

## NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Tanner Pickett  
tannerp@montreat.org

### **Montreat Conference Center Announces Next Conference on Systemic Racism** **(for immediate release)**

MONTREAT, NC - In October 2019, Montreat Conference Center will host ColInspire, the second in a series of conferences addressing systemic racism in the church. This event will explore ways churches and individuals might co-inspire one another to liberate imagination for new ways of being, and examine ways to conspire to eviscerate the racism within our communities.

In 2016 Montreat hosted the DisGrace conference, an event that brought together over 400 participants from around the country to examine the ways that systemic racism exists in the church today.

ColInspire will bring together people of faith to disarm prejudices that divide and instead equip believers for practicing resurrection as new creations in Christ. This event will delve into questions around the toxicities of racism currently being breathed into our bodies and exhaled into the shared air, as well as identify those things that precipitate a pathway to eviscerating racism in this country and the world.

The Rev. Traci Blackmon, the executive minister of justice and local church ministries for the United Church of Christ, will be the preacher at this event. Other leadership includes Raj Nadella of Columbia Theological Seminary, Jennifer Harvey of Drake University, Liz Valle of McCormick Theological Seminary, with more leadership to be named in coming weeks.

A conference center spokesperson had this to say about the chosen theme: "When our planning team gathered, we talked about the roots of the word "conspire": it literally means to "breathe with," which caused us to wonder: as the church conspires to extinguish racism, what does it mean to breathe with one another, even as we acknowledge that people of different races experience racism differently and have different roles to play in this work? Can we work across lines of difference to conspire for change? Where is the breath of our life, the Holy Spirit, waiting for us to show up? As people of faith confronted daily by the sins of racism, how is the work before us defined by being members of Christ's body?"

The planning team for this event, several of whom served as planners for DisGrace, consists of Jessica Vasquez Torres, Carol Steele, Denise Anderson, Shawna Bowman, Alex McNeill, Ashley-Ann Masters, Ruth-Aimee Belonni-Rosario Govens, Christine Hong, Mindy McGarrah Sharp, Amantha Barbee, Wende Ballew, T Gonzales, Lindsey Anderson, and Tanner Pickett.



**When:** October 7-10, 2019

**Where:** Montreat Conference Center

**Cost:** commuter rate starting at \$118 p/p

**Full details:** [www.montreat.org/coinspire](http://www.montreat.org/coinspire)

Montreat Conference Center is visited by thousands of people each year who come for retreats, to participate in conferences or events, and to enjoy the many recreational opportunities that Western North Carolina has to offer. The conference center is affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and it is routinely a host for people from many backgrounds and religious affiliations. All are welcome here. Find out more at [www.montreat.org](http://www.montreat.org).

###