Dear Congregants,

I invite you to a three-session book discussion of Ibram X. Kendi's HOW TO BE AN ANTIRACIST. This is a lovely, readable best seller in which he weaves his own story of growing up - he was born in 1982 - with his wrestling with the issue of racism in both himself and our society.

We will be meeting on Zoom three consecutive Thursdays from 7 to 8:30 pm in September starting on the 3rd. It will be structured similarly to our White Fragility discussion group; we will have questions to grapple with about the book and about ourselves, and we will meet in breakout groups small enough so everyone can share. Although we will be dividing the 18 chapters into thirds, I recommend you read the whole book prior to our first meeting. It was the most meaningful to me that way when I did this group with the Resource Center for Nonviolence folks. I got some help with questions not only from them but also from the New York Times. I also got some critiques from the Internet.

Questions for the first session:

1. In How to be an Anti Racist, Kendi shares his experience with racist thinking. How does his honesty help give us space to acknowledge and name our own racist behavior sand attitudes? The thesis of White Fragility powerfully is that these biases are unconscious, we all have them, they are deeply rooted in our group consciousness, and they are only so much our fault if we don't make a choice to grapple with them. I don't want us to spend any time in this group beating ourselves up but rather trying to forge a new way.
2. Kendi writes, "The only way to undo racism is to constantly identify it and describe it—then dismantle it. Why does he believe we need to call out racism when we see it, even if it can be uncomfortable to identify? Think of examples in grade school, the medical system and in housing.
3. The book's central message is that the opposite of "racist" isn't "not racist." The true opposite is antiracist. The good news, Kendi writes, "is that racist and antiracist are not fixed identities. We can be racist one minute and antiracist the next." What does it mean to have to constantly reaffirm your identity as an antiracist? Is there any benefit to the fact that you can't just decide you are "not racist" or an antiracist and be done with it?

I hope you will consider taking part.

In faith, Jenny Choate.