



FAQ

The Well: A Family-friendly Retreat Tending the Wounds of Racism

[Note: this document may change as we hear new patterns of questions]

Why this kind of retreat?

The Well is a life-giving retreat. Just like a communal well in ancient times, we gather at the well, share wisdom and learn from each other, talk about things that matter, and fill our vessels with resources that sustain us. This gathering takes on significance today as individuals and families of color – including white parents raising children of color – seek healthy resources that interrupt racist thinking and practices. Religious professionals will be using this space to create and test new and innovative teaching, learning and community-building strategies that foster healthy racial identities.

As a rare multi-generational opportunity for children, youth, and adults, programming of *The Well* explores our spiritual paths, including rites of passage that bear witness to our experiences. There will be food, music and age-appropriate sports, history, arts, and bodywork that nurtures our souls, and worship, rituals and networking that uplift our spirits.

Who is sponsoring and designing this retreat?

There have been ongoing discussions and conversations about the need for a gathering with this focus. When some of us who were engaged in the conversation realized that we were not “the only ones,” we decided to reach out to each other. Five core leaders of this effort emerged: Dr. Mark A. Hicks, Rev. Dr.

Hope Johnson, Dr. Janice Marie Johnson, Lily Rappaport and Sana Saeed. From there we reached out further to see where the enthusiasm was rooted. We cast our nets and are pleased to know that leadership for *The Well* is offered by a team of religious educators and ministers of color, and white religious professionals who are also parents of children of color. In the spirit of community – and building on the good work of Rev. Joseph Santos-Lyons – the coordinating team has a deep commitment to healing the wounds of racism in healthy, socially-responsible, just, and spiritually-generative ways.

Leadership of *The Well* is an *ad hoc* and growing collective. As of April 1, the team consists of:

- Rev. Jacqueline Brett, Minister for Congregational Engagement, Raleigh ,NC
- Dayna Edwards, Director of RE, Rockville, Maryland
- Dr. Mark Hicks, Director, The Fahs Collaborative at Meadville Lombard Theological School
- Rev. Kierstin Homblette Allen, for The Fahs Collaborative at Meadville Lombard Theo School
- Rev. Dr. Hope Johnson, for the UUA Congregational Life Central East/Southern Regions
- Dr. Janice Marie Johnson, for the UUA Ministry and Faith Development
- Lily Rappaport, DRE; Continental Programming Chair for LREDA
- Jyaphia Christos Rogers, Crossroads Ministries, New Orleans
- Sana Saeed for DRUUMM
- Religious educators: Christina Rivera, Jolena James-Szanton, Adena Dannouf

Racial and Ethnic Group Affinity Groups

Our experience as religious educators has taught us that the learning needs of people of color and those socialized into a white cultural identity are significantly different. For people of color who know deeply how oppression, stereotyping and violence shapes a life, there is a need to name and speak truth to that experience (“I’m not the only one!”) and find ways to heal the wounds of racism. For whites, healing begins with consciousness about how white culture – and how one’s complicity with its thinking and practice can exclude and harm people outside that identity (“I didn’t realize that I thought or behaved in such a way”). And, of course, how our identities show up is made all the more complicated because of how we blend those identities in cross-racial partnerships and coupling, by the

impact of gender, sexual orientation, economic class, geography, our thoughts about religion and spirituality and so forth. As a result of these important understandings, *The Well* will feature focused gatherings, rituals, worship, and restorative practices around these identities. Because *The Well* is intentionally attuned to the needs of people of color, programming will include support for white parents and siblings on how they can practice healthy cultural boundaries and support their friends, children and siblings of color.

Is *The Well*'s content “too heavy” for our young?

Generations of social science research has taught us that children identify racial bias and role preferences as early as their preschool years. As time unfolds, these preferences turn into points of conflict and negative feelings of self worth, or, for white children feelings of superiority. All these messages are confirmed by larger society, especially through schooling, media, family life, community and religious institutions. Parents as primary educators of our children, must find developmentally appropriate ways to ensure that children, youth and young adults have opportunities to normalize interrupting negative cultural messages. And, we must offer alternatives. Religious educators know how to make serious subjects accessible for all ages. This is important because many of our children of color have shared that “silence around racial topics” within their families is a source of real pain and anxiety. We hope *The Well* will be a community that offers children, youth and adults a way to engage issues of race in healthy, accountable, and life-giving.

How might it feel as a person of color to be among whites at *The Well*?

Every person attending *The Well* will have options of how they wish to participate. We expect that adult learners in such settings ask for what they need and engage accordingly. As a person of color who might need a space to “not explain” or be responsible for the emotional and intellectual processing of white colleagues, there will be dedicated spaces for doing just that. The visual, spiritual and contextual frame of the entire camp centers the cultural journeys of black and brown people across the spectrum of skin color and similar markers of social identity. As such, have confidence that your presence and needs matter, and expect covenantal practices to support that belief.

How might it feel to be a white person at *The Well*?

Every person attending *The Well* will have options for learning, relaxation, and engagement! We would expect that white parents and guardians may

experience moments of awkwardness, confusion and even frustration. Yet, we also know that learning to cope with such feelings and situations is part of the anti-racism journey every parent of a child of color must take. We will provide facilitated, open and honest spaces alongside other white parents who have travelled your journey. Through dialogue, worship, ritual and workshops and caucusing, white parents, too, can expect to experience connectedness, affiliation, belonging that leads to growth and development.

What will my children get that they can't get elsewhere?

This family retreat provides a unique opportunity for children and youth to gain understanding of racial-ethnic identity, to make sense of their own identity, and to engage in an exploration to find what that means for them. Especially for those who are in the numeric minority in their schools, the retreat will help young people gain perspective of race and racism present in society, build resiliency around issues of race and form a more empowered sense of self. Children will have opportunities to engage in activities and conversations which foster authentic relationships with people who are different and who hold similar ethnic-racial identities. There will be time for families to connect around identities and for children to interact with peers and positive role models who take time to listen, talk, relax and reflect. And, of course, they will also have a fun time!

Spiritual Support

There will be chaplains to support both children, youth and adults of color as well as a dedicated chaplain for white parents and families.

Will we have fun?

Absolutely! While racism is a heavy topic, *The Well*'s staff will be creating ways to balance serious expressions with times of laughter, frivolity, games, and plain 'ol fun.

Scholarships and Financial Support

This is the inaugural launch of *The Well* so we are building this experience as we go. We have been working with the staff at Ferry Beach to reduce costs as much as possible and are also reaching out to UU and UU-adjacent organizations to provide specific kinds of support (***register before June 1 to get the largest discounts!***). And we have secured a couple of generous grants to reduce costs.

Over the last couple of years, many congregations and organizations have taken up the mantle to supporting experiences like *The Well*. We have an “ask letter” you can share with your congregation that explains costs and how you might be sponsored. Click **here** for a copy of the letter. And, keep watching this site for information about financial support. Register today!!

What is the Ferry Beach Retreat and Conference Center

Since 1901, Ferry Beach has served as a retreat and conference center steeped in Universalist values. Just 30 minutes south of the quaint yet cosmopolitan city Portland, Maine, Ferry Beach itself is a camp on 32 acres of beachfront property with 19 buildings. *The Well* will be taking full advantage of this natural setting to explore our community in a relaxed, natural setting. For more details on the camp, see <https://www.ferrybeach.org/our-facility.html>

How do I get there?

Ferry Beach is about 20 minutes south of Portland Maine and 90 miles north of Boston by car. Portland has airport supported by major airlines, including Southwest. The Amtrak station (Saco/Old Orchard Beach, ME) stops about 15 minutes from Ferry Beach (which offers a shuttle). As summer is a busy season, flying into Manchester, New Hampshire and renting a car also provides economic savings (a 1.5 hour drive). We encourage you to secure travel options as soon as you're able (i.e., NOW!).

I'd like to lead a workshop! Who should I speak with?

There will be a wide range of activities over the four days of the retreat. We welcome your ideas. As a start, we are seeking those who can lead workshops in the following areas:

- Music: such as singing, guitar, drumming, jam sessions, etc.
- The Arts: such as drama, visual, crafts, pottery, painting, fiber arts, spoken word, drumming
- Photography
- Writing - journaling (visual, written)
- Body and Soul Work: such as massage, tai chi, yoga, dance
- Storytelling: oral histories, stories from your cultural community
- Game night
- Food, such as a recipe share;

- Spiritual practices, such as healing circles, meditations, art-as-meditation, nature walks, drumming
- Movement, such as sports, acting, moving,
- Nature, such as taking advantage of “life on the beach” as well as learning about sustainability and POC

We'll be accepting proposals for workshops until **June 1**. Please send a note to:
thewell@ferrybeach.org

**Still have questions, please reach out to our staff email,
thewell@ferrybeach.org.**

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