

2021 Lenten Devotional Guide

Peace and Justice Committee, Presbytery of Western North Carolina

As Christians we are called to walk in the way of Jesus. The Gospels reveal that Christ came for the whole person and the wellbeing of the society. Jesus made his way past geographical boundaries as well as invisible boundaries constructed by systemic sin. He did not let that which divides humanity from one another to keep him from reaching out to all people whether it was the Pharisee or Samaritan, the proud or meek, the righteous or the sinner, and the slave or free. God's love for the world revealed in Jesus Christ knows no bounds.

In an effort to bear witness to Jesus Christ, our Presbytery has engaged in the Matthew 25 vision for the church and community. This is a call for us to be actively engaged in our communities by working toward:

- Building congregational vitality
- Dismantling structural racism
- Eradicating systemic poverty

The Peace and Justice Committee is tasked in taking the lead on dismantling structural racism. The Presbyterian Mission Agency explains that this is a call involving “breaking down the laws, policies, practices and structures that reinforce and perpetuate discrimination, bias, prejudice and oppression of ‘people of color.’”¹

In this season of Lent, we are invited to a journey of discovery. It is one thing to confess the sin of racism and white supremacy. But, in a spirit of repentance we also are encouraged to turn and return to God's command to love our neighbors and respond to people who are ignored with understanding, compassion and justice.

We are called to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. May the resources provided help us all work for the kingdom Jesus began in his birth, pushes us into with his Spirit, and will bring to completion in his power.

¹ Matthew 25 Bible Study For prayer and reflection, (Louisville: PC (USA) Presbyterian Mission Agency), 17.

Week Four

This week focuses on some of our ecumenical partners in racial justice ministries.

Sunday: Sabbath Rest and Worship. Take some time to reflect and journal about what God is revealing to you and your community about the sin of racism and Christ's work and call for the church to work for peace, reconciliation and justice.

Monday: A litany from the African Methodist Episcopal Church written by Bishop Adam J. Richardson Jr., 2015.

<https://ame-church.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Litany-After-the-Vigils-Vigilance1.pdf>

Tuesday: Statement on Racial Justice and resources for anti-racism ministries from the United Methodist Church

<https://www.umc.org/en/how-we-serve/advocating-for-justice/racial-justice/united-against-racism>

Wednesday: Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of North Carolina hosted a webinar, "Next Steps: Deepening the Racial Equity & Justice Conversation," on June 9, 2020. Dr. Curtis Freeman (Director of Baptist House of Studies and Research Professor of Baptist Studies at Duke University Divinity School) and Dr. David Goatley (Director of Office of Black Church Studies and Research Professor of Theology and Black Church Studies at Duke University Divinity School) led this webinar on how we can deepen our conversations on racial equity and justice in our local context.

<https://vimeo.com/427869284>

Thursday: The Declaration of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America to People of African Descent was adopted on June 27, 2019 by the Church Council of ELCA. "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians

3:28). The ELCA apologizes to people of African descent for its historical complicity in slavery and its enduring legacy of racism in the United States and globally. We lament the white church's failure to work for the abolition of slavery and the perpetuation of racism in this church. Click below to read the complete statement.

https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Slavery_Apology_Explanation.pdf?_ga=2.23138746.1615740143.1614880900-311133928.1614880900

Friday: Hear Presiding Bishop Michael Curry of the Episcopal Church offer a message on the church's work for racial healing.

<https://www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/racial-reconciliation/>

Saturday: Pope Francis' statement and prayer in the wake of U.S. protests against racism on June 3, 2020.

<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2020-06/pope-francis-usa-george-floyd-protests-no-racism-violence.html>

Week Three

Sunday: Sabbath Rest and Worship. Take some time to reflect and journal about what God is revealing to you and your community about the sin of racism and Christ's work and call for the church to work for peace, reconciliation and justice.

Monday: Wondering how to get started on a conversation on race and faith? Listen to what one small community in Tryon is doing in an ecumenical effort and why as they read and discuss Who Will Be a Witness: Igniting Activism for God's Justice, Love and Deliverance by Drew G. I. Hart.

<https://vimeo.com/513124982>

Monday: Take a few moments to read the following article on anti-Asian racism that was published by the Presbyterian Mission Agency following a rise of racism toward Asians during Covid. The Rev. Laura Cheifetz, assistant dean of Admissions, Vocation, and Stewardship at the [Vanderbilt Divinity School](#), provides steps we can take to combat Anti-Asian racism:

Solidarity work, as an individual and with groups. She pointed out that Japanese-American groups, with the memory of internment during World War II, have been active working with other groups in times of persecution, such as people who are Muslim after 9/11 and detention centers for asylum seekers now.

Support for immigration reform, including stopping the deportation of refugees, DACA recipients and Dreamers, and changing laws pertaining to visas, some of which disproportionately impact people from Asian countries.

Support of several actions related to voting, including expanding voter rights and fighting voter suppression, language support for voters, and registering people to vote.

View the complete article:

https://www.presbyterianmission.org/story/anti-racist-effort-is-not-optional-for-us-as-christians/?utm_source=ActiveCampaign&utm_medium=email&utm_content=A+Time+of+Reflection+and+Action&utm_campaign=Compassion+Peace+and+Justice+Monthly+June+2020

Tuesday: View the May 18 discussion from “Covid at the Margins” produced by offices in the [Presbyterian Mission Agency’s Compassion, Peace & Justice ministries](#) and [Racial Equity & Women’s Intercultural Ministries](#). This episode, “Anti-Asian Racism in the Wake of COVID-19,” was produced by the [Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People](#).

https://fb.watch/3Klu_vuY37/

Wednesday: Pick out and order one of the children's books recently recognized with the Coretta Scott King Book Award given to outstanding African American authors and illustrators that demonstrate an appreciation of African American culture and universal human values.

<https://www.common sense media.org/lists/coretta-scott-king-book-award-winners>

Thursday: Prejudice vs. Racism: A Racial Equity Workshop
Explore the differences between prejudice and racism with this resource, which includes a workshop with background information and an article.

<https://www.presbyterianwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Prejudice-vs-Racism-RE-Workshop-FA-2020.pdf>

Friday: This video, created collaboratively by the Hispanic/Latino-a Intercultural Congregational Support, Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, and the Hispanic/Latinx National Presbyterian Caucus, reflects the sentiments of the many Latin American communities who are part of the Presbyterian Church (USA) regarding racism in the United States and the hope for justice and righteousness in the world.

<https://youtu.be/i3Ti4-lujmI>

Saturday: We Stand Arm in Arm: Mid council leaders from throughout the [Presbyterian Church \(U.S.A.\)](#) share this prayer of lament and solidarity for such a time as this. Debby Brincivalli, of West Jersey, Cindy Kohlmann of Boston and Northern New England, Larry Beasley of Utica, and Amaury Tanon-Santos the synod networker, joined this effort of prayer

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2047359435407874>

Week Two

Sunday: Sabbath Rest and Worship. Take some time to reflect and journal about what God is revealing to you and your community about the sin of racism and Christ's work and call for the church to work for peace, reconciliation and justice.

Monday: We have heard Jeremiah's challenge to "seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you...for in its welfare you will find your welfare." (Jeremiah 29:7) Welfare, well-being, and peace is the work of experiencing and building Christ's kingdom. Have we considered the effect of racism on people's health in the cities and communities in which we live?

<https://www.kvpr.org/post/mary-bassett-how-does-racism-affect-your-health#stream/0>

Tuesday: If you missed it prior, plan on watching or rewatching "The Black Church: This is Our Story, This is our Song" that premiered February 16th at 9:00 p.m. ET on your PBS station. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. of Harvard University will trace the 400-year-old story of the Black church in America. View the first episode here:

<https://www.pbs.org/video/the-black-church-episode1/>

Wednesday: Continue watching "The Black Church: This is our Story, This is our Song," Episode Two.

<https://www.pbs.org/video/the-black-church-episode2/>

Thursday: Is racism real? Take a look at this short video and think about the community in which you live.

<https://www.vox.com/2015/4/30/8520305/systemic-racism-video>

Friday: In the opening pages to the PC (USA) Book of Confessions, we are reminded that "Christians confess their common faith not only to praise and serve God and not only to establish their self-identity but to speak to the world a unified word that declares who they are and what they stand for and against." (vii) Take some time to review the "Confession of Belhar" and view this helpful introductory video.

<https://vimeo.com/97751502>

Saturday: Wondering where to even begin a discussion in your congregation around dismantling racism? Take a look at a small group study Grace Covenant in Asheville has offered to and from their community.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9LoCYkj6F_4&feature=youtu.be

Week One

Ash Wednesday: The journey begins at home with this conversation between the Reverend Dr. Amos Disasa (pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Dallas, TX) and Richard Dubose (President, Montreat Conference Center) on Montreat and the church's past, present and future struggles with race.

<https://vimeo.com/434767296>

Thursday: At baptism we often talk about Jesus' welcome of the little children. As most adults can attest, kids are very aware of their surrounding and have a lot of questions when they see or hear the news. This video from CNN live is a town hall with Sesame Street that may help you address racism with the children in your church of family.

<https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/06/app-news-section/cnn-sesame-street-race-town-hall-app-june-6-2020-app/index.html>

Friday: How did you interpret the Black Lives Matter protest of 2020? If you were a pastor what would you say or preach? The Presbyterian Mission Agency provides this podcast entitled, "Pastoring During Protest: A Conversation with Today's Presbyterian Pastors."

<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/today/2020/06/16/gospel-and-inclusivity-7/>

Saturday: We've all missed congregational singing during the pandemic. Whether we need comfort or challenge we are especially thankful for the prayers sung on our behalf by our choirs. Rest, worship and be inspired for Christ's kingdom work as you listen to the Presbyterian Peacemaking's Virtual Choir.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j1pOkb9G2Ds>