind?

Play the Video (15 minutes)

After the video is finished, provide time for the participants to add additional notes to their Listening and Looking Guide.

Create Four Mini-discussion Groups (10–15 minutes)

Have participants work in teams (3–4 persons preferred). First, ask them to connect with the video by showing their wrist bracelets and say briefly how their bracelets might connect to a community campaign. Also, encourage participants to “swap biographies” by naming three things they like for people to know about them (i.e., something they value or have passion for). Note that this exercise was highlighted in the video.

Next, assign one of the following topics/questions to each group:

1. Reverend Twardowski said that this is the largest refugee crisis facing the world since World War II. He said there are 60 million refugees and 50 percent of them are under the age of eighteen.
 - a. Identify other things shared in the video about children/youth.
 - b. Make a list of eight to ten things that must be done to help children and youth grow and thrive despite their refugee status.
2. The presenter also posed an “agonizing” question: How open can our borders be? Can Germany be a place of refuge?
 - a. Draw comparisons between Germany’s challenges and discussions about immigrant reform in the United States (list at least 5 items)
 - b. What are our hallelujah moments? List examples of joyful acceptance of refugees from recent and past history.
3. The backlash: voices that promote hatred are getting louder, citing that housing being built for refugees was set afire.
 - a. Name the horror: reflect on the news or community experiences; where do you see grave harm being done?
 - b. Who are or where are the voices that are promoting hatred—list ways in which those voices might be challenged, those places changed.

4. We must practice a welcoming culture: share games, have a clothing drive, swap biographies.
 - a. Identify best practices from the video for welcoming refugees—add experiences in the United States of which you are aware.
 - b. Discuss which ideas shared in the video can be easily implemented in the church communities represented in the group.

Group Sharing (12–15 minutes)

Ask each group to take three minutes to summarize the discussion that occurred. Ask people to write down any questions that may come to mind from the presentation or any clarity needed (hold all questions or comments until all groups have reported).

Once groups have shared, invite participants to raise questions and share other ideas.

Call to Commitment—When and Where I Enter (3–5 minutes)

Enter into a time of personal discernment. Distribute construction paper and markers. Ask group members to individually think about Reverend Twardowski’s statement “I Dream a Church” and to jot down (or draw) their dreams for their church to be more welcoming, more loving, more accepting of persons who are fleeing injustice, wars, environmental challenges. Share how the church can make room for whom Jesus might consider “the least of these.”

Encourage participants to use their cell phones to take pictures of their bracelets (arms extended in a circle) and post on social media as a “witness” to the ministry of caring of the church. Then urge participants to make another “welcome” bracelet and ask someone in their social network (family, work group) to wear the bracelet with them for one day each week in solidarity with refugee ministries around the world.

Finally, ask everyone to choose a “mission possible” task—that there is something that each of us can do. Ask each person to record their “task” on their guide. Invite a couple of persons to share what they’ve written.

Tweet This! (1–2 minutes)

Encourage participants to use social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) to share one thought, one fact, one challenge to help others know about the deliberate steps that German Christian churches are making to minister to the needs of refugees.

Close in Reflection and Prayer

Share this prayer: God, the Reverend Stephan Twardowski said that he wears the welcome bracelet as part of a national campaign in Germany to send a message that “yes, we are open to creating a humane journey for refugees.” Help us to boldly raise a sign—a banner, our voices, our witness—that we, too, who love God are poised and prepared to welcome those with the greatest need for refuge, for shelter, for a new life. Help us to work as outlined in Matthew 25:34–40, to be among those who are called “blessed” because we vowed to be a blessing to others in their time of need. Amen.

Session 5: Listening and Looking Guide

Welcoming the Stranger: Refugees and the German Church
The Reverend Stephan Twardowski

When you hear the words *immigration* or *refugees*, what comes to mind?

What are two main causes of immigration into Europe?

From which countries are refugees coming?

What about the children? How are they affected?

“Every church is challenged to react/respond.” In what ways (i.e., providing housing in sports gyms/creating a community garden) are the church responding in Germany?

Reverend Twardowski “dreams a church” that has a contagious effect on the community and the country. Where can you see that happening in your country and community?

My Commitment _____

Tweet This/Post on Facebook _____

Reach out to GCORR

- Twitter: @GCORR_UMC
- Facebook: General Commission on Religion and Race



Dr. Nancy Cardoso Pereira

Environmental Justice in Brazil

Dr. Nancy Cardoso Pereira is an ordained minister in the Methodist Church of Brazil who works with the Land Pastoral Commission. She conducts grassroots education especially with groups of peasant women, *quilombolas* (African Brazilians), and native women in the struggle for land rights. Dr. Cardoso lives in Mato Grosso with the peasant communities in the Amazon region. The peasant movement in Latin America seeks to transform agrarian and agricultural structures with processes of land reform that are more inclusive as a way to reconcile people and land in rural and urban areas.

Session 6: Environmental Justice in Brazil

Supplies Needed

- A flower pot with loose soil that can be touched
- Sheets of construction paper
- Markers
- Painter's tape (blue has the least adhesive)
- A notebook or paper for capturing words, thoughts, ideas on paper
- "Listening and Looking Guide" (copy for each participant)
- Copy of "Invitation to Conversation"
- Recruit someone to read aloud the invitation.

Getting Started (10 minutes)

Read aloud the Invitation to Conversation. Then read aloud Nehemiah 5:1–8. Have a time for prayer—can be a private or corporate prayer.

Pass around the flower pot and ask everyone to touch the soil, feel it, smell it—connect with it. As people are touching the soil, introduce the video, saying that Reverend Nancy Cardoso is an activist working on behalf of the indigenous peoples in Brazil who have been forcibly removed from their land and in some cases have been murdered or disappeared. Note that in the video she quotes this passage from Nehemiah as a biblical reference for abuse of people and property in one's own country.

Distribute the Listening and Looking Guide

Ask persons to make an attempt to define environmental racism based on their current understandings. Then ask them to familiarize themselves with the questions as a way of opening themselves to Dr. Cardoso's presentation.

Play the Video (18–20 minutes)

Encourage participants to jot short notes on the guide but as much as possible remain focused on listening to and experiencing the video.

Personal Reflection Time (5 minutes)

Ask participants to answer at least three of the nine questions on the Listening and Looking Guide.

Build a Word Art Wall (5 minutes)

Distribute sheets of construction paper and markers. Ask participants to write a word that they heard in the video presentation on a sheet of paper (participants may submit more than one word, but each word should be on a single sheet of paper). Arrange the words on a wall, a white board, or on the floor (words can be taped horizontally or vertically).

Discussion Time, Part 1 (15 minutes)

Work in groups of three to four persons. Using the guide, invite participants to answer the questions and discuss ideas and images that stand out for them. Give a ten-minute signal and ask each group to share one thing that has been part of their discussion—only one comment per group because time is needed for part 2.

Discussion Time, Part 2 (3–5 minutes)

Bring the group back together as a whole and say that there is a tenth question: "And now what?" Now that we have seen and heard, what should the church do? What should individuals do? Allow the group to share popcorn style.

Call to Commitment—When and Where I Enter (2–3 minutes)

Enter into a time of personal discernment. Ask group members to individually think about what they have seen and heard. Encourage them to accept a “mission possible” task—that there is something that each of us can do—we just need to ask. On the guide sheet, capture that idea, that thought.

Tweet This! (1–2 minutes)

Encourage participants to use social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) to share one thought, one fact, one challenge to help others know about the issue of environmental racism.

Close with Prayer

Ask for a volunteer to pray for Dr. Cardoso and for the group, that participants will find ways to live out the commitments they have made.



Session 6: Listening and Looking Guide

Environmental Justice in Brazil

Dr. Nancy Cardoso Pereira

Define “environmental injustice” or “environmental racism”

1. What are the five seasons of the year in Brazil?
2. What does the “map of inequality” describe?
3. What are the three dimensions of the word *terra*?
4. What are the two books that God wrote?
5. What does the phrase “contains indigenous blood” mean?
6. Environmental racism is a sin that does what?

7. What is the relationship between the book of Exodus and environmental injustice?
8. What image(s) were most powerful?
9. Where did you see an experience that mirrors something in your community?

My Commitment

Tweet This

Reach out to GCORR

- Twitter: @GCORR_UMC
- Facebook: General Commission on Religion and Race



Dr. Joseph Maren Sampson

Muslim-Christian Relations in Nigeria and How Church Leaders Are Addressing Interfaith Issues

Dr. Joseph Maren Sampson is the director of Reconciliation Trainers Africa, an organization that provides community training and resources in conflict mediation, leadership, and human rights education. An ordained clergyman, he has written extensively on the subject of peace building, specifically as it relates to interethnic and interreligious conflict. Dr. Sampson's passion for bringing communities together has been recognized throughout Nigeria and on the continent of Africa.

Session 7: Muslim-Christian Relations in Nigeria and How Church Leaders Are Addressing Interfaith Issues

Prepare for the Session

- Watch the video, making note of the suggested audio breaks for discussing the concerns and challenges Dr. Sampson raises.
 - » Part A: 1:00–4:03
 - » Part B: 4:04–9:06
 - » Part C: 9:07–12:44
- Recruit someone to read aloud the “Invitation to Conversation.”
- Sheets of construction paper
- Markers and pens
- A notebook or paper for capturing words, thoughts, ideas on paper (optional)
- “Listening and Looking Guide” (can be printed on newsprint or copied and distributed)
- Copy of the invitation

Getting Started (10 minutes)

Ask someone to read aloud the Invitation to Conversation. Then read aloud the scriptures Deuteronomy 10:12; Habakkuk 3:17–19, and Ephesians 6:10–18. Have a time for prayer—this can be a private moment or someone can lead the group in prayer.

Introduce the session by saying that the video will be shown in three sections. The “breaks” are not clearly identified but are given in order to encourage deep reflection on key concerns that Dr. Sampson shared.

In preparation for this conversation about Muslim-Christian dialogue in Nigeria, ask participants to use a sheet of paper to create a “map” of their current understanding and thoughts about Muslim-Christian dialogue. Distribute markers and construction paper. Ask each person to write in the center the words *Muslim*, *Christian*, and *Nigeria* and circle them. Then as quickly as possible, have them draw lines from the center and write down words, ideas, or thoughts that come to mind in relationship to those words.

Distribute the Listening and Looking Guide

Ask persons to review the guide in order to familiarize themselves with the questions and statements as a way of opening themselves to Dr. Sampson's presentation.

Play the Video (30–35 minutes)

Encourage participants to focus deeply on listening to and experiencing each section of the video. Keep in mind the questions How is this like my community, my country? What are the similarities?

Pause the video and allow persons to work through questions and reflections provided on the Listening and Looking Guide.

Group Reflection (3–5 minutes)

Pose the question “And now what?” Now that we have seen and heard, what can the church do? What should the church do? What should individuals do? Allow group members to share randomly. Be sure to issue an invitation for each person to speak but do not force a verbal response from anyone.

Call to Commitment—When and Where I Enter (3–5 minutes)

Enter into a time of personal discernment. Ask participants to individually think about what they have seen and heard. Encourage them to accept a “mission possible” task—that there is something that each of us can do. Ask each person to record their “task” on their guide sheet as well. Invite a couple of persons to share.

Tweet This! (1–2 minutes)

Encourage participants to use social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) to share one thought, one fact, one challenge to help others know about the Muslim-Christian dialogue in Nigeria.

Close with Prayer

Ask for a volunteer to pray for Dr. Sampson and for the group. Pray that participants will find ways to live out the commitments they have made.

Session 7: Listening and Looking Guide

Muslim-Christian Relations in Nigeria and How Church Leaders Are Addressing Interfaith Issues

— Dr. Joseph Maren Sampson

Part One: List one to two issues that contributed to the deterioration of relationships that once existed and have “opened the window of hatred”?

Part Two: Pair ‘n’ share (discussion). Read the quote by Sir Ahmadu Bello: “The new nation called Nigeria should be an estate of our great-grandfather Uthman Dan Fodio. We must ruthlessly prevent a change of power. We use the minorities in the north as willing tools and the south as a conquered territory and never allow them to rule over us and never allow them to have control over their future.” Find a partner and share how you feel this statement and attitude contributed to the challenges in Muslim-Christian relations in Nigeria as Dr. Sampson described. Then answer the question “Where did you hear about an experience that mirrors something in your community?”

Part Three: Dr. Sampson provides several suggestions for the ways that the church can help lead the dialogue; list one of them.

Part Four: Come together as a group for discussion. Say, Dr. Sampson told that the church has a role to “sow seeds of peace” and provided suggestions. What if one party refuses to dialogue, has no interest in dialogue, then what?

My Commitment _____

Tweet This/Post on Facebook _____

Reach out to GCORR

- Twitter: @GCORR_UMC
- Facebook: General Commission on Religion and Race



Dr. Albert Park

How Asian Churches Are Merging Faith and Culture

Dr. Albert Park is an associate professor of history at Claremont McKenna College. His primary interests include modern Korean intellectualism and economic and social history, along with interests in modern Japanese history and critical theory. Also a prolific writer, his most recent published work is a book entitled *Building a Heaven on Earth: Religion, Activism and Protest in Japanese Occupied Korea*.

Session 8: How Asian Churches Are Merging Faith and Culture

Prepare for the Session

- Copy of “Invitation to Conversation”
- Recruit someone to read aloud the invitation.
- Make copies of the questions under the discussion section (if there are 12 persons in the class, have 4 copies of each question).
- Basket or container in which to put the questions (fold so questions are chosen randomly)
- A notebook or paper for capturing words, thoughts, ideas on paper (optional)
- “Listening and Looking Guide” (make a copy for each participant)

Getting Started (10 minutes)

Ask someone to read aloud the Invitation to Conversation. Then read aloud Isaiah 58:6–12. Have a time for prayer—can be a private moment or someone can lead the group in prayer. Introduce the session by saying that the video provides a call for faith communities in various countries to work anew on issues of racism, social and economic inequality, and political discord. The call is rooted in the history of Christianity’s expansion in Asian countries and probes the memories and experiences of Asian churches as a way of supporting U.S. churches in social justice.

Distribute the Listening and Looking Guide

Ask persons to review the guide in order to familiarize themselves with the questions and statements as a way of opening themselves to Dr. Park’s presentation. Before watching the video, ask everyone to respond to the first question: Where do you see a clash or conflict between faith and culture in your community? In your church? In your country? Tell the group that it is okay to say, “I am not sure what that means.”

Play the Video (15 minutes)

After the video is finished, provide time for the participants to add additional notes to their Listening and Looking Guide.

Discussion (20 minutes)

Divide the participants in three groups by having group members draw a slip of paper (from a basket or a hat) on which one of the statements or questions below has been written. Have groups meet for ten to twelve minutes to discuss the question/statement and prepare a report. Have each group share the result of their discussion. After all groups have reported, open the floor for questions and additional reflections to and from each group.

- He said WHAAAT???? Make a list of things that Dr. Park said that may have been hard or shocking to hear (i.e., Protestant missionaries crushed the expression of the theology as a social gospel).
- Create a list of countries besieged by political discord and social injustice (include countries that he named—i.e., urban developers exploiting rural inhabitants in China). What other countries should be on that list?
- Quote: “This memory of control by Western (European and U.S.) missionaries forbidding us to draw on Christ’s teaching as a means for social justice impacts us even today.” What memories in our communities and countries make us cautious to reach out and imagine a just community?

Group Reflection (3–5 minutes)

Have the groups reconvene and discuss this question: “And now what?” Now that we have seen and heard, what can the church do? What should the church do? What should individuals do? After a few minutes of discussion as a group, ask for persons to share randomly. Be sure to issue an invitation for each person to speak but do not force a verbal response from anyone.

Call to Commitment—When and Where I Enter (3–5 minutes)

Enter into a time of personal discernment. Ask group members to individually think about what they have seen and heard. Encourage them to accept a “mission possible” task—that there is something that each of us can do. Ask each person to record their “task” on their guide. Invite a couple of persons to share.

Tweet This! (1–2 minutes)

Encourage participants to use social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) to share one thought, one fact, one challenge to help others know about the merging of faith and culture in Asia.

Close in Reflection and Prayer

Share this prayer: God, Dr. Albert Park said that an issue or problem cannot be attacked from a single side. Open our eyes and our hearts so that we may work together to help build that intimate community he talked about. Let us renew our commitment (as stated in the Isaiah passage) to be repairers of the breach, restorers of the streets in which to live. Amen.



Session 8: Listening and Looking Guide

How Asian Churches Are Merging Faith and Culture

Dr. Albert Park

Where do you see a clash or conflict between faith and culture in your community? In your church? In your country?

Write down anything that was new to you or simply hard to hear:

Dr. Park said the U.S. is not alone in experiencing racism, social and economic inequality; where do you see that happening in the U.S.? In other countries?

What “bad” memories do you have that impede your ability to trust others? A certain group of people?

What does he mean by articulation?

My Commitment

Tweet This/Post on Facebook

Reach out to GCORR

- Twitter: @GCORR_UMC
- Facebook: General Commission on Religion and Race

About the Study Guide Author

Dr. G. Faye Wilson

Dr. G. Faye Wilson is the minister of music and arts at Mt. Zion United Methodist Church in Quantico, Maryland. She is also a lay servant and president of the Salisbury (Md.) District United Methodist Church. In the community, she is a ten-year volunteer with HALO (Hope and Life Outreach), a program providing shelter, meals, and life skills training for families experiencing homelessness.

Dr. Wilson is executive director of GeeFaye Associates, her music and education consulting firm. She gives voice lessons, writes and edits manuscripts, and gives instruction in public speaking.

Dr. Wilson has worked in the areas of communications and outreach since 1978. A staff member of the General Board of Global Ministries for twenty-one years, she led seminars, visited mission projects, taught in United Methodist Women's "Mission U" across the country, and wrote books and articles to help people become more involved in mission work.

When she is not working and volunteering, she likes to play Scrabble, read, travel, and entertain. She loves to cook and is constantly creating recipes using local ingredients as her part in the "farm-to-table" movement.

VITAL CONVERSATIONS ON RACE, CULTURE AND JUSTICE

A TED-Styled Talk Video Series

Series 3: Young Adults, Social Justice and the Church

*General Commission on Race and Religion
United Methodist Church*

A Facilitator's Guide

Preface

Conversations around topics such as racism, ethnicity, language, gender and sexual identity can be uncomfortable. Recognizing this, the General Commission on Race and Religion of The United Methodist Church has prepared this video resource, Vital Conversations 3, to help start the dialogue on subjects that may sometimes be difficult to approach.

Vital Conversations 3: Young Adults, Social Justice and the Church is the third in a series of videos that invites us to consider the challenges, perspectives and struggles of others with whom we may never have had the opportunity to communicate. In this collection of 14 videos, Vital Conversations 3 helps initiate conversation by bringing to us the voices and experiences of people from various countries, reared in different communities, and who in one way or another have been called to be drum majors for justice. Each video segment reminds us, the people of God – we who have “ears to hear and eyes to see” – that we are all part of the beloved community, and that this resource is an invitation to welcome perspectives that bring enlightenment and understanding.

Each video has an accompanying study guide. We encourage Sunday school classes and covenant groups to use Vital Conversations 3 as a weekly study resource. You may also plan to meet every other week or monthly. In addition, Vital Conversations 3 may be used for individual study and reflection as preparation for engaging in work that will nurture and expand the beloved community.

The study guide is written so that either one person can lead the entire study or several people may be assigned so that there is a different leader for each video study. Each study session is designed for an intergenerational group so that you benefit from the perspectives of members of varying ages.

Each study session is also designed to encourage multisensory interactions with the video presentation. Most sessions may be completed within 60-75 minutes. Some sessions may grow longer as group members become more comfortable with one another and more courageous in talking about the issues presented.

Common elements of the sessions include the use of prayer and Scripture; and the call for individual reflection, sharing in pairs, trios, and small groups. (This may involve sharing thoughts via writing and drawing.) There is also a call for an individual act of commitment and the envisioning of what groups of people could do to bring about justice. Finally, each session encourages individuals to use social media to share their learnings, their reflections, and their ongoing concerns. The videos of each speaker are available for advanced viewing or further study at www.gcorr.org/series/vc3.

About The General Commission on Race and Religion

Our vision is to invite and lead the church into new conversations about our relevance and our calling from God to serve a world that is far different than when we began our work. The commission works to build the capacity of The United Methodist Church to be more relevant to reach more people, younger people, and more diverse people in order to nurture disciples of Jesus Christ who will transform the world for the better. Our ministry model provides resources for congregations and church leaders to increase: Intercultural Competency, Institutional Equity and Vital Conversations.

Getting Started: Once You Agree to Facilitate this Study

Facilitators should prepare in the following ways:

Pray

Ask God for help to guide a conversation about an issue that may have polarized your church or family. Ask for courage and understanding that – for some people – just the call to conversation evokes strong, negative emotions. Ask God to prick the hearts who normally would not join a group discussion on issues of social justice and faith. Ask God to send you help – those who would invite others, bring others, and nurture others in these key and necessary conversations.

Invite

There are many groups and individuals who might benefit from using the Vital Conversations 3 resource. Invite boomers and millennials. Invite persons from various faith traditions and ethnicities. Invite co-workers and family members. Use a variety of methods to invite people to attend, especially if you are creating a new group. Use a variety of methods: the community calendar on your public access channel; Facebook and Twitter; a billboard; e-blasts; an ad in the paper or on an online listserv. Walk the mall and the grocery store, strike up a conversation, and give the invitation. Ask the “enemy,” the other – the person with whom you have not yet been able to have a civil conversation. Invite.

Review

For each session that you are leading, be sure to watch the video two to three times. Make a list of things that you would like your study group to “look for” or “listen for.” Be sure to make notes on things that challenge your personal truths. Research facts or news stories that you hear; find out more about people whose names or work are mentioned. Expand the list of biblical references or hymn selections that can be used.

Plan

Be sure to gather the needed supplies for each sessions (i.e., laptop or tablet, projector, markers, newsprint, hymnals or song sheets, and copies of handouts). Read through the directions for specific activities to be sure you can lead the group seamlessly. You may have to choose which ideas to share with the group. Advanced planning will support flexibility in guiding the session. If the job of facilitator will be rotated among several people, meet together to review this guide and discuss the format for study.

Commit

When working in a defined group of people around sensitive or challenging topics, it is important that group members create a covenant of care for the spiritual and emotional well-being of each person. Even if the group members change from session to session, be sure to review a covenant statement at the beginning each study session. Commit to ensuring that everyone has the right to speak and be heard, as well as the responsibility to listen respectfully to others. Commit to holding each person’s stories in confidence. (Meaning: What is said in the group should stay in the group.) Commit raising questions and making statements without attacking another group member.



The Rev. Jennifer Bailey

I Am A Prisoner of Hope for Civil Rights

Video (14:44): The Rev. Jennifer Bailey, founder, Faith Matters Network and Activist-in-Residence, Scarritt-Bennett Center

The Rev. Jennifer Bailey is an ordained, itinerant elder in the African Methodist Episcopal church and is founding executive director of the Faith Matters Network (building community and taking action). She was named among 15 Faith Leaders to Watch by the Center for American Progress and writes regularly for Sojourners and the Huffington Post. Her first book, tentatively titled *Confessions of a #Millennial #Minister*, is under contract with Chalice Press. She is an activist-in-residence at Scarritt-Bennett Center, Nashville, Tenn.

Session 1: I Am A Prisoner of Hope for Civil Rights

Preparation

Select a room or location to offer the study. Every session needs a room with internet access so that you may show and project each video. Do a run-through to make sure the internet and computer equipment are working properly. Preview the video. Read through the lesson plan. Draft a covenant of care for the session. Review the life and work of civil rights activist Ella Baker (www.ellabakercenter.org).

Gather the following materials:

- At least two translations of the Holy Bible for reading the Scriptures – Joshua 4:1-7; Joshua 6:1-5
- Listening & Looking Guide (one for each person or project on a screen)
- Construction paper in assorted colors – a sheet for each person
- Pens, pencils, and markers in assorted colors
- Blue painter's tape

THE STUDY SESSION

Get Started [10 minutes]

Welcome everyone to the session and invite people to share their first name and what draws them to participate in this Vital Conversations group. Share why you have accepted the role of facilitator and your visions for the time together. Take care of housekeeping matters at this time.

Read statement of purpose: “The General Commission on Religion and Race presents Vital Conversations to help start the dialogue on subjects that may sometimes be difficult to approach. We are all part of the beloved community, and we welcome perspectives that bring enlightenment and understanding.”

Ask someone to read aloud Joshua 4:1-7 and Joshua 6:1-5. Have a time for prayer; invite someone to lead the group in prayer; if no one volunteers, open with a prayer of your choice. Share the need for establishing a covenant for working together. Read (post) a sample covenant that you have created and highlight the key components: confidentiality; everyone's voice matters; disagree with care and do not “attack” anyone. Invite the group to add their ideas and agree to honor the final version of your covenant.

Distribute the Listening & Looking Guide. Explain that this is a resource to help them capture thoughts and ideas from the video presentation as well as a place to make note of visions they have for ministry. Allow time for group members to scan the questions to help focus the viewing and listening process.

Play the Video [25-30 minutes]

Introduce the video by reading the following information about the presenter. Encourage participants to jot down short notes on their guide but as much as possible remain attentive to listening to and experiencing the presentation.

The Rev. Jennifer Bailey is founder of the Faith Matters Network, a nonprofit social justice collective that is committed to building leadership in marginalized communities to challenge structural inequalities. In this video, she discusses how current contemporary human rights movements such as Black Lives Matters are part of the tradition of protest and organizing as much as efforts in the Civil Rights Era. An ordained elder in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, she is currently the activist-in-residence at Scarritt-Bennett Center in Nashville, Tenn.

At the conclusion of the video, allow five to ten minutes for the group to add more information and answer questions on the Listening & Looking Guide. Tell the group that there will be opportunities to add more information to the sheet and to reflect upon their notes. (Show the video again if the group desires and time permits.)

Group Discussion No. 1 [15 minutes]

1. Invite people to share their key reflection or image/story that stands out for them from the video.
2. Refer the group to the second question on the guide (the sacredness that Ms. Bailey found at Brown Chapel AME Church). Encourage group members to “pair ‘n share” with each other, discussing experiences of sacred places and spaces that nudge them to doing the “right things.” Return to the full group and share your comments.

Research or Share History [10 minutes]

Option A: Ms. Bailey referenced the work of Ella Baker, a lesser-known leader in the Civil Rights Movement. Invite group members with smartphones to do a quick search about Ella Baker and share information that they find. (Information can be found at www.ellabakercenter.org.) Invite persons to share their information. If time permits, allow someone to share the nature of the work of the Ella Baker Center. **Option B:** Read aloud this summary statement about Ella Baker then invite group members to identify traits that they most admire.

“Ella Baker was an activist in the Civil Rights Movement whose goal was to “get people to understand that they had something within their power that they could use” to help counter violence and injustice. She played a role in the leading organizations such as the NAACP, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. She began speaking against injustice as a college student. After moving to New York, she joined the Young Negroes Cooperative League whose goal was to develop black economic power. She served as a field secretary with the NAACP and, later, as director of branches between 1940 and 1946. Later, she moved to Atlanta to help with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and ran a voter registration campaign called Crusade for Citizenship. She then went to Greensboro, N.C., to help organize the student sit-ins. She continued her advocacy for human rights until her death in 1986.”

Reenact History [5 minutes]

Invite those who are able to reenact the “die-in” that took place at Walgreens in Nashville, an experience that builds on the sit-ins at lunch counters during the early days of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement. Lie down in protest. Lie down to disrupt and interrupt everyday business so that voices for justice can be heard. Lie down in commemoration of those who were forced to lie down through death. Feel the pain and discomfort in your body. Lie down. Allow time for sharing feelings and ideas of how the protesters may have felt.

Group Discussion No. 2 [10 minutes]

3. Share stories in the group about their own experiences in observing or experiencing institutional racism. Ask members to limit their remarks to one to two minutes so that everyone may share.
4. Distribute construction paper and markers to the group. Ask them to think about the statement: “Our democracy is an unfinished building with each new generation contributing to its construction.” Invite members to write down the contributions to democracy that they have seen or have made in the last two years. Invite members to share their responses and tapes their paper to the wall.

Reflect and Share [10 minutes]

Ask members to review the information recorded on the guide sheet. Add additional thoughts, complete their vision, their commitment, and begin to draft their social media share. Invite anyone who wishes to share their commitment to do so after a time of individual reflection.

Closing Prayer [1 minute]

God, make us compost. Help us nurture and support and participate in the work of the young activists we heard about today who as Ms. Bailey said, “Are not seeking to destroy or kill, but who strive to take the best and most nourishing from the institutions around us and to cultivate a new vision.” She asked us: which path will we choose? Help us to choose the justice path even though it may be rocky. Help us to choose the path to ensure freedom and justice for all. Amen.

Listening & Looking Guide: The Rev. Jennifer Bailey

Reflection: Name two primary images or ideas from the video.

Ms. Bailey discusses her connection with Brown Chapel AME, identifying with their “sacred halls.” Name spaces with which you connect justice or places where you go to feel empowered:

Name any connections you have with the foot soldiers of the Selma movement or prophets of progress in other (even newer) civil rights movements:

Ms. Bailey describes experiencing the “sting” of racism. Make note about your experience with or knowledge of racism:

Recall the “die-in.” What specific thing can you do to take a stand for justice?

Cultivate a new vision: Ms. Bailey advises us to not “submit to the seduction of hopelessness,” but rather be a prisoner of hope and to believe in the possibility of transformation. Think about how you can avoid hopelessness and despair. Jot your thoughts here:

Make a commitment: _____

Tweet This/Post on your social media: _____

Connect with GCORR

- Twitter: @GCORR_UMC
- Instagram: @gcorr_UMC #vitalconvo
- Facebook: General Commission on Religion and Race



Dr. Katelin Hansen

Being A White Ally With People of Color

Video (9:09): Dr. Katelin Hansen, director of experiential learning for the faith-based nonprofit agency, Community Development for All People, and director of music for the United Methodist Church for All People

Katelin Hansen serves as the director of experiential learning for the faith-based nonprofit agency, Community Development for All People. She is also director of music for the United Methodist Church for All People, a multi-race, multiclass church in Columbus, Ohio where she interweaves a wide array of music styles into each service. Her blog, *By Their Strange Fruit*, is an online ministry facilitating justice and reconciliation across racial divides. She received her doctorate in neuroscience from Ohio State University in Columbus, OH.

Session 2: Being A White Ally With People of Color

Preparation

Select a room or location to offer the study. Every session needs a room that has the capability to access the video via the internet and to project the video for groups of various sizes. Check to be sure equipment is working properly. **Preview the video. Read through the lesson plan.** Have the covenant of care for display or sharing for the session.

Do some research about the different kinds of generations (i.e., iGen, Gen Z or Centennials, born 1996 and later; Millennials or Gen Y, born 1977 to 1995; Generation X, born 1965 to 1976; Baby Boomers, born 1946 to 1964; and Traditionalists or Silent Generation, born 1945 and before.)

Read about the generations at www.genhq.com/faq-info-about-generations and make notes about the characteristics of these generations. Also, visit Katelin Hansen's blog, <http://bytheirstrangefruit.blogspot.com>. Read through a few of her weekly posts. Make notes on some ideas to share with the class as part of the proposed research project.

Gather the following materials:

- Bible for reading the Scriptures – Matthew 7:15-20 and Luke 13:6-9
- Listening & Looking Guide (one copy for each person or project on a screen)
- United Methodist Hymnal, #378 Amazing Grace and #351 Be Thou My Vision
- Pens and pencils
- Hand mirror
- CD player (or smartphone or tablet) and a CD of soft, instrumental music (optional)

THE STUDY SESSION

Get Started [10 minutes]

Welcome everyone to the session. (Take care of housekeeping matters such as break times and location of bathrooms, etc.). Read the following statement of purpose (or recruit a volunteer to do so): “The General Commission on Religion and Race presents Vital Conversations to help start the dialogue on subjects that may sometimes be difficult to approach. We are all part of the beloved community, and we welcome perspectives that bring enlightenment and understanding.”

Begin the study session by inviting people to share their first name, their generation (Baby Boomers, Gen X, millennial, Gen Y, etc.), and a favorite characteristic about their generation. Introduce yourself, share your generation, and explain why you have accepted the role of facilitator and your visions for the time together.

Introduce the video presenter: Dr. Katelin Hansen is a neuroscientist and a United Methodist laywoman in ministry. Dubbing herself as an “illusive millennial that the church is always worried about,” she shares her journey to various forms of ministry, away from her “precise and structured” science background to a full-fledged commitment to ministry. She says, “Jesus is a troublemaker, and he would not let me go.” She writes the blog, “By Their Strange Fruit.”

Lead the group in singing verse one of the hymn “Amazing Grace,” No. 378 in the United Methodist Hymnal. Ask someone to read aloud these Scriptures: Matthew 7:15-20 and Luke 13:6-9. Invite someone to lead the group in prayer; if no one volunteers, open with a prayer of your choice.

Read aloud and post a covenant that the group has created and highlight the key components: confidentiality; everyone's voice matters; disagree with care and do not attack anyone. Invite the group to add thoughts and ideas to the covenant.

Distribute the Listening & Looking Guide. Explain that this is a resource to help them capture thoughts and ideas from the video presentation as well as a place to make note of visions they have for ministry. Allow time for them to scan the questions to help focus the viewing and listening process.

Play the Video [15-20 minutes]

Encourage participants to jot down short notes on their guide but as much as possible remain attentive to listening to and experiencing the presentation. At the conclusion of the video, allow 5-10 minutes for the group to add more information and answer questions on their Listening & Looking Guide. Tell the group that there will be opportunities to add more information to the sheet and to reflect upon their notes. (You may show the video twice if time permits and the group agrees.)

Open Mic: Stand and Share [15 minutes]

Invite people to share responses from two answers on their Listening & Looking Guide:

- What are the key values that are fundamental to their souls?
- State what meaning they found in the following sentence: “I learned the history that wasn’t taught to me.”

Research/Review [20 minutes]

Divide the participants into two groups by choosing between the following two options. Allow the groups 10 minutes to complete the selected task:

- Use your smartphone, tablet or laptop to find and read at least one of Dr. Hansen’s posts on her blog, “By Their Strange Fruit,” <http://bytheirstrangefruit.blogspot.com>). Make note of one or two key points or new ideas.
- Write a few sentences about people or organizations that you know who are about the business of doing “diligent and good work for justice and reconciliation.” (The General Commission on Religion and Race may be one of them).

Call the group back together and hear reports from the research and review process. Encourage members to make connections between their research and knowledge base with Dr. Hansen’s experiences. (As the facilitator, be prepared to add to those connections.)

Reflect and Share [10 minutes]

Ask members to review the information recorded on the guide sheet. Add additional thoughts, complete their vision, their commitment, and begin to draft their social media share. Invite anyone who wishes to share their commitment to do so after a time of individual reflection.

Closing Meditation [10 minutes]

Ask group members to sit in a circle. Bring out the hand mirror and say to the group: “Katelin Hansen said her pastor challenged her as she was preparing to advance her career as a neuroscientist, telling her, ‘I just want you to hold a mirror to your life and how you are spending all your extra time, all your extra energy, your passion. I think you might have some tough choices about your life path ahead.’”

Then say, “I am asking you to take this mirror, hold it in front of your face, take a long look and ask, ‘God, what is the tough thing you would have me to do in becoming an ally with people whose color or experiences may be different than mine?’”

If you are using music, begin playing soft music. Pass the mirror to one participant, ask her or him to take a good look, and ask the question: “God, what is the tough thing you would have me to do?” before silently passing to the person to the left. Each person, after taking a look, should sit quietly seeking God’s will and discernment until everyone has held the mirror and raised the question. (Note: If the group is larger than ten persons, pass two mirrors.)

After everyone has had a chance to look in the mirror and engage in a time of silence and contemplation, begin singing this hymn of dedication (or ask a volunteer song leader), “Be Thou My Vision” No. 451, United Methodist Hymnal.

Finally, close with this prayer or one of your choosing:

God, be thou our vision so that we may not be colorblind, so we can clearly see our sisters and brothers in the array of skin tones that you have granted us. God, be our vision so that we may clearly see – if just for a day or a month or a year – the path, the direction you want our lives to take. Be thou our vision so that we may see thee more clearly and follow thee more dearly – day by day. We belong to the generation that would rather seek justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you. Use us Lord. In the name of our Savior and Lord, Amen.

Listening & Looking Guide: Dr. Katelin Hansen

Reflection: In what way do you see a link between the words of the hymn, “Amazing Grace” and the presenter’s experiences?

Dr. Hansen discusses the choice that she and her husband made to join and worship at the United Methodist Church for All People so that they would not “deprive their souls” of God’s majesty by isolating themselves among believers of similar backgrounds. In what way(s) is your soul deprived?

In what way(s) is your soul fed?

Dr. Hansen mentioned adopting a value of downward mobility, not as a charitable endeavor, but as something fundamental to her soul. Jot down one or two values that are fundamental to your soul:

Katelin Hansen said, “I learned the history that wasn’t taught to me.” What history have you learned recently that was not taught to you (in school)?

Complete the statement: “I am of the generation that

Describe a new vision that you want your church to claim:

Make a commitment: _____

Tweet This/Post on your social media: _____

Connect with GCORR

- Twitter: @GCORR_UMC
- Instagram: @gcorrumpc #vitalconvo
- Facebook: General Commission on Religion and Race



Sarah Schulz

Called to Welcome Refugees

Video (11:08): Sarah Schulz, United Methodist theologian, licensed minister and education consultant for United Methodist Church in Germany

Sarah Schulz is a United Methodist preacher and theologian who serves as the education secretary for the United Methodist Church in Germany. Her primary work is helping congregations learn to welcome and advocate for refugees and immigrant persons. She urges the church to remember the most basic and most important part of our Christian belief: To love God and to love our fellow human beings and to care about them just as we do ourselves.

Session 3: Called to Welcome Refugees

Preparation

Select a room or location to offer the study. Every session needs a room that has the capability to access the video via the internet and to project the video for groups of various sizes. Check to be sure the equipment is working properly.

Preview the video. Read through the lesson plan. Have for display or sharing a covenant of care for the session. Think about asking members in the session to read the Scriptures.

Do some research about topics such as welcoming refugees in the United States and Germany (welcomingrefugees.org; america.aljazeera.com); protests against establishing shelters and transition homes for veterans, released prisoners, and homeless persons in certain neighborhoods. In addition to online news articles, refer to United Methodist Church publications such as *Response* magazine (<http://unitedmethodistwomen.org/response>), and websites of other agencies, General Board of Church and Society (<http://umc-gbcs.org>),

General Board of Global Ministries (<http://umcmmission.org>), United Methodist Women (<http://unitedmethodistwomen.org>), and United Methodist Committee on Relief (<http://umcor.org>) Download or purchase a map of Germany to post in your meeting room and point out or outline the places where Sarah Schulz has lived.

Gather the following materials:

- Bible for reading the Scriptures – Ruth 1; Matthew 25:31-40; and James 1:5 (included)
- Listening & Looking Guide (one for each person or project on a screen)
- Construction paper, assorted colors – two sheets for each person
- Pens, pencils and markers, assorted colors
- Trash can or small laundry basket

THE STUDY SESSION

Get Started [20 minutes]

Welcome everyone to the session; take care of housekeeping matters. Read aloud the following statement of purpose (or recruit a volunteer to do so): “The General Commission on Religion and Race presents Vital Conversations to help start the dialogue on subjects that may sometimes be difficult to approach. We are all part of the beloved community, and we welcome perspectives that bring enlightenment and understanding.”

Begin the study session by distributing markers and construction papers and ask participants to sketch a picture of a journey in their lives (i.e., leaving home to go to college; establishing residence for a new job; achieving a dream vacation). The “sketch” may be a timeline, a series of pictures, or a cluster of words. Have each person introduce themselves by sharing their journey briefly. (Manage the time process, allowing each one a maximum of two minutes to describe their journey.)

Introduce yourself last and describe your journey.

Then explain why you accepted the role of facilitator for this session and your vision for the time together. Introduce the video presenter:

Sarah Schulz, a theologian and licensed minister, works as an education secretary in the United Methodist Church in Germany. Upon finishing her studies in theology, she moved from Berlin to Saxony to work in ministry there. She calls the church to take its mission seriously and welcome the stranger and embrace the newcomer, specifically refugees and immigrants.

Ask someone to read aloud these Scriptures: Ruth 1 and Matthew 25:31-40. Invite someone to lead the group in prayer; if no one volunteers, open with a prayer of your choice.

Read and post the group covenant and highlight the key components: confidentiality; everyone’s voice matters; disagree with care and do not attack anyone. Invite the group to add thoughts and ideas to the covenant.

Distribute the Listening & Looking Guide.

Explain that this is a resource to help them capture thoughts and ideas from the video presentation as well as a place to make note of visions they have for ministry. Allow time for them to scan the questions to help focus the viewing and listening process.

Play the Video [20 minutes]

Encourage participants to jot down short notes on their guide but as much as possible remain attentive to listening to and experiencing the presentation. At the conclusion of the video, allow five and ten minutes for the group to add more information and answer questions on their Listening & Looking Guide. Tell the group that there will be opportunities to add more information to the sheet and to reflect upon their notes. (If time permits, ask the group if they want to see the video again.)

Share Research and Experiences [10-15 minutes]

Give an overview of information that you have found about the challenges some communities have faced in welcoming refugees or others who might be thought of as strangers (homeless, veterans, etc.). Ask the group if any of them has had firsthand experience with these challenges. Allow one or two persons to add information.

Encounter Spaces [20-25 minutes]

Ms. Schulz calls for the church to create “encounter” spaces to help break the circle of xenophobia and fear of the stranger, the refugee, and the unknown. She talks specifically about having language exchange sessions, joint cooking events, and sports tournaments.

Divide the group into mini-circles of three to five persons (try to keep it an odd number). Invite each person to describe a setting in which she or he was a newcomer and to identify people and experiences that helped make them welcome. (Ask the group to dig deep into their memory banks and think of new settings in their lives, i.e., going to college; marrying into a family; serving on a volunteer in mission team in another state or country; changing jobs.) Allow each person up to three minutes to share their story. (Try to be strict in timekeeping.)

Litany: Naming the “Crazy Thing” [5 minutes]

In the beginning of the video, Ms. Schulz describes the actions of radical right-wing groups in her native Germany using discriminating slogans that show “utter contempt for human life.” She says, “The crazy thing is that those parties claim to advocate Christian values.”

Lead the group in a litany-type reflection by asking for volunteers to name the “crazy thing” that they have recently witnessed in their communities in response to a social justice issue, a “crazy thing” that runs contrary to their understanding of Christian values. Any person who desires to speak gets ONE MINUTE to rant or lament against the craziness – to speak sorrow, frustration or anger without judgment. Ask others in the group to listen in silence as much as possible.

At the conclusion of each person’s “rant,” lead the group in acknowledging the pain and frustration by simply saying, “Lord, have mercy.” Call for a group response by saying: “And the people say....”

Casting Out Fear [10 minutes]

Sarah Schulz names two fears that are prevalent in the community where she lives: fear of everything foreign and strange and fear of falling by the wayside. Distribute sheets of paper and markers. Ask each person to write on the paper a true fear that they have – it could be for their lives, for their family, for their church, for the world.

Set out a basket or trash can about eight feet away from the group. Invite persons one at a time to come up (stand or sit) and cast their fear in the wastebasket. Persons may make a statement about their fear or throw their paper in silence. Leave the papers wherever they land.

After everyone who desires to speak has done so, go stand close to the “fears” and share this prayer: Our Lord and Savior, you asked us to cast all our fears upon you because you care for us. We cast out the fears in our lives, in our communities that keep us from being the beloved community that you call us to be. Hear our prayers, have mercy upon us. AMEN.

Reflect and Share [10 minutes]

Have members review the information recorded on their guide sheet. Add additional thoughts, complete their vision, their commitment, and begin to draft their social media “shares.” Invite anyone who wishes to share their commitment to do so after a time of individual reflection.

Closing Prayer [1 minute]

We began our time talking about journeys and changes in our lives. We listened to Sarah Schulz talk about her journey. Let us conclude with this scriptural reminder as we journey through what may be challenging and turbulent times in welcoming refugees. James 1:5 (The Voice), reads: “If you don’t have all the wisdom needed for this journey, then all you have to do is ask God for it; and God will grant all that you need. He gives lavishly and never scolds you for asking.”

Let us ask and believe as we hear this prayer:

God, bless the work of people like Sarah Schulz, people who work day and night to live the Christian values outlined in Matthew 25. Help us to see you hungry and thirsty in the faces of all we meet – and respond. Help us see the stranger and offer them welcome. Bless our journey and strengthen the work of our hands; Lord, strengthen the work of our hands. Amen.

Listening & Looking Guide: Sarah Schulz

Reflection: In what way(s) do you see a link between Sarah’s experiences in Germany and yours in the United States or your country of birth? _____

Remember a time when you formed a group to address a perceived challenge (as did people in Sarah’s hometown): _____

Recall the positive effects to her town as a result of refugees being placed there (i.e., abandoned flats restored): _____

She describes two kinds of fear –identify them: _____

What are your fears or concerns about issues of immigration and refugee resettlement? _____

Cultivate a new vision: Sarah Schulz asks of us to create spaces for people to meet. She says: “We have rooms where meetings could take place.” Identify spaces and places where you live that could be used to build community for refugees: _____

Make a commitment: Ms. Schulz talks about the need for churches to take on a second big task to disable biases and lies (i.e., false assertions that refugees are getting huge amount of money while other local people in need are being ignored). What bias will you work to reverse? _____

Make a commitment: _____

Tweet This/Post on your social media: _____

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Joseph Kye

My Story: Building Bridges with Music

Video (15:51): Joseph Kye, singer, composer, violinist and recording artist, currently planning an Asia tour and working on his new album, *Migrants* (title song included in video)

Joseph Kye is a singer/composer/violinist/looper. Born in Korea and raised in Seattle, his music has drawn rave reviews. Drawing upon his migrant background, Kye blends indie-rock, jazz, classical, pop, and world folk to create a unique sound. Sacramento Bee wrote that he is a “single violinist and ...one mesmerizing symphony.” In 2015, he released the acclaimed album *Joseph in the Well*, and toured the United States, opening for world-renowned cellist Yo-Yo Ma. His next album, *Migrants*, is slated for release in early 2017. (The title song is featured in his presentation.)

Gather the following materials:

- Bible for reading the Scriptures – Matthew 25:31-40 and Psalm 150
- Hymnals or music books
- Listening & Looking Guide (one for each person or project on a screen)
- Assorted candles (if allowed in your meeting space – may substitute battery-operated candles, portable instruments: toy, homemade, or professional musical instruments, including drums, tambourines, maracas, flute, violin, steel pans)
- Construction paper, assorted colors
- Pens, pencils, and markers, assorted colors
- Blue painter’s tape
- Large hat (or basket) to hold slips of paper

You will also need:

- A small table to use to create an altar setting
- Cloth to cover the table – can use an assortment of fabrics
- CD player
- CD of instrumental music (jazz, gospel, hymns, or whatever speaks to you)

Prepare for the session “Pass the Hat” by typing or writing on individual slips of paper questions 2 through 5 from the Listening & Looking Guide. Make multiple copies of each question inside the hat to ensure everyone gets each question.

THE STUDY SESSION

Get Started [20 minutes]

Set up the altar with the Bible, hymnal, and a candle. Light other candles around the room. Have music playing softly as people gather. Welcome everyone to the session; take care of housekeeping matters. Read or ask someone else to read the statement of purpose: “The General Commission on Religion and Race presents Vital Conversations to help start the dialogue on subjects that may sometimes be difficult to approach. We are all part of the beloved community, and we welcome perspectives that bring enlightenment and understanding.”

Introduce the video presenter (and explain that you’ll show the video later in the session than in previous meetings): Joseph Kye was born in Korea and came to the United States with his parents when he was six years old. He began taking violin lessons in elementary school. He is a classically trained musician who has a passion for music of all kinds, including blues and socially conscious hip-hop. His desire for the church is to create spaces where various music traditions are embraced and there is room for “diverse expression of emotion” through music.

Begin the study session by asking participants to connect with music in their lives. Using the markers and construction paper, ask participants to help create a “musical band” by each writing (or drawing) on the paper an instrument that they play or whose sound they love. (Ask members to write or draw only one instrument per sheet of paper. For those who play multiple instruments, ask them to use additional sheets.)

Place the words on the wall and allow people to revel in the talent that exists in their group. Introduce yourself and briefly explain why you have accepted the role of facilitator for this session, your musical connections, and the visions you have for the time together.

Session 4: My Story: Building Bridges with Music

Preparation

Select a room or location to offer the study. Every session needs a room that has the capability to access the video via the internet and to project the video for groups of various sizes. Check to be sure the equipment is working properly.

Preview the video. Read through the lesson plan. Have for display or sharing a covenant of care for the session. Considering inviting group members to read the Scripture(s).

Go to [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dLUDehQpsvU) and listen to “Love Shall Overcome” by the group, The Brilliance (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dLUDehQpsvU>). Make note of words or phrases that stand out for you. Be prepared to connect your reflections with those of Joseph Kye.

Read aloud –or ask someone to read – Psalm 150. Ask the group to respond to the Word by sharing briefly what they hear and feel when they hear this psalm. Ask them how it connects with their worship experiences. Invite someone to lead the group in prayer; if no one volunteers, open with a prayer of your choice.

Review and post the group’s covenant, and highlight the key components: confidentiality; everyone’s voice matters; disagree with care and do not attack anyone. Invite the group to add thoughts and ideas to the covenant.

Distribute the Listening & Looking Guide. Explain that this is a resource to help them capture thoughts and ideas from the video presentation as well as a place to make note of visions they have for ministry. Allow group members to scan the questions to help focus the viewing and listening process.

Play the Video [20 minutes]

Encourage participants to jot down short notes on their guide but as much as possible remain attentive to listening to and experiencing the presentation. Say that at the conclusion of the video, there will be 5-10 minutes for the group to add more information and answer questions on their Listening & Looking Guide. Also, tell the group that there will be opportunities to add more information to the sheet and to reflect upon their notes.

To begin viewing the video, direct group members to set aside their pen and paper and pick up and hold any musical instrument they have brought or may be available to them. Play the first part of the video, having participants connected with their instrument while listening to the song.

Pause the video just before Joseph Kye begins to speak and direct group to the first questions on the Listening & Looking Guide: What did you feel as you listened to the music? What comes to mind as you watch and listen to Mr. Kye?

Pass the Hat – group reflection [20 minutes]

Play the remainder of the video and have the group complete making notes on their Listening & Looking Guide. Have the next four questions (name a song, when have you felt a “disconnect” with worship, etc.) written on slips of paper and in a hat (or basket).

Ask each person to pull from the hat. Once everyone has selected a slip of paper, call on members to answer the question they have chosen. Invite everyone who has selected the first question “Name a song...” to answer before calling on those who have the question “When have you felt a disconnect...”. If time permits, allow anyone who wishes to share their response to the final question: “What do you expect most from worship music?”

Reflect and Share [10 minutes]

Allow time for members to reflect on what has been shared in the group. Allow time for them to add additional notes on their guide and to complete their vision, their commitment, and draft their social media share.

Altar Call [10 minutes]

Have the video cued to Mr. Kye’s singing: “You Are Part of Me.” Give group members an index card and ask if they will also write their commitment on that card to use in the closing worship. Play the song “Love Shall Overcome” by The Brilliance (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dLUDehQpsvU>). Ask members to reflect on feeling evoked by the song as they prepared for the lesson and now, as the lesson closes.

Begin to play Mr. Kye’s song and invite the group to come and place their cards, on which they have written their commitment, on the altar and join in singing the song.

Closing Prayer [3 minutes]

Offer this prayer (or ask a volunteer to pray):

Lord, how can we get there? How can we get to the place where everyone hears their music, everyone finds their solace, everyone finds in our churches the freedom to rejoice and worship God? God send us musicians whose love for you and all God’s people allow us to find room for introspection and vulnerability. You have called us to create community, to be one with another. Make us willing, make us able. Amen.

Listening & Looking Guide: Joseph Kye

What did you feel as you listened to the music; what came to mind as you watched Joseph Kye interact with the music?

Name a song or types of music that bring you joy, comfort and energy:

When have you felt a “disconnect” with a worship experience; what was missing for you?

Recall a time when worship brought you joy and comfort; what was happening at that time?

Overall, what do you expect most from worship music?

Joseph Kye references a song “Love Shall Overcome” by The Brilliance, which includes the line, “When all we see is in equality, love shall overcome.” Imagine your faith community singing this song in strange and strained times. How would this song be received or embraced?

Cultivate a new vision: Joseph Kye talks about some churches not “leaving room” for diverse expressions of emotion. What do you dream for worship that would make it beneficial for a wider audience?

Make a commitment: _____

Tweet This/Post on your social media: _____

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Nia Shand

When I Told My Church

Video (8:41): Nia Shand, professional dancer, and co-founder of the Brooklyn, N.Y.–based performance art duo, Nia & Ness

Nia Shand is a Brooklyn-based contemporary dance artist, co-founder of the dance/poet performance art duo “Nia & Ness.” Their work has been recognized among the Brooklyn-based Creators Collective’s top artists of the year. A self-described “life explorer,” she has tried karate, skiing, horseback riding, and plays both the violin and viola. She majored in at Temple University and after graduating college joined the DAGAGA Dance Company, with which she performed throughout Germany and France.

Session 4: When I Told My Church

Preparation

Select a room or location to offer the study. Every session needs a room that has the capability to access the video via internet and to project the video for groups of various sizes. Check to be sure equipment is working properly. For this session, space enough for group dancing is also preferred.

Preview the video. Watch the video a couple of times. The first time, at least for the first two to three minutes, watch the video without sound. Pause the video and simply think about what comes to mind for you. Then start the video over and watch her dance and listen to Nia Shand’s voice. What comes to mind now? Finally, read through the lesson plan. Ponder the question: what does it mean to lead with love? Post the group covenant of care for the session.

Gather the following materials:

- Bible for reading the Scriptures – Luke 11:5-10 and I John 3:16-20
- Listening & Looking Guide (one for each person or project on a screen)
- Pens and pencils
- Index cards
- Construction paper
- Scissors, preferably one for each participant
- Blue painter’s tape

Also prepare:

- Paper hearts of various sizes and colors
- Post a sheet of newsprint (or poster board) with these words at the top “My name is” and “I am ____.” Complete the phrase with information about yourself. Include space enough for everyone in your group to write about themselves. (Have extra sheets available in case your class members write large.)
- Post a second sheet of newsprint and write across the top, the words, “I am Nia Shand.”
- Post a third sheet of newsprint with the words at the top: “Leading with Love.”

THE STUDY SESSION

Get Started [15 minutes]

Welcome everyone to the session and take care of housekeeping matters. Read – or ask a volunteer to read – this statement of purpose: “The General Commission on Religion and Race presents Vital Conversations to help start the dialogue on subjects that may sometimes be difficult to approach. We are all part of the beloved community, and we welcome perspectives that bring enlightenment and understanding.”

Begin the study session by drawing people’s attention to the newsprint with the heading “I Am Nia Shand.” Explain that the presenter today is a young woman who introduces herself by name and defines four aspects of who she is. Invite everyone to make their own list using “I Am” statements. If possible, sit or stand in a circle, and ask each one to introduce herself or himself using their statements.

You may wish to model the exercise for the group either by introducing yourself with your “I Am” statements or using the following sample: “I am Barbara Jean. I am a pianist. I am a writer. I am a single woman. I am an activist.”

Ask someone to read aloud the Scriptures Luke 11:5-10 and I John 3:16-20. Allow time for prayer. Invite someone to lead the group in prayer; if no one volunteers, open with a prayer of your choice.

Read and post the group covenant, and highlight the key components: confidentiality; everyone’s voice matters; disagree with care; do not attack anyone. Invite the group to add thoughts and ideas to the covenant (especially if there are new persons). Modify the covenant as needed.

Invite the group to watch the video by sharing this introduction: Nia Shand is a young woman. She is a dancer. She is a lifelong “church girl.” She is a woman who prays. She is a child of God longing for Christians to show love that truly embraces young people. She laments, “How

are you going to expect young people to stay in the church or come to the church if you aren’t willing to make changes, positive changes, more inclusive changes?”

Then tell the class that because Ms. Shand is a dancer, her video will be viewed in a way that is a little different from those in previous classes. In fact, for the first few minutes, the group is simply to watch Nia dance.

Play one to two minutes of the video then pause it. During the pause distribute the Listening & Looking Guide. Explain that this is a resource to help them capture thoughts and ideas from the video presentation as well as a place to make note of visions they have for ministry. Direct the group to the first question and ask them to capture their reflections in writing.

Play the Video [15 -20 minutes]

Divide the group into two smaller groups by counting off “One. Two.” Assign group 1 to watch the video, paying special attention to Ms. Shand’s dancing.

Ask group 2 to focus on the words Ms. Shand is saying during the video. Encourage them to jot down notes, but stress that they should focus on listening and experiencing the words.

At the conclusion of the video, allow five minutes for all group members to add more information and answer questions on their Listening & Looking Guide. Say they will have more opportunities to add more information to the sheet and to reflect upon their notes. (If time permits – and the group wants to – show Ms. Shand’s video again.)

What Do Our Hearts Say? [15 minutes]

As people finish making notes on their Listening & Looking Guide, ask them to take a pair of scissors and construction paper and cut out paper hearts (of varying sizes). Note: If someone is particularly good at this, allow them to cut out hearts for those who find this task daunting.

Using information from the Listening & Looking Guide, invite people to write names of people or issues and concerns on their hearts and place them on the newsprint with the heading “Leading with Love”:

Name of someone (first name only or pseudonym) of a person who feels alienated because of their sexual identity.

- Describe a challenge or pain being experienced because of love other than man-woman romantic love.
- Recall any words from the video that depicted cares and concerns for Ms. Shand as she “came out” as lesbian to her mother and her church family.
- Write a brief prayer, vision statement or dream for a more inclusive church.
- Write the word “love” in a language other than your own, or draw your idea of love.

Reflect and Share [10 minutes]

Have members review the information recorded on the guide sheet. Add additional thoughts, complete their vision, their commitment, and their social media share. Invite anyone who wishes to share their commitment to do so after a time of individual reflection.

Closing Meditation: Dance with Nia Shand [5 minutes]

Ask all who are able and willing to stand on their feet or sit in a chair with hands free of paper, pens, scissors, phones or Bibles. Explain that we are invited to move and dance with Nia Shand, to use our bodies and movements to share her longing for a world where every person who loves God and longs to worship God will have a home.

Say that you will play a section of the video (begin anywhere), and the group is invited to move in worship, in expression of petition, in expression of joy. Ask members to dance as fully with their bodies as they are able – hand-waving, head-nodding, toe-tapping, leaping, yoga poses, twirls and whirls are all acceptable.

After a few minutes, bring the video volume down to barely audible and ask people to remain in place while you read this closing prayer (or share one of your own choosing): Holy and loving God, we thy people pledge to follow your call to love. Help us to open wide our hearts and our arms to show love to as many as we can. Make our hearts a home for others. In Christ’s name we pray, Amen.

Listening and Looking Guide: Nia Shand

What came to mind as you watched Nia dance without hearing any sound?

Group 1: When you focused on the movement, what did you hear?

Group 2: When you focused on her words, what did you see?

Nia Shand described a moment when she felt as if her church “didn’t see me for me” anymore. In what way can you identify with that experience? Have you been targeted or rejected?

Answer her question: “What kind of positive impact are we going to make on the world?”

What does it mean to “lead with love”?

Cultivate a new vision: Nia Shand shares that her girlfriend continued to accompany her to church and they found love and acceptance. How can acceptance be experienced right away?

Make a commitment: _____

Tweet This/Post on your social media: _____

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Brittney Jackson Brown

Ethnic Identity: 'What ARE you?'

Video (8:42): Brittney Jackson Brown, student at Vanderbilt Divinity School, pursuing a master's degree in theological studies

Brittney Jackson Brown is chairwoman of the LatinX student organization at Vanderbilt Divinity School, where she is pursuing a master's degree in theological studies. She talks about the challenges she has faced being multiracial, often asked the intrusive question: "What are you?" She emphasizes how the church might welcome new people — especially people of color and multiracial people — to church.

Session 5: Ethnic Identity: 'What ARE you?'

Preparation

Select a room or location to offer the study. Every session needs a room that has the capability to access the video via internet and to project the video for groups of various sizes. Check to be sure the equipment is working properly.

Preview the video then read through the lesson plan. Post the group covenant and select volunteers to read the Scriptures during the session.

Gather the following materials:

- Bible for reading the Scriptures – Ruth 2:1-7; Matthew 11:2-3; Matthew 16: 13-15; Matthew 21:6-10; John 4:7-9; Acts 9:1-5; and James 5:13-16
- Listening & Looking Guide (one for each person or project on a screen)
- Pens and pencils
- A pack of small index cards
- Envelopes (business size)
- A basket large enough to hold the envelopes and cards
- Low- or no-fragrances anointing oil. (Olive oil is frequently used. Other oils such as almond have strong scents, which some may find overwhelming. Check with group members before the session to avoid allergic reactions.)
- Small, shallow bowl or ramekin to hold the oil

Also prepare:

- Read through the Healing Service (It is acceptable for a layperson to lead this service; however, you may ask a pastor or a lay servant.)
- List Scriptures on newsprint (except for James 5:13-16).
- Write/type these directions on a sheet of paper (should be able to fit on a sheet of paper three or four times, so that everyone gets a copy of instructions):
 - » "You are getting to know this person who is 'new' to our class. Ask her/him the question on the index card you selected, or make up a question."
 - » "You have the right to insist that the person answer your question." (Say, 'Hey, you didn't answer my question!' – then repeat it).
- Write each one of these "nosy/intrusive" questions on a separate index card, using one side of the card only (and feel free to add other questions):
 - » "Are you getting fat?"
 - » "Are you pregnant or getting fat?"
 - » "How much money do you make?"
 - » "Are you Mexican?"
 - » "Have you ever been in jail or prison?"
 - » "Are you 'saved?'"
- Put directions and one index card in an envelope – one for each participant. Seal them and place envelopes in a basket.
- Make copies of the directions for the "Hot Seat" activity – one for each participant, excluding the person designated to be on the "Hot Seat."
- Arrange seating in a semi-circle in the room; place one seat –preferably a backless stool— at the top of the semi-circle

THE STUDY SESSION

Get Started [5 minutes]

If you have not done so in advance, recruit one person from the session to sit on the stool, to sit on the “Hot Seat.” (NOTE: We strongly suggest you choose a person in advance of the class, and explain the purpose of the exercise; suggest that the person may say, “I’m not comfortable answering that,” or “That question feels inappropriate.”)

Welcome everyone to the session and take care of housekeeping matters. Read the statement of purpose (or recruit a volunteer to do so): “The General Commission on Religion and Race presents Vital Conversations to help start the dialogue on subjects that may sometimes be difficult to approach. We are all part of the beloved community, and we welcome perspectives that bring enlightenment and understanding.”

In the “Hot Seat” [10 minutes]

Pass the basket around and ask everyone to take envelope. Give people time to review the materials that are in the envelope. Set the stage for the activity by welcoming the person who is new/on the hot seat and say that the class will have an opportunity to get to know this person by asking just a few ‘of interest’ questions. Tell them you will give a signal and they are to begin asking the questions of the person sitting on the stool and that they may either wait for a reply or just keep asking questions.

After three to five minutes of questions, stop the activity and ask everyone to take a deep breath. Thank the person sitting on the hot seat and ask her or him to share what it felt like being asked so many questions all at once. Also, ask if any of the questions stood out as being really bothersome – and to say which ones. Finally, ask the class who were asking the questions how they felt about participating in the exercise.

Hear the Scriptures [10 minutes]

Direct the group’s attention to the Scriptures and ask for volunteers to select a Scripture and read it aloud. Be sure to pause for a five to ten seconds between each reading. After all Scriptures have been read aloud, point out that all of these Scriptures have one thing in common, namely someone is asking someone a question: Who are you? What are you doing here? What do you think you are doing? Who do you belong to?

Distribute the Listening & Looking Guide. Explain that this is a resource to help them capture thoughts and ideas from the video presentation as well as a place to make note of visions they have for ministry. Direct the group to the first question and ask them to answer it.

Invite the group to watch the video by sharing this introduction: Brittney Jackson Brown is a theology student at Vanderbilt Divinity School where she is serving as the vice president of the LatinX seminarians. She has a unique experience, one that rarely shares with even her spouse and friends. People keep asking her “Where are you from?” and, even when she tells them, they often ask her again. Therefore, she wants church people to consider how framing and asking questions can disrupt conversation and community building in God’s church.

Play the Video [10 minutes]

Ask group members to jot down short notes on their guide as needed, but to pay careful attention to Ms. Jackson Brown’s presentation. At the conclusion of the video, allow five to ten minutes for the group to add more information and answer additional questions on their Listening & Looking Guides. Also, say that there will be opportunities to add more information to the sheet and to reflect upon their notes. (If time permits and group members ask, you may show the video a second time.)

Pair ‘n Share [10 minutes]

Divide the group into pairs and ask teams to exchange thoughts about the video. Ask them to share with each any “rude” experiences they have had. Ask them to discuss Brittney Jackson Brown’s statement about the world not being colorblind and identify how that is truth for them (or someone they know).

Reflection [5-10 minutes]

Bring the group back together and invite members to share their thoughts about the video or the stories that emerged from their own lives as a result of bearing witness to Ms. Jackson Brown’s life experiences. Ask, “Has anyone here ever limited your movements or stopped going places because of an affront to their dignity?” You might offer examples, such as people who get divorced and do not go to church or other places for fear they will see an ex-spouse.

Closing Meditation [10 minutes]

In the 2002 movie Antwone Fisher the title character reads a poem called, “Who Will Cry for the Little Boy?” Ask group members who will lament for Brittany Jackson Brown and others like her who are questioned in some form about their right to “be” anywhere they want in this world. Read the Scripture James 5:13-16. Remind the group how important prayer is to the wellbeing of our spiritual and physical selves.

Ask everyone to sit in a semi-circle, facing the “hot seat” and say, “Let’s take the opportunity to transform this seat of division and interrogation to one of wholeness and support.” Then invite anyone who wishes, one at a time, to sit on that seat and receive an anointing of oil.

(Note: The person anointing may draw a cross with or place a dot of oil on the recipient’s wrist, palms, back of the hand, or forehead.)

As the oil is applied, give a prayer or blessing (use this one or one shared spontaneously by the person leading the service of anointing): May you ___(person’s name) ___ know that you are a child of God and are welcome any place in the world. Be blessed. Go and share a blessing.”

After everyone who wants to be has been anointed, say a closing prayer:

Holy and Gracious God, we ask that you infuse us with a spirit of love and welcoming. Help us to open wide our hearts and that we see color, that we see individuals, that we see all of those who belong to you and simply say, “My sister, my brother – it is good to be with you.” In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Listening and Looking Guide: Brittney Jackson Brown

Where are you from? To answer this question, use five or six key phrases to describe where you are from (region, family, culture, etc.):

How rude! Think about Ms. Jackson Brown's description of her experience with the artist on the panel in Nashville. Recall an experience when you felt smacked in the face with someone's rudeness:

Think about her statement, "Society isn't colorblind." Describe a time you have been aware that you could not pinpoint someone's racial-ethnic identity. Who was the person and what were the circumstances?

Describe a place you no longer visit or an activity you may be avoiding because you do not want to face probing questions or stares from other people:

Cultivate a new vision: Brittney Jackson Brown says that the church's job is to start conversations only if it plans to continue them. What are the engaging comments and questions to get to know someone?

Make a commitment: _____

Tweet This/Post on your social media: _____

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Takura Farera

A Welcoming Church for Differently Abled People

Video (11:30): Takura Farera, a native of Zimbabwe, and master's degree student at United Methodist-related Africa University

Takura Farera, a master's degree student at Africa University has a passion for welcoming differently abled persons in the church. He believes it is the mission of the church to create ministries and worship that welcome and involve people with varying physical, mental and emotional abilities. He says the church should set an example for the rest of the world.

Session 7: A Welcoming Church for Differently Abled People

Preparation

Select a room or location to offer the study. Every session needs a room that has the capability to access the video via internet and to project the video for groups of various sizes. Conduct tests ahead of the session to insure that all equipment is working properly.

Preview the video.

Be mindful that this presenter is making a case for a caring church for people with disabilities largely in the context of his home annual conference in Zimbabwe. However, his proposals and his challenge to the church continue to be key for churches everywhere. You may wish to view the video a couple of times and make notes of key points that stand out for you. Post your group's care for the session.

Gather the following materials:

- Bible for reading the Scriptures – 2 Samuel 9:1-9a and Acts 3:1-9
- Listening & Looking Guide, one for each person (or project on a screen)
- Words, sheet music (or CD) of song, "For Everyone Born a Place at the Table"
- Pens and pencils

- Construction paper
- Markers and crayons
- Blue painter’s tape

Also prepare [to mimic barriers and challenges to access]:

- Set up the classroom in a haphazard fashion, as if the chairs should be in a circle but some are facing outward from the circle, some are turned on their side, others have “junk” – old newspapers, etc. on them.
- Also, place blue painter’s tape across the doorway so that people may have to stoop a bit to enter the classroom.
- You may also place “reserved” signs on a couple of the chair.

THE STUDY SESSION

Get Started [15-20 minutes]

Greet group members as they enter. Do not comment on the layout of the room. Note the reactions of the members. Answer questions as briefly as possible. For example, if someone asks if they can sit in a reserved spot, simply say, “that seat is reserved.” If someone asks, “what happened here,” respond by saying “it looks a mess, doesn’t it.” You may also say, “If you cannot find a free seat, there is standing room at the edge of the classroom. We have to make this situation work.” Make note if anyone removes tape and sits down. Keep this observation going for at least three to five minutes or until most group members have gathered.

While everyone is still in various forms of “access and comfort,” introduce yourself and welcome everyone to the session; take care of housekeeping matters. Read statement of purpose (or recruit a volunteer to do so): “The General Commission on Religion and Race presents Vital Conversations to help start the dialogue on subjects that may sometimes be difficult to approach. We are all part of the beloved community, and we welcome perspectives that bring enlightenment and understanding.”

Begin the study session by telling anyone who is standing to be seated, to remove any items that may have been hindering their access to a free, clean seat, and gather in a circle. Explain that the session is about the church expanding access – “architectural access” and “attitudinal access” for people with disabilities, or as others say, people with varying abilities. Say further that the presentation and discussion is about access of physical entry and access of ministry and service.

Read aloud one or both of the following stories:

The Rev. Eric Pridmore is an ordained United Methodist minister and pastor of First UMC in Poplarville, Mississippi. When one of the United Methodist Women’s “Mission U” studies was “The Church and People with Disabilities,” he was asked to teach. Dr. Pridmore is blind. He uses a seeing-eye dog and has support from his spouse, Lisa; he uses a variety of assistive devices as well. He enjoyed teaching, but had to ask: “Can I only teach the “disability” study or can I teach any study United Methodist Women offers? It was an “aha” moment for an organization that has a strong history of advocacy for access for all people. In that moment, Dr. Pridmore made it clear that access to his teaching was more “attitudinal” than “architectural.”

[NOTE: This story is used with permission; Dr. Pridmore was the first person I heard used the terms “attitudinal access” and “architectural access.”]

This is Aunt Mary’s (not her real name) story about being differently abled, overlooked, and abused: I clearly needed help with everyday living tasks. I have Parkinson’s. I have unrelenting shaking in my hands. And one of my knees no longer bends and I have to sit in a wheelchair with it fully extended all the time. I was excited when my niece offered a home for me with her and her family (husband and two children). We had an agreement that I would contribute a certain portion of my income (Social Security and pension).

Life was good for a while. I found a church home just down the street. It was small but I could be wheeled in and be “set” in the front. It was awkward trying to turn my head to see the preacher, but I was loved there. However, things took a downturn. Soon, all my independence was stripped away from me. My niece took all the money – if I wanted to give her children a “thank you” token for helping me, I couldn’t. She did allow me to give money to my church, but it was an amount that she designated from my funds.

Eventually – and sadly – my niece was convicted of fraud and elder abuse (I won’t even go into the way she treated me physically and verbally abused me). She went to jail. Her family sold the home that I had helped them purchase. Currently, I live in a nice, safe place but it is far from my church and other people I know; I had to go to a place that I could afford. Being disabled has its challenges. I know that for sure.

Invite participants to respond to the stories or allow time for one or two persons to share about personal experiences (could be a family member) that they have had with involving persons with different abilities in the church.

Distribute the Listening & Looking Guide. Explain that this is a resource to help them capture thoughts and ideas from the session and the video presentation; it also is a place to make note of visions they have for ministry. Allow time for them to scan the questions and statements to help focus the viewing and listening process.

Read aloud or ask someone to read aloud these two Scriptures: 2 Samuel 9:1-9a and Acts 3:1-9. Direct the members to their Listening and Looking Guides and ask them to respond to the Word by sharing briefly in writing what these scriptures say about “making room” at the table for people with disabilities. Ask for volunteers to share thoughts. Then invite someone to lead the group in prayer; if no one volunteers, open with a prayer of your choice.

Review and post a covenant that you have created (or group has created) and highlight the key components: confidentiality; everyone’s voice matters; disagree with care/do not attack anyone. Invite the group to add thoughts and ideas to the covenant.

Introduce the video presenter: Takura Farera is a native of Zimbabwe and is a student at United Methodist-related Africa University. He has a passion and vision for having the church be the leader of what it means to have a church where people with varying physical abilities can use their gifts. He offers a challenge –throws down a gauntlet, in fact— to practicing Christians in congregations, declaring, “We can be better than we are when it comes to having all God’s children’s gifts and graces used in worship and service.”

Play the Video [20 minutes]

Encourage participants to jot down short notes on their guides but, as much as possible, to remain attentive to listening to and experiencing the presentation. At the conclusion of the video, allow five to ten minutes for the group to add more information and answer questions on their Listening & Looking Guide. Tell the group that there will be another opportunity to add more information to the sheet and to reflect upon their notes.

Pair 'n Share [15 minutes]

Take time to share reflections and comments related to the next two questions and statements on the guide sheet (after the scripture reflections). Direct members to find a partner and talk about where their church “is” and where they would like their church to be in ministry with people with disabilities. Use the remaining time to begin to draft visions and the social media statement.

Prepare a New Vision [10-15 minutes]

Ask each person to use a sheet of construction paper and markers to do the following (may do one or both). Draw an interior of a church (may or may not be one’s own) and make note of where adjustments and additions can be made to improve access (i.e., video screen, headphones, sign language interpreter). Because the focus needs to be on attitude as well as architecture, ask members to also list how to address people resources in the church (are there ideas for ushers; are additional people needed to serve in support of those with disabilities; will people need to be challenged to listen more intently if a person has difficulties with speech).

If people choose not to draw, ask them to make two columns on a sheet of paper. Label one “expanding architectural access” and the other “expanding attitudinal access.” Encourage everyone to dream big to make our churches truly places of sanctuary and worship where everyone’s gifts are embraced and used.

Closing Devotions [10 minutes]

Ask participants to sit in a circle, bringing with them their papers of their church “remodels.” Lead the group in a litany of confession and prayer by introducing this line:
My church has done this: _____
and I hope that they will consider doing this: _____

You may start the group’s time of prayer and commitment by sharing your own example or the one below:

My church has installed screens and a camera, which allows two of our members who have macular degeneration to see the choir and pulpit areas more clearly. I hope that they consider making a pew cut on either side of the sanctuary. It was really sad when Daniel broke his leg that he had to sit on the back pew with it extended, head turned to the side to see the pulpit. I also hope they will be patient as we make changes in the service to allow Pam, who has speech difficulties, to read the Scripture. Continue sharing until everyone who desires has spoken. Then close in prayer (using one of your own choosing or this one). God of Mephibosheth, the blind man, the lame man at the Gate called Beautiful and all whose abilities may differ from what is called the “norm” – we repent that we as a church and body of believers have not committed to full access in the ways that Takura Farera has challenged us to do. We hold in our hands a model for a more inclusive and a more accessible church. Help us to bring these visions to fruition. Infuse us with your strength. In Christ’s name we pray, Amen.

Listening and Looking Guide: Takura Farera

What does the Mephibosheth story say to you?

What does the story of the lame man at the gate (in Acts) say to you?

Takura Farera is passionate about the church meeting the needs of people with disabilities or people who are differently abled and being a role model for society. In what ways is your church providing access and avenues of service?

Think of a person who has a physical or mental condition that makes her or him differently abled (i.e., a person with post-traumatic stress disorder). Think of one or two ways to welcome them in the church and make it a place of comfort for her/him:

Cultivate a new vision: Takura Farera says that where ‘love leads’ the atmosphere will always provide warmth and joy as he talks about the gifts of the Zimbabwean cricket analyst (who is blind). How can you shift the atmosphere?

Make a commitment: _____

Tweet This/Post on your social media: _____

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Prisca Mojica Rodriguez

What is in My Mouth!

Video (6:33): Prisca Mojica Rodriguez, founder, Latina Rebels, activist, chonga mujerista, and writer

Prisca Dorcas Mojica Rodriguez is a chonga mujerista from Managua, Nicaragua, currently living in Nashville, Tennessee. She is the founder of Latina Rebels, a movement (and a Facebook page), designed to help and provide a forum for Latina women. She is a writer for Philadelphia Printworks, Vivala, and a columnist/editor at Chica Magazine. Her work is around reclaiming and upholding embodied resistance, particularly within chonga and chola subcultures.

Session 7: What is in My Mouth!

Preparation

Select a room or location to offer the study. Every session needs a room that has the capability to access the video via the internet and to project the video for groups of various sizes. Check to be sure equipment is working properly.

Preview the video. Be sure to make notes about what stands out for you. Think about things that she says that may be new to you or challenging to what you believe about people who live biculturally and who regularly speak more than one language. The idea of speaking more than one language may be especially challenging to those in the United States who have been reared to speak only English.

Read through the lesson plan. Prepare suggested drawing as a way of demonstrating how to illustrate a phrase or a concept. Post the covenant of care for the session.

Gather the following materials:

- Bible for reading the Scripture – Isaiah 58:6-12
- Listening & Looking Guide (one for each person or project on a screen)
- Pens and pencils
- Index cards
- Construction paper
- Markers, colored pencils, and crayons
- Scissors – preferably one for each student
- Blue painter’s tape

Also prepare:

- A picture of a “home within my mouth” as a sample for that activity
- Notes to describe the two (or more) worlds in which you live (per the activity)

THE STUDY SESSION

Get Started [10 minutes]

Welcome everyone to the session; take care of housekeeping matters. Read statement of purpose (or recruit a volunteer to do so): “The General Commission on Religion and Race presents Vital Conversations to help start the dialogue on subjects that may sometimes be difficult to approach. We are all part of the beloved community, and we welcome perspectives that bring enlightenment and understanding.”

Recruit a volunteer to read the Scripture Isaiah 58:6-12. Ask everyone to jot down in their notebook or on a sheet of paper (distribute paper or index cards if needed) what they hear this Scripture says that they must do and why. Explain they will be using these reflections later in the session.

Next, have a time of prayer. Invite someone to lead the group in prayer; if no one volunteers, open with a prayer of your choice. Read (and post) a covenant that you have created (or group has created) and highlight the key components: confidentiality; everyone’s voice matters; disagree with care/do not attack anyone. Invite the group to add thoughts and ideas to the covenant (especially if there are new persons).

Show the Video [15 minutes]

Invite the group to watch the video by sharing this introduction: Prisca Mojica Rodriguez is a chonga mujerista, a woman who is deeply committed to the struggle for the liberation of Latina women as a community. She is a writer, a blogger, activist, and founder of Latin Rebels. She speaks widely on the topic of being bilingual in a cultural that neither understands nor embraces gladly bicultural/bilingual people.

Distribute the Listening & Looking Guide but explain that they are not to try to answer the questions as they watch – simply review the guide as a way of focusing their attention. They may wish to jot down a phrase or a key point but to try to remain focus on what is being said. If there is time, you may show the video again and encourage members to write more reflections.

Use the Listening & Looking Guide [10-15 minutes]

Individually, complete the statements or answer the questions on the guide. Encourage participants to take their time to recall and reflect upon Prisca Rodriguez’s experiences and concerns, being sure to find connections with their own lives.

If the group is no larger than ten persons, share thoughts about the questions and statements from the guide as an entire group. If larger than ten, divide in smaller groups of six to seven persons. As the facilitator, pose the questions or statements one at a time and get responses before moving to the next one. (Ask each person to name only one thing; once everyone has had a turn to share then invite others who may have something else to add that is unique from what others have said to share their experience.)

Draw a “Home in Your Mouth” [15 minutes]

Distribute construction paper and markers. Remind the group of Prisca Rodriguez’s statement: “Imagine feeling so isolated that you begin to make a home in your own mouth and in that tongue you carry resistance to both worlds.” Ask the group member to write (or draw) on the paper ways in which they take care of their soul in the midst of challenges.

Be prepared to share what you have created or written to help them conceptualize the activity or read this statement:

As an African-American woman who grew up on a farm and yet spent half of my adult life in an urban area, I had to find a place first of all (could draw a park or a river) that brought the calmness of my home life back to me. I went to farmer’s markets just to touch the vegetables and to catch a whiff of the earth. And I found the words to challenge those who would glorify the city life without being able to value what country living brought to everyone (i.e., the food they ate, the retreat spaces they often craved).

After everyone has had a chance to create or capture that “home,” ask for two or three volunteers to share their work.

Reflect and Share [5-10 minutes]

Have members review the information recorded on the guide sheet. Add additional thoughts, complete their vision, their commitment, and their social media share. Invite anyone who wishes to share their commitment to do so after a time of individual reflection.

Closing Meditation [10 minutes]

Invite a participant to read aloud Isaiah 58:6-12 again. Explain that Scripture calls us to repair breaches and restore streets. Prisca Rodriguez talks about that feeling of not belonging, which can be brought on both by “outsiders” as well as a feeling that others have “overstayed their welcome.” How can we acknowledge the two worlds (or several worlds in which we live) and build connections between them? Have a time of contemplation and then hear from a few persons.

Read this closing prayer (or share one of your own choosing): God of all people, God of all creation, God of the worlds in which we choose to live and are forced to live, have mercy upon us, be with us, heal us so that we may heal the land and restore hope to all people. Help us to choose the fast that honors you – to embrace those without a home (physically and internally). Help us to be like “well-watered garden” to bring the abundant life promised to ourselves and to others. In Christ’s name we pray, Amen.

Listening and Looking Guide: Prisca Mojica Rodriguez

What stands out for you from the video? (Try to name three things.):

Prisca Rodriguez says growing up hearing her mother speak Spanish is central to her core. What do you carry with you from your mother, father or other person who raised you with love? (Leave if this does not apply to you.)

She says that the erasure of the indigenous is real. Describe a cultural or family practice, name, tradition, or trait or language that you feel has been “erased” from your life:

Ms. Rodriguez says that she had to learn English to thrive. What have you had to learn or do to thrive?

Prisca Rodriguez says that the way her name is said in Spanish by her family makes her feel safe. Think of a name/nickname that someone uses that makes you feel safe, loved:

Cultivate a new vision: She says that she needs people to understand that Spanish is my first language. How can we demonstrate and offer acceptance for people who are bilingual and bicultural?

Make a commitment: _____

Tweet This/Post on your social media: _____

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Brittany Campagna

Is This the 'Hood'?

Video (6:33): Brittany Campagna, founder of Inner City Innovations, Nashville, Tenn.

Brittany Campagna is founder and CEO of Inner City Innovations, an organization that seeks to bring sustainable food, health, and other services to low-income communities. She continually challenges people in and outside of neighborhoods to understand how the word “hood” is used and interpreted, advising the church and the media to avoid confusing urban blight with “blackness.”

Session 9: Is This the 'Hood'?

Preparation

Select a room or location to offer the study. Every session needs a room that has the capability to access the video via internet and to project the video for groups of various sizes. Check to be sure equipment is working properly.

Preview the video. Be sure to take notes about what is new for you, what captures your keenest interest, and what one thing you want to be sure to emphasize in the teaching process. Next, read through the lesson plan, making notes of what you need to prepare in advance or persons you may recruit to assist in leading the session.

Gather the following materials:

- Bible for reading the Scripture – Ezekiel 34:25-31
- Listening & Looking Guide (one for each person or project on a screen)
- Pens and pencils
- Blank (self-stick) sheets of newsprint (be sure to have additional sheets to prevent markers from bleeding through onto walls)
- Small index cards in three different colors, enough for participants

- Basket for collecting the index cards
- Pens and pencils
- Markers, colored pencils, and crayons
- Scissors
- Blue painter's tape

Also prepare:

- Write these vocabulary words on newsprint for posting on the wall: redlining; food desert; and place utility.
- Research the above words/phrases which are used in the video; also research the phrase ‘racial profiling’ and be prepared to introduce it in the discussion during the “Name the Pain” section.
- Write your definitions of the phrases on index cards (for ease, use a specific color for a particular phrase – i.e., write the word and definition of place utility on a blue card).
- Post or hang newsprint on the classroom wall.

THE STUDY SESSION

Get Started [20 minutes]

Welcome everyone to the session; take care of housekeeping matters. Read statement of purpose (or recruit a volunteer to do so): “The General Commission on Religion and Race presents Vital Conversations to help start the dialogue on subjects that may sometimes be difficult to approach. We are all part of the beloved community, and we welcome perspectives that bring enlightenment and understanding.”

Tell the group that in this session we are going to talk about our perceptions of the word neighborhood. Distribute the Looking & Listening Guide and ask the group to answer the first two questions:

- Describe your neighborhood (name three good things and three challenging things).
- What is meant when you hear someone say or use the word “hood,” as in “I’m from the ‘hood’” or “They live in the ‘hood’?” How do you define ‘hood’?

Next, hand out three index cards to each participant (three different colors). Direct the group’s attention to the three words/phrases on the newsprint and ask them to write the words listed on the newsprint on their index cards (one word or phrase per card). Ask them to write a definition for each word/phrase. Pass around the basket and ask them to place the cards in the basket.

Quickly, sort through the cards putting them in piles by color. Recruit a volunteer to write the definitions of the words on the labeled newsprint sheets. Read the cards one at a time – acknowledge everyone’s response even if it duplicates what has already been written. Point out that these words are part of the vocabulary linked to the video being used in the session.

Recruit a volunteer to read the Scripture Ezekiel 34:25-31. Next have a time for prayer. Invite someone to lead the group in prayer; if no one volunteers, open with a prayer of your choice. Read and post a covenant that you have created (or group has created) and highlight the key components: confidentiality; everyone’s voice matters; disagree with care/do not attack anyone. Invite the group to add thoughts and ideas to the covenant (especially if there are new persons).

Show the Video [15 minutes]

Invite the group to watch the video by sharing this introduction: Brittany Campagna is founder and CEO of Inner City Innovations, an organization that seeks to bring sustainable food, health and other services to low-income communities. She is exploring how we (church folk, media, clergy, community members) use and understand the phrase “the hood.” She offers advice to avoid conflating urban blight with “blackness.” Refer the group back to the Listening & Looking Guide but explain that they are not to try to answer the questions as they watch – simply review the guide as a way of focusing their attention. They may wish to jot down a phrase or a key point but try to remain focus on what is being said. If there is time, you may show the video again and encourage more extensive written reflection.

Use the Listening & Looking Guide [10 minutes]

Individually, complete the remaining statements or answer the questions on the guide. Encourage participants to take their time to recall and reflect upon Brittany Campagna’s experiences and concerns, being sure to find connections with their own lives.

Name the Pain [15 minutes]

Read aloud this statement by Brittany Campagna: “While urban decay gathers public attention, the public pays no attention to the real barriers people face living in a rotting community – and are mistaken for blackness.” Ask participants to share where they have seen this happening and talk about what can be done – and where this needs to be done (church, media, communities, etc.). Be prepared to deeply listen and deeply hear someone’s story of frustration, anger, and pain.

Next, read this statement from the video: “Ramifications of previous racial segregation are presently equated with black bodies, black businesses; crime, poverty, and declining neighborhoods are all publicized as something resulting from the presence of black folks.” Recap those ramifications that Brittany Campagna outlined for us.

Third, add one more phrase to the conversation: “racial profiling.” Ask the group about their understanding of this term and call forth any personal experiences they have had or have known about.

Finally, invite people to name those things shared by Brittany Campagna that cause their hearts to ache. Invite members to share something one by one. After each person has spoken, say the phrase “Lord, in your mercy” and ask the group to respond by saying: “Bring us justice.”

Reflect and Share [5-10 minutes]

Have members review the information recorded on the guide sheet. Add additional thoughts, complete their vision, their commitment, and their social media share. Invite anyone who wishes to share their commitment to do so after a time of individual reflection.

Closing Meditation [10 minutes]

Have someone reread aloud Ezekiel 34:25-31. Read this closing prayer (or share one of your own choosing): Some of us live in places where we have access to all that we need to be comfortable and safe. Others live in “deserts,” places of lack and dryness, a place that is home for a challenge to experience the abundance that you promised all believers. We repent for calling names and assigning blame to persons whose lives are ripped apart by the inequity of jobs, health care, and education. We repent for our own sins and seek restoration for communities everywhere. Strengthen our hearts and our hands for doing your work. In Christ’s name we pray, Amen.

Listening and Looking Guide: Brittany Campagna

Name three positive things and three negative things about your current neighborhood:

What is meant when you hear someone say or use the word ‘hood,’ as in “I’m from the hood” or “They live in the ‘hood.’” What comes to mind; how do you define ‘hood’?

As you watched the video, what images stood out? What pictures came to your mind?

Have you or a loved one ever been ‘stuck’ by changes in economic fortunes (loss of a job; relocation of health and education services, etc.)?

Where and how have you seen poverty linked to the racial identity of one or two groups of people?

Where did you hear inequality clearly named as a factor in establishing economic stability for people living in cities?

Cultivate a new vision for the word ‘hood’:

Make a commitment: _____

Tweet This/Post on your social media: _____

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Bryan Eason

Engaging Children and Youth Using Rap and Hip-hop

Video (6:45): Bryan Eason, a public-school educator in Dallas, a former Ella Baker Trainer for the Children's Defense Fund Freedom Schools®

Bryan Eason is a musician, activist, community organizer, and public school teacher in Dallas. For the past 14 years, he has served as staff person for the Washington, D.C.-based Children's Defense Fund Freedom Schools®. He teaches children and youth with needs children and uses his training as an advocate and a Freedom Schools teacher to reach young people and give voice to their concerns using contemporary music and rap. He embraces the motto, "Serve first, then lead," so thoroughly that he says, "It is now the air I breathe." He works all over the United States organizing young people in Children's Action Teams.

Session 10: Engaging Children and Youth Using Rap and Hip-hop

Preparation

Select a room or location to offer the study. Every session needs a room that has the capability to access the video via internet and to project the video for groups of various sizes. Check to be sure equipment is working properly.

Preview the video. Read through the lesson plan. Have for display or sharing a covenant of care for the session. Think about asking members in the session to read the Scripture(s).

Gather the following materials:

- Bible for reading the Scripture – Ephesians 6:10-20
- Listening & Looking Guide (one for each person or project on a screen)
- Construction paper, assorted colors

- Notebook paper
- Pens, pencils, and markers, assorted colors
- Paint stirring sticks for each participants (optional), available at a local home-improvement store

Prepare for the activity "Join the Protest/Make a Statement" by creating your protest sign or statement of hope.

THE STUDY SESSION

Get Started [10 minutes]

Have the altar set up with the Bible, hymnal, and a candle. Have other candles burning around the room. Have music playing softly as people gather. Welcome everyone to the session; take care of housekeeping matters. Read the statement of purpose (or recruit a volunteer to do so): "The General Commission on Religion and Race presents Vital Conversations to help start the dialogue on subjects that may sometimes be difficult to approach. We are all part of the beloved community, and we welcome perspectives that bring enlightenment and understanding."

Introduce yourself and say a word about why you have accepted the role of facilitator for this session, what your musical connections are and what visions you have for the time together. Read aloud or have a volunteer read the Scripture Ephesians 6:10-20. Have a time for prayer. Invite someone to lead the group in prayer; if no one volunteers, open with a prayer of your choice.

Review, read, and post a covenant that you have created (or group has created) and highlight the key components: confidentiality; everyone's voice matters; disagree with care/do not attack anyone. Invite the group to add thoughts and ideas to the covenant.

Distribute the Listening & Looking Guide. Explain that this is a resource to help them capture thoughts and ideas from the video presentation as well as a place to make note of visions they have for ministry. Allow time for them to scan the questions to help focus the viewing and listening process. Say that at the conclusion of the video, there will be 5 – 10 minutes for the group to add more information and answer questions on their Listening and Looking Guide. Also, tell the group that there will be opportunities to add more information to the sheet and to reflect upon their notes. If time permits, ask the group if they feel the need to see the video again.

Introduce the video presenter: Bryan Eason is a musician, an activist, a Dallas-based public school teacher, and summer staff member for Children Defense Fund Freedom Schools®. He shares how the church might engage urban children and youth of color using rap and hip-hop. He is an advocate for Freedom Schools.

Play the Video [15 minutes]

Encourage participants to jot down short notes on their guide but as much as possible remain attentive to listening to and experiencing the presentation. At the conclusion of the video, give group members an opportunity to respond to the questions and statements on the guide.

Remember God’s Word [10-15 minutes]

Bryan Eason shares how Ephesians 6:10-20 is his favorite passage of Scripture as he navigates the violent times (music and culture) in his life. Invite everyone to share their favorite Scripture that supports and nurtures them during the rough moments they experience in the world.

Hear My Fear, Share My Pain [10-15 minutes]

Have the group revisit their responses to the statement: “Until the killing of black men, black mothers’ sons, is as important as the killing of white men, white mothers’ sons, we who believe in freedom cannot rest until this happens.” Ask if there are any persons who are willing to share their thoughts in reference to the statement.

Join the Protest/Make a Statement [15 minutes]

Bryan Eason calls on all of us to be “outraged” about issues that are ripping to shreds the vision for the beloved community. He says, “You don’t have to be black to be outraged.” Distribute construction paper (2 per person), markers, notebook paper, and paint sticks (optional). Ask everyone to think about what they would say if they were to join a protest or vigil. Ask them to make a short statement that identifies their outrage or their vision for resolution. Place this statement on construction paper using markers. Using the notebook paper, give more meaning to the statement by writing a paragraph. Glue this statement to the 2nd sheet of construction paper – then glue both sheets together, back to back. (Optional: Glue the paint stick between the two sheets of construction paper to make a sign that could be held during a protest march.) Provide an opportunity to several persons to stand and share their statements of frustration or hope.

Reflect and Share [10 minutes]

Allow time for members to reflect on what has been shared in the group. Allow time for them to add additional notes on their guide and to complete their vision, their commitment, and draft their social media share.

Closing Devotions [10 minutes]

Invite group members to sit in a circle. Invite them to carry this one line from the rap with them during the week: “My day is on fire.” The context of the line is the success a student feels upon completing her or his homework – “my day is on fire, I got my brain rolling.”

Just for a moment, stop and breathe. Make yourself remember that amidst the pain and negativity, there are the moments – that time – when you know that you have made a difference, that you know that you have made a correct decision, that you know you have tapped into your spiritual strength to challenge injustice sometime, somewhere. Your day is on fire!

Invite people to share their excitement, their commitment, their vision – and ask that as they bring their witness to a close, simply say “My day is on fire!” After everyone has spoken, offer this prayer (or ask a volunteer to pray): Lord, thank you for speaking to us through the music. Help us to turn negativity into positivity. Help us to believe that there is a way through, there is a way out of the madness, the anguish, the injustice that so many face on a daily basis. Make us servant leaders so that we can embrace every child and make their needs our priority. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Listening & Looking Guide: Bryan Eason

What line(s) stood out for you from the rap?

Bryan Eason challenges America to rethink the impact of its “violent culture and music.” Do you see violence in America’s culture? If yes, name few examples:

How do you respond to his statement: “Until the killing of black men, black mothers’ sons, is as important as the killing of white men, white mothers’ sons, we who believe in freedom cannot rest until this happens.”

Bridge between cultures: Think about a song that you know from another culture or in another language besides your first language. What is that song and how does it speak to you?

Cultivate a new vision:

Make a commitment:

Tweet This/Post on your social media:

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- Instagram: @gcorrumc #vitalconvo
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Jonathan Petty

The Church I Want to Pastor

Video (5:54): Jonathan Petty, master of divinity student, Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington, and licensed preacher in the AME Church

Jon Petty, a youth minister in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, shares his vision of the kind of church he wants to pastor – a church that is inclusive, justice-focused, and unapologetically welcoming to youth. He is pursuing a master of divinity degree at Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington, D.C.

Session 11: The Church I Want to Pastor

Preparation

Select a room or location to offer the study. Every session needs a room that has the capability to access the video via the internet and to project the video for groups of various sizes. Check to be sure equipment is working properly. Preview the video and make notes of key points that stand out for you. Review the lesson plan. Have for display or sharing a covenant of care for the session.

Gather the following materials:

- Bible for reading the Scripture – Matthew 28:16-20 and Galatians 3:24-29
- Listening & Looking Guide (one for each person or project on a screen)
- Pens, pencils, and markers
- Index cards
- Basket
- Construction paper
- Blue painter's tape

Also prepare:

- Prepare a sheet of newsprint for posting with the heading posted on newsprint: “Why aren't people involved in religious affiliated endeavors?”
- Prepare a “Portrait of Hope.”

THE STUDY SESSION

Get Started [15-20 minutes]

Greet group members as they enter. Introduce yourself and welcome everyone to the session. Take care of housekeeping matters. Read statement of purpose (or recruit a volunteer to do so): “The General Commission on Religion and Race presents Vital Conversations to help start the dialogue on subjects that may sometimes be difficult to approach. We are all part of the beloved community, and we welcome perspectives that bring enlightenment and understanding.”

Begin the study session by giving each participant an index card and to answer the question posted on newsprint: “Why aren't people involved in religion-affiliated endeavors?” After 3 – 5 minutes, ask group members to share their responses. *(NOTE: there may be some persons who do not agree with the assertion of the question.)*

Introduce the video by saying: Jonathan Petty, a youth minister in the African Methodist Episcopal Church bewails the status of the church, particularly in the United States. He wants to know why it seems that fewer people are involved in religious endeavors. And he wants to know what can be done about it. He is pursuing a master of divinity degree at Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington, D.C. He shares his vision, his hunger for the kind of church (inclusive, justice-focused, and youth-welcoming) that he wants to lead as pastor.

Before showing the video, review or read (post) a covenant that you have created (or group has created) and highlight the key components: confidentiality; everyone's voice matters; disagree with care/do not attack anyone. If desired, invite the group to add thoughts and ideas to the covenant. Also, distribute the Listening & Looking Guide; ask the group to quickly review the questions and statements. Tell the participants they are only to jot down short notes on their guide so to remain attentive as much as possible to the video presentation.

Scripture Reflection [10 minutes]

Before viewing the video, read aloud or ask someone to read aloud these Scriptures that were referenced in the video: Matthew 28:16-20 and Galatians 3:24-29. Distribute index cards and ask members to write down how their church is living out one of these Scriptures or a “confession” that the church is not being all that it could be. Share this example to help get people started:

When I read Galatians 3:24-29, I am glad to say that my church is actively becoming a church where the faces and voices of people from every nation and tongue are welcomed. We sing (perhaps badly) songs in different languages, striving for an accurate phonetic sound. New tempos and rhythms are awakened in our body and I am glad.

Collect all the cards in a basket and read aloud some of the reflections shared.

Show the Video [15-20 minutes]

At the conclusion of the video, allow five to ten minutes for the group members to individually answer questions and statements on the guide, except for cultivating a new vision and creating a social media share. Tell the group that there will be another opportunity to make notes for that and to create a social media statement. After everyone has made notes, ask them to find a partner and discuss some of the information that was shared. What was shocking? What was appalling? What simply seemed untrue? Ask each other: have you ever felt that you have

lost hope for our church? Have them respond to the first five statements or questions on the Listening & Looking Guide. Reconvene as a group and share thoughts and comments.

Portrait of Hope [10-15 minutes]

Share that it can be easy to get “stuck” in despair as you listen to the research revealed in the Quadrennium Project. The antidote to despair is dreaming and hoping – calling forth visions that are fuzzy but fierce in our spirits. Direct the group’s attention back to the guide and ask them to write or revisit their statement on cultivating a new vision. If they have not done so, they could also draft their social media statement. Then distribute construction papers and markers and ask them to create a “portrait of hope,” an artistic representation of what they would like to see in their own churches or in the church as a denomination. You may show your sample portrait or you may simply post it on the wall using blue painter’s tape. Invite them to add their portraits to the wall once they have finished.

Allow time for a galley walk, that is, an opportunity to view all the portraits. Provide time for general reflections and comments, especially where they saw common ties between their dreams and that of other members in the group.

Closing Devotions: Shout It Out [10 minutes]

Have the group sit in two lines facing each other. Read aloud this statement from Jonathan Petty’s video: “My ideal church isn’t afraid to meet the community – both inside and outside of the church walls – in the midst of its troubles.”

Say that in the closing devotion, they are going to practice casting out all fear and trepidation. Pass the basket of index cards that were created related to the Scriptures. Have each person select one. (If they select their own, they can select another and then return their own to the basket).

How to cast out fear? Tell the group that each person, as moved, is to read aloud what is written on the index card that she or he has pulled from the basket. At the end of the reading, that person is to say, “Don’t be scared.” The remaining persons are to respond, “I ain’t scared, no, I’m not scared.”

Continue to practice this call and response process until everyone has shared and the group begins to feel the power of saying no to fear, to feel the power of declaring, “I ain’t scared, no, I’m not scared.”

Close with this prayer (or invite someone to pray from the group):

God, how do we get there? How do we get to be a church where the hopeless and the homeless sit with the wealthy and the optimistic? How do we get there? How can we reach the lost and loveless, the cynical and the doubters? How can we get there? We are asking God for guidance because we do not live as people without hope. We believe in the Great Commission. We believe that in you there is no East or West. We believe that we are all welcome at the banquet of life. Build in us a church where everyone finds a home for her or his heart. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Listening and Looking Guide: Jonathan Petty

What stands out about the statistics shared in the beginning of the video?

How have you despaired about the future of the church where you worship in the next 10 years?

The next 20 years?

Jonathan Petty quoted Beth Ann Estock and Paul Nixon, who say that, “There has to be a common something that binds us together in our diversity.” What would you say is your church’s identify/common something?”

What is your personal compelling story of why you believe, worship, and serve?

What is most hopeful about Jonathan Petty’s video?

Cultivate a new vision: Focus on your church and your community. What one thing do you wish would happen to create a more ideal church?

Make a commitment: _____

Tweet This/Post on your social media: _____

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Jeanette Iman'ishimwe

See Me, Love Me: The Plea of the Refugee

Video (8:48): Jeanette Iman'ishimwe, native of Rwanda, now an interpreter/translator for the United Nations Refugee Agency refugee camp in Chipangayi, Zimbabwe. She is pursuing a master's degree in public policy and governance at United Methodist-related Africa University

M. Jeanette Iman'ishimwe, a native of Rwanda, is an interpreter for the United Nations Refugees Agency in Zimbabwe. A former refugee, she describes the rejection her family experienced by family and church because they were an inter-tribal family. The family found a church home in a Congolese church in the refugee camp, learning a new language in order to worship. She is pursuing her master's degree in public policy and governance at Africa University, focusing on how the church must embrace refugees and immigrants.

Session 12: See Me, Love Me: The Plea of the Refugee

Preparation

Select a room or location to offer the study. Every session needs a room that has the capability to access the video via the internet and to project the video for groups of various sizes. Check to be sure equipment is working properly.

Preview the video; be mindful that this video presenter is sharing a deeply personal story – her family's story that was affected by the civil war in her home of Rwanda. This war did not erase the discrimination she faced in church as a child. Sadly, her subsequent status as a refugee did not erase it either. You may wish to view the video a couple of times and make notes of key points that stand out for you. **Post on the wall the group's covenant of care.**

Gather the following materials:

- Bible for reading the Scripture – Romans 8:31-39
- Listening & Looking Guide (one for each person or project on a screen)
- Pens and pencils
- Index cards
- Notebook paper
- Blue painter's tape

Also prepare:

- Listen to the song "Friend of a Wounded Heart" as recorded by Brooklyn Tabernacle (available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MPNCRF8r4Lg>; if desired, skip to the spoken intro and start video at 1:30)
- Prepare a sheet of newsprint for posting with the heading "If Only I Could..."

THE STUDY SESSION

Get Started [15-20 minutes]

Greet group members as they enter. Introduce yourself and welcome everyone to the session. Make housekeeping announcements, i.e. break times, location of bathrooms. Read statement of purpose (or recruit a volunteer to do so): "The General Commission on Religion and Race presents Vital Conversations to help start the dialogue on subjects that may sometimes be difficult to approach. We are all part of the beloved community, and we welcome perspectives that bring enlightenment and understanding."

Begin the study session by noting that feeling welcome in the house of God can be challenging on various levels. Explain to the group that in this session we will meet a young woman who experienced alienation as a Christian because of her mother's tribal affiliation. Introduce the video by saying: M. Jeanette Iman'ishimwe, a native of Rwanda, is an interpreter for the United Nations Refugees Agency. A former refugee – who is pursuing her master's degree at Africa University, Mutare, Zimbabwe – she advocates for how the church must embrace refugees and immigrants.

Before showing the video, review and post the group's covenant. Highlight the key components: confidentiality; everyone's voice matters; disagree with care/do not attack anyone. If desired, invite the group to add thoughts and ideas to the covenant. Also, distribute the Looking & Listening Guide. Ask them to quickly review the questions and statements. Tell the participants they are only to jot down short notes on their guide so as much as possible remain attentive to the video presentation.

At the conclusion of the video, allow five to ten minutes for the group members to individually answer questions and statements on the guide, except for cultivating a new vision and creating a social media share. Tell the group that there will be another opportunity to make notes for that and to create a social media statement.

Scripture Reflection [10 minutes]

Read aloud or ask someone to read aloud the Scripture Romans 8:31-39. Distribute index cards and ask members to work individually and write down the specific persecutions that Jeanette Iman'ishimwe faced as a child: recall the ones that families similar to hers also faced.

Remember the Scripture that nothing can separate us from God. Then recall a time when you “almost let go” – when it seemed you could no longer believe, when you asked God, “Why, why, why?” Was it the death of a child? A home foreclosure? A layoff at work? A betrayal by a trusted colleague? Identify what helped you to hold on to your faith and trust in God.

Pair ‘n Share [10-15 minutes]

Have the groups work in pairs, with each person reflecting on the time when her/his faith was tested. Ask them to refer to comments related to the questions and statements on the Looking & Listening Guide. Call the members back together and invite people to share aloud experience and memories related to feelings of being isolated within the church.

Write a Lament [5-10 minutes]

Direct the group’s attention to the blank sheet of newsprint with the heading: “If Only I Could...” Encourage them to create a group statement in the form of a lament on behalf of Jeanette (they may review their notes from their index cards or guide). If no one offers a line, write either of these phrases on the newsprint to help the writing begin:

- Give you candy every Sunday after church
- Be your grandmother for the rest of your life
- Pay your family a pastoral visit
- Ask your mom to usher
- Make you feel safe
- Let you sing in the children’s choir

Prepare a New Vision [10 minutes]

Direct the group’s attention back to the guide and the opportunity to cultivate a new vision and make a comment on social media. Specifically remind them of the pain that Ms. Iman’ishimwe faced in so many ways – not getting candies, not being allowed to join the choir, seeing her mom unable to serve in the church. How do we prepare to offer love and healing to someone who is experiencing “church hurt?” What do we say to the little girl Jeanette? What do we say to the adult Jeanette? How will we build a better world for those in similar situations? Invite someone to share their vision for justice and healing.

Closing Devotions [15 minutes]

Have the group sit in a circle, bringing a pen and a blank index card with them. If able, play the song “Friend of a Wounded Heart” by Brooklyn Tabernacle. If not, invite participants to speak aloud some words from song or Scripture that support and courage someone who is hurting. Examples: “Jesus, he heals your secret scars.” “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.” Put two chairs in the middle of the circle, side by side and facing in opposite directions. Ask each person to write on each card the first name of someone whose heart is hurting or broken. As the music plays – or in silence – invite members to bring their cards and put on the seat of the chairs.

Once all cards have been placed, close with this prayer (or using one of your own choosing). Our hope is built on nothing less, than Jesus’ blood and righteous – on Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand. God, we place our hope and trust in you. We lift up the people whose names are laid here at this altar, in the midst of us all. You know their pain, you know their longing. Heal. Deliver. Soothe. Calm. Ease. Bless, oh, bless. We come to thee. In Christ’s name we pray, Amen.

Listening and Looking Guide: Jeanette Iman’ishimwe

What would you call an unforgiveable sin?

In what way(s) can you relate to Jeanette Iman’ishimwe’s experience?

Have you known about any conflicts in church or family because “two different kinds of blood” run in someone’s veins?

What was most painful for you to hear in Ms. Iman’ishimwe’s story?

What were signs of hope in her story?

Ms. Iman’ishimwe describes her experience as “isolation.” Have you seen people isolated in your church or ministry setting? Write about it:

Cultivate a new vision: Jeanette Iman’ishimwe’s family joined a Congolese church for worship and fellowship. What can be done to keep people from being alienated in the church?

Make a commitment: _____

Tweet This/Post on your social media: _____

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The Rev. Jasper Peters

Understanding ‘New’ Expressions of Civil Rights Movements

Video presenter (6:54): The Rev. Jasper Peters, founding pastor of Belong Church, a diverse, inclusive, justice-oriented congregation in Denver

The Rev. Jasper Peters is the founding pastor of Belong Church, a diverse, inclusive, justice oriented congregation in Denver. He is a graduate of the University of Colorado at Boulder and Iliff School of Theology. He is passionate about bringing the real and relevant blessings of church to traditionally marginalized communities. His ministry focus also includes helping white Christians understand and support movements, such as BlackLivesMatter, which reflect and address the concerns of people of color.

Session 13: Understanding ‘New’ Expressions of Civil Rights Movements

Preparation

Select a room or location to offer the study. Every session needs a room that has the capability to access the video via the internet and to project the video for groups of various sizes. Check to be sure equipment is working properly.

Preview the video. Read through the lesson plan. Have for display or sharing a covenant of care for the session. Think about asking members in the session to read the Scripture(s).

Listen to the songs, “Love Can Build a Bridge” by The Judds (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RSEJYLv8Pc>), and “Bridge Over Troubled Water” by Simon & Garfunkel (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jjNgn4r6SOA>). Write down words or phrases that stand out for you (i.e., love will build a bridge don’t you think it’s time; when you are weary, when you need

a friend I’m sailing right behind; when all your hopes are sinking let me show you what hope means; when we stand together it’s our finest hour). Be prepared to connect these words and your reflections on the songs with visions of ministry and church that Jasper Peters has.

Gather the following materials:

- Bible for reading the Scripture – Acts 2:1-8
- Listening & Looking Guide (one for each person or project on a screen)
- Construction paper, 11 x 17, assorted colors of brown, beige, peach, white
- Large “Post-it”-style notes, lined (4 x 6 size)
- Pens, pencils, and markers, assorted colors
- Blue painter’s tape
- Scissors

You will also need to prepare:

- Three sheets of newsprint with one of these questions at the top: What is the “gift” of the Holy Spirit? What does it mean to be colorblind? What does it mean to decentralize whiteness? (For “Posting Perspectives” activity.)
- Trace your feet and cut out foot patterns (write a different word on each pattern to indicate a skill, a gift that you can bring to build a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic church) as a sample for the exercise, “Bridge of Footprints” in this session.
- Study the room space and decide where you can create the “Bridge of Footprints”

THE STUDY SESSION

Get Started [10 minutes]

Welcome everyone to the session [take care of housekeeping matters – bathrooms, etc.]. Read statement of purpose (or recruit a volunteer to do so): “The General Commission on Religion and Race presents Vital Conversations to help start the dialogue on subjects that may sometimes be difficult to approach. We are all part of the beloved community, and we welcome perspectives that bring enlightenment and understanding.”

Begin the study session by having participants sit in a circle if possible and answer the following questions. (Ask members to keep their responses under two minutes):

- What is great about your church?
- Describe the most diverse worship experience that you have been a part of; what made it diverse for you?

If desired, share Jean’s story (not her real name) about her diverse experience in worship:

It was a cold, rainy day in Chihuahua, Mexico. In fact, it had snowed – the first snow there in decades we’re told – but quickly changed to rain. We were part of a mission trip and had been out meeting with church leaders all day. I was tired. Then the young man driving our bus asked (through our interpreter) if anyone wanted to be picked up to go to Bible study. Everyone was silent. Not wanting to hurt the driver’s feelings, I volunteered. Later that night, I sat in Bible study conducted totally in Spanish – no one spoke English. Yet when they began to sing the song “Cristo Eres Bello” (“Christ, You are Beautiful”), I was able to hear the words phonetically, make meaning from my limited Spanish, and sing along to the tune ... a song that I committed to memory. I asked someone to write the words for me, and I still sing it today, a full twenty years later. That was my Pentecost, the gift of the Holy Spirit in my life.

Introduce yourself and say a word about why you have accepted the role of facilitator for this session, what visions you have for the time together, and describe a time when you experienced cultural diversity in worship.

Read –or ask someone to read aloud Acts 2:1-8. Ask the group to respond to the Word by sharing briefly what they feel when they hear this passage. Ask them how it connects with their worship experiences. What is similar? What is different? What is a little scary?

Invite someone to lead the group in an opening prayer. If no one volunteers, open with a prayer of your choice.

Review and post your group’s covenant and highlight the key components: confidentiality; everyone’s voice matters; disagree with care/do not attack anyone. Invite those present to add thoughts and ideas to the covenant.

Introduce the video presenter for the evening (explaining that you will show the video later during the session): Jasper Peters is a United Methodist pastor who has been assigned to create a new interracial fellowship in Denver, Colo. He is committed to helping white Christians to understand – and support – movements of people of color, such as BlackLivesMatter – that clarify the concerns and challenges of their lives and their community.

Distribute the Listening & Looking Guide. Explain that this is a resource to help them capture thoughts and ideas from the video presentation and to make note of visions they have for ministry. Allow time for them to scan the questions and statements to help focus the viewing and listening process.

Play the Video [20 minutes]

Encourage participants to jot down short notes on their guide but as much as possible remain attentive to listening to and experiencing the presentation. At the conclusion of the video, allow five to ten minutes for the group to add more information and answer questions on their Listening & Looking Guide. Tell the group that there will be opportunities to add more information to the sheet and to reflect upon their notes. (If time permits and the group agrees, show the video a second time.)

Posting Perspectives [10 minutes]

Direct the group’s attention to the newsprint posted on the wall. The words there were shared in the video by Jasper Peters. Distribute Post-it notes and ask the group to use them to write a comment or answer to each of the questions and place on the newsprint: What is the “gift” of the Holy Spirit? What does it mean to be “colorblind?” What does it mean to “decentralize whiteness?”

A Bridge of Footprints [20 minutes]

Ask the group if anyone knows the Wynonna Judd song, “Love Will Build a Bridge”? Have an impromptu sing-a-long and/or share some of the words. Do the same thing with the song “Bridge Over Troubled Waters” by Simon & Garfunkel. Relate the lyrics to each song to Jasper Peters’ question: Are we ready to build bridges? Are we ready to bear one another’s burdens? Are we ready to take risks?

Distribute construction paper and scissors. Ask each person to trace their feet (with or without shoes) and cut them out. Then have people write an idea, a dream, or a commitment to creating the “Acts 2” church – multicultural and multiethnic. Ask them to place words of actions and inspiration on the foot patterns. Then, using painter’s tape, affix the foot patterns in the form of a path on the floor/carpet.

Reflect and Share [10 minutes]

Allow time for members to do a reflection walk around the room, reading the notes on newsprint and paying attention to the words on the footprints. Allow time for them to add additional notes on their guide and to complete their vision, their commitment, and draft their social media share.

Closing Devotions [10 minutes]

For all who are able and willing, ask them to remove their shoes and go stand around the footprints forming a bridge, two lines facing each other – each one with a partner. Extend hands overhead –palm to palm– and connect with the partner across from them. Then invite everyone, beginning from the back – one or two at a time - to walk under the bridge of hands, placing their feet on the footprints (if walking one at a time, have them reconnect with one’s partner on the other end of the line). As people are walking the “bridge,” let a song emerge, singing a familiar hymn or song (i.e., “Precious Lord, Take My Hand,” “Amazing Grace,” “Marching to Zion”) – or someone may start singing “Bridge Over Troubled Waters.”

Closing Prayer [3 minutes]

Offer this prayer (or ask a volunteer to pray): Lord, we so desire to be the church of the future. You have shown us our inheritance from the day of Pentecost. Let it be our future. Help us become a more diverse and inclusive church, where we see our colors, we sing music that appeals to the variety, where our mission choices and giving supports the well-being of all. Help us accept the need to be a community where the burdens of the few are carried by many. We offer our gifts, Lord. Take them and use them. Amen.

Listening & Looking Guide: The Rev. Jasper Peters

What is meant by the “gift” of the Holy Spirit?

What does it mean to be “colorblind” with regard to racial identity? Is that a good thing?

What does it mean to “decentralize whiteness?”

What impact would the “decentralization of whiteness” have on your life? Your church?

Mr. Peters talks about the need to build bridges. Identify the location and characteristics of your favorite bridge in your community or somewhere in the world. Describe a time when you witnessed a bridge built between people of differing cultures or races.

Cultivate a new vision: Jasper Peters cautions us to not limit or draw too small our circles of care and concern. He concludes by talking about the beautiful vision of church in Acts 2. Think about your life and ask, “How far can my parish go (not where it ends)?”

Make a commitment: _____

Tweet This/Post on your social media: _____

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- Instagram: @gcorrumpc #vitalconvo
- Facebook: General Commission on Religion and Race



Adam Haugeberg The Rev. Tyler Sit

¡Bendiciones! Building a Just, ‘Green’
Faith Community

Video (6:33): The Rev. Tyler Sit, pastor of New City United Methodist Church, Minneapolis, and Adam Haugeberg, director of environmental justice at New City Church

Adam Haugeberg is the director of environmental justice at New City Church in Minneapolis. He has started a permaculture design and edible landscaping business in Atlanta, managed and helped design a 350-acre permaculture demonstration site in southern Missouri, and worked with several churches and non-profits in the area of environmental justice. His calling is to create sustainable, equitable, and abundant systems that serve God, create justice for people, and harmonize with the earth.

The Rev. Tyler Sit is the church planter of New City Church, a Minneapolis-based church that focuses on environmental justice. New City has been featured in The New York Times, on Minnesota Public Radio, and on the website Patheos. The church’s ministry was named one of the “50 Environmental Projects to Watch” by online magazine Grist. Tyler is an outdoors enthusiast and on the side designs communications for an urban garden program.

Session 13: ¡Bendiciones! Building a Just, ‘Green’ Faith Community

Preparation

Select a room or location to offer the study. Every session needs a room that has the capability to access the video via the internet and to project the video for groups of various sizes. Check to be sure equipment is working properly.

Preview the video. Be sure to take on what is new for you, what captures your keenest interest, and what one thing you want to be sure to emphasize in the teaching process. Next, read through the lesson plan, making notes of what you need to prepare in advance or persons you may recruit to assist in leading the session.

Gather the following materials:

- Holy Bible, turned to Scriptures: 2 Kings 19:29-31; 2 Chronicles 7:14; and Isaiah 65:21-23
- Listening & Looking Guide (one for each person or project on a screen)
- Pens or pencils
- A potted dwarf tree or small tree of some sort
- A flower pot (medium-sized) filled with potting soil
- Construction paper
- Notebook paper
- Business envelopes (one for each participant)
- Large index cards (4 x 6)
- Markers, colored pencils, and crayons
- Scissors
- Blue painter's tape

Also prepare:

- Your tree poster and brief story about you and a fruit tree
- Write the mailing address and website of New City Church on newsprint for display: <http://grownnewcity.church>; New City Church, P. O. Box 7083, Minneapolis, MN 55407
- A bowl of eight to ten lemons (for display and for use in "Make Lemonade" activity)
- Materials for optional activity "Make Lemonade:" a small table, 2-quart pitcher of water, 2 cups of sugar, stirring spoon, 8-10 lemons, cutting board, and a knife

THE STUDY SESSION

Get Started [10 minutes]

Welcome everyone to the session and take care of housekeeping matters. Read statement of purpose (or recruit a volunteer to do so): "The General Commission on Religion and Race presents Vital Conversations to help start the dialogue on subjects that may sometimes be difficult to approach. We are all part of the beloved community, and we welcome perspectives that bring enlightenment and understanding."

Recruit a volunteer to read the Scriptures: 2 Kings 19:29-31; 2 Chronicles 7:14; and Isaiah 65:21-23.

Invite someone to lead the group in prayer; if no one volunteers, open with a prayer of your choice. Post your group's covenant and highlight the key components: confidentiality; everyone's voice

matters; disagree with care/do not attack anyone. Invite the group to add thoughts and ideas to the covenant, especially if there are new persons.

Draw and Share [15 minutes]

Give each person a sheet of construction paper, an index card, and provide access to varied colored markers. Ask everyone to think about fruit that grows from a tree. Ask them to think about their favorite fruit tree then "sketch" that tree on one side of the paper. Then ask them to use the index card to write down their memories of eating fruit from that tree (i.e., peach juice dribbling down your chin; fresh squeezed orange juice in a glass; pears so hard that you almost broke a tooth). Show your fruit tree poster as an example.

After everyone has prepared their tree poster and jotted down their stories, ask them to tape their posters on the wall. Then have a museum "walk," encouraging everyone to browse the artistic and literary gifts of the other participants.

Show the Video [15 minutes]

Invite the group to watch the video by sharing this introduction: The Rev. Tyler Sit and Adam Haugeberg focus on the correlation between environmental racism and gentrification in urban areas. Tyler is pastor of New City Church, a Minneapolis-based United Methodist congregation. Adam is director of environmental justice at the church. Their ministry has been named one of the "50 Environmental Projects to Watch" by Grist (grist.org), an American non-profit online magazine that has been publishing environmental news and commentary since 1999.

Distribute the Listening & Looking Guide but explain that they are not to try to answer the questions as they watch – to quickly scan the guide as a way of focusing their attention. They may wish to jot down a phrase or a key point but to try to remain focus on what is being said. If there is time, you may show the video again and encourage more extensive written reflection.

Use the Listening & Listening Guide [10-15 minutes]

Individually, complete the statements or answer the questions on the guide. Point out New City Church's website (<http://grownnewcity.church>) and encourage group members to use their phones and tablet to take a look at their website. Next, encourage participants to recall and reflect upon the passion and vision of Tyler Sit and Adam Haugeberg by gathering in pairs (or triads) and discuss one of the key questions on the guide, "How can we be like compost tea?"

Reflect and Share [10 minutes]

Have members think about their conversations and review the information recorded on the guide sheet. Add additional thoughts, complete their vision, their commitment, and their social media share. Invite anyone who wishes to share their commitment to do so after a time of individual reflection.

Appreciation Pause [10 minutes]

Distribute a blank sheet of notebook paper and an envelope to each person. Ask them to write a letter of thanksgiving to Rev. Sit and Mr. Haugeberg. Ask the group to share something specific that they will carry with them or tell someone else about as a result of hearing their ministry story of tree and justice planting. Place the mailing address for New City in a visible place and encourage people to send the letter within the week.

(Optional Activity) **Make Lemonade [10 minutes]**

Place the bowl of lemons, cutting board, knife, a bag of sugar, spoon, and pitcher of water on a table in the center of the group. Cut a lemon in half, and squeeze the juice into the water. Invite the group to come in pairs, and repeat the process. As they leave, have them take a cup.

After everyone has added juice to the water, add sugar and ice and stir. Pass the pitcher and have all pour some lemonade in their cups. You may recruit a volunteer to serve the lemonade. When everyone's cup is filled, propose a toast to the lives and ministry of New City Church – share a toast and invite everyone to respond “Here, here! And there, there!” Encourage group members to add a toast as well.

Closing Meditation: Dirt Under My Fingernails [10 minutes]

Ask a volunteer to read Isaiah 65:21-23 again. Explain that Scripture calls us to plant and enjoy the fruits of our labor. Call the group's attention to the flowerpot filled with soil. Invite everyone to come forward, one by one, and scoop up a handful of dirt. Invite them to get dirt under their fingernails. Remind them of the call to action issues by Tyler Sit and Adam Haugeberg. Ask them to think about the new vision that they noted on their Looking & Listening Guide. Remind them of the call to God's people to not only live an abundant life (John 10:10) but to be a provider of that life. (Isaiah 58:11 says we must be like “well-watered gardens, whose waters never fail.”)

Recall this statement by Adam Haugeberg:

“In a few years, people who have received trees will literally have more apples than they will know what to do with ... this is our way of saying – God is abundant; God's love for you is abundant; and God is making a home for you here that is abundant.”

Then, read this closing prayer (or share one of your own choosing). Pause after every sentence and ask the group to respond with the word: ¡Bendiciones! (bayn-dee-see-OH-nays, Spanish for “blessings!”) God, provider of life and nourishment, we praise you. ¡Bendiciones! We praise you for the deliciousness of every apple we have eaten. ¡Bendiciones! We praise you for the beauty and aromas of our favorite apples: Honey Crisp, Granny Smith, Golden Delicious, Red Delicious, McIntosh, Pink Lady. ¡Bendiciones! [Pause and invite others to name the apples that they savor and enjoy.] ¡Bendiciones! Bless the work of the hands of Tyler Sit and Haugeberg and the members of their faith community. ¡Bendiciones! Provide for their ministry so they may bring more of your abundance to the lives of people in their community. ¡Bendiciones! In Christ's name we pray, Amen. ¡Bendiciones!

Listening and Looking Guide: The Rev. Tyler Sit and Adam Haugeberg

What stands out for you from the video (try to name three things)?

Families who had revitalized their neighborhood, which led to an increase in value and made it too expensive for their income, lamented: “I guess I'm too poor to live in a safe and green neighborhood.” What emotions does that statement evoke for you?

Tyler and Adam say their mission is planting churches and planting trees to inspire others to fight racism, heal the earth, and create disciples in their own context. What does that look like for you?

How can we be like the compost tea that Adam described?

Cultivate a new vision: If we were compost tea, where would we like to be sprayed? What ministries would we plant? Grow?

Make a commitment: _____

Tweet This/Post on your social media: _____

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