

DISMANTLING RACISM DISCUSSION GUIDE

SEASONED LEADERS

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RELIGION & RACE
The United Methodist Church

OPENING PRAYER

Gracious and Holy God, you sent Jesus Christ to be with us that we might know you and the goodness of being accompanied by you—open our hearts and minds by the power of the Holy Spirit that we might be changed through this conversation and learn to faithfully accompany our neighbors. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

INTRODUCING THE DISCUSSION

 [WATCH THE CONVERSATION](#)

Town Hall panelists include **Clara Ester, the Rev. James Lawson, Bishop Joel N. Martinez** and **Sue Thrasher**, alongside **Erin Hawkins** as moderator. Four experienced leaders discuss how God calls the people called Methodists today to lean into their own conversion and sanctification by actively engaging the work of dismantling racism within the life of the congregation and public square.

SCRIPTURE

JOHN 18:12-27 (THE INCLUSIVE BIBLE)

Then the cohort and its captain and the Temple guards seized and bound Jesus. They took him first to Annas. Annas was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. It was Caiaphas who had advised the Temple authorities that it was better to have one person die on behalf of the people. Simon Peter and another disciple followed Jesus. This disciple, who was known to the high priest, entered his courtyard with Jesus, while Peter hung back at the gate. So the disciple known to the high priest went back and spoke to the doorkeeper, and brought Peter inside. The doorkeeper said, "Aren't you one of this guy's followers?" But Peter answered, "No, I'm not."

Now the night was cold, so the attendants and guards had lit a charcoal fire and were warming themselves. Peter was with them as well, keeping warm. The high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teachings. Jesus answered, "I have spoken publicly to everyone; I have always taught in synagogues and in the Temple area where the whole Jewish

people congregates. I have said nothing in secret. So why do you question me? Ask those who have heard me. Ask them what I said to them—they know what I said." When Jesus said this, one of the guards standing by slapped him and said, "Is this how you answer the high priest?" "If I've said anything wrong," Jesus replied, "point it out; but if I'm right in what I said, why do you strike me?" Then Annas sent him, still shackled, to Caiaphas the high priest. Meanwhile, Simon Peter was still standing there warming himself. Others asked him, "Aren't you one of his disciples?" But Peter denied it, saying, "I am not!" One of the attendants of the high priest, a relative of the attendant whose ear Peter had severed, spoke up: "Didn't I see you in the garden with him?" Again Peter denied it. At that moment a rooster crowed.

DEVOTION/REFLECTION

Simon Peter shows us what it looks like when our desire for self-preservation drives the bus and fear contorts the human spirit toward violence. Toward seeing another human sibling as disposable. We stand in the courtyard, cross our arms, stare into the charcoal fire and say—*I don't know her. I don't know him. Nope, don't know them, and we don't belong to each other. We deny the Imago Dei—the image of God—the very presence of Jesus Christ among us.*

As a white cisgender woman with the power and privileges of ordination in our denomination, my first—and continuous—step in dismantling racism is practicing prayerful self-examination every day. I must take a hard and honest look at how I relate to Peter. At how I abandon Christ. At how I passively participate in our church's systems and our national social ordering that values white bodies more than Black and Brown bodies.

I must acknowledge the ways I cross my arms and look blankly into the charcoal fire while silently thinking—*I'll grieve here on my own and offer up more thoughts and prayers because there's really nothing else I can do at the moment about yet again another trans Black woman being murdered in Houston.* I must daily recommit to practicing spiritual disciplines that shift my heart and mind and body by the transforming grace and love of God—grace and love that requires me to align my time, values, habits, language, financial investments, and relationships with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- **Rev. Lawson said, “Not only The United Methodist Church but Christianity as a whole has to re-examine the forms of Christianity that have been taught and practiced.”** (WATCH: 22:27 - 22:50)

How do Rev. Lawson’s comments stir you? What troubles you? Where are you sensing the Holy Spirit inviting you to slow down, listen, and re-learn the story of God and the stories of Christianity?

- **Bishop Martinez said, “Unless we are willing to go off the map, off the terrain we are comfortable in, we will not be empowered to work for the kind of future [God desires] ...and call of the church for this time.”** (WATCH: 36:07 - 36:50)

What would need to change within you so you could go off the map into the uncomfortable terrain of dismantling white supremacy— terrain that leads to God’s desired future for the church and for the world?

- **Sue Thrasher said, “When you wake up every morning you have to consciously think about what you are going to do today to leave the world in a little bit better of a place than it was before. You can’t coast just because you have been involved in something. You have to keep finding the answers.”** (WATCH: 41:45 - 42:08)

What are some changes you can make today to your morning or daily routine to center you in the transforming love of God and the work of self-examination?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES: WATCH, LISTEN, EXPLORE

OUR CONGREGATION GLADLY SCRAMBLED TO HELP DURING THE TEXAS WINTER STORM. BUT WE SHOULDN'T HAVE TO DO IT AGAIN.

Galveston Central Church—a United Methodist congregation situated on the Gulf Coast of Texas—was hit hard by Winter Storm Uri in February 2021. Pastors Michael Gienger and Julia Riley reflect on inequities revealed by the storm and how the church must practice self-examination and repentance. Read this article and pray about ways your church might relate to Galveston Central Church and how God calls you to take the next step with your own reflection, self-examination, and confession in your own church and neighborhood contexts.

 [READ THE ARTICLE](#)

WHAT IS TRANSFORMATIVE JUSTICE?

Transformative Justice is a movement of building communities that encourage accountability, mediate conflict, and prevent, respond to, and minimize harm. While not rooted in The United Methodist Church, this work reflects practices that the church needs to embody to be faithful to Christ and equip people for life together in Christian community. Watch this introductory video and listen for ways Transformative Justice offers you concrete steps to dismantle racism and can help you grow in love with God and your neighbor.

 [WATCH THE VIDEO](#)

EVERYDAY PRACTICES OF TRANSFORMATIVE JUSTICE

This video offers a glimpse into community practices that develop skills for communication, generative conflict, and accountability. We must build spiritual muscle memory to repair relationships and reorder our world in alignment with the Gospel. As you watch this video, pay attention to the connections between transformative justice, the gospel, and ways the connections spark your imagination for next steps in preventing violence, intervening in violence, and supporting one another in the aftermath of violence.

 [WATCH THE VIDEO](#)

WE ARE NEVER ALONE

Pancho Argüelles practices the lifelong way of accompaniment thanks to his time in the mountains of Mexico learning from Christians who lived and loved like Jesus. Pancho says that “accompaniment, particularly with communities that have experienced the trauma of oppression and marginalization, is a process that starts by acknowledging the full humanity and dignity of the people we want to accompany.” As you read Pancho’s story, ask God to reveal your next steps in learning accompaniment as you seek to do anti-racism work in Christian community.

 [READ THE ARTICLE](#)

DISMANTLING RACISM

**Dismantling Racism is an initiative of
The United Methodist Church.**

[LEARN MORE.](#)

This resource was designed with a United Methodist perspective, but we believe that the content is also relevant for non-UMC seekers who are doing anti-racism work with a spiritual foundation.

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