An interview series designed to help churches of all colors host constructive dialogue about faith, race, and the church.

SMALL GROUP CURRICULUM
Welcome to the Faith and Race Podcast! The Faith and Race Podcast is designed to help churches of all colors host constructive dialogue about faith, race, and the church. Every episode has a specific focus in order to help us intentionally think about the intersection of history, institutions, scripture, prayer, race, and justice. The audio recordings will bring diverse insights and experiences into churches, homes, and hearts across Missouri and beyond. For Season One, all of the interviewees are African-American Methodists from Missouri. The interviewees all have powerful stories to tell, and it was a great honor to interview them. The following curriculum will help guide small groups to listen to each episode and discuss the issues raised and what these issues might look like in your church or community.

The impetus for the podcast may seem obvious to some. The shooting of Michael Brown by a police officer in Ferguson, Missouri, on August 9, 2014, initiated a series of protests and sustained media attention that renewed national interest in racial justice and reconciliation in Missouri and across the country. It was a close-to-home reminder that we may have crossed the Red Sea, but we certainly haven’t made it to the Promised Land. This idea of continuously striving can be disheartening to some, but for Wesleyans and other Christians it is an integral part of our communal pursuit of sanctification. In the words of the first interviewee, Rev. Cody Collier, “the discussion of race is essential if we’re truly to be the hands, heart, and face of Jesus Christ in a very sometimes violent and divisive time.”

Talking about race is not easy. We all have had diverse life experiences which have shaped the way we understand race and its role in the church and broader society. And yet, we need to listen to each other’s stories and stop and reflect on race and inclusivity’s role in our own lives and in our own contexts. Continuing to have conversations about faith and race isn’t the end of our quest for racial justice and reconciliation, but rather it is the beginning of us truly heeding Isaiah’s command to seek justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God. May we all strive to have courageous conversations for such a time as this.

Grace and Peace,

Connor Kenaston
Global Mission Fellow, US2
The Space

The Faith and Race Podcast is intended to be used to stimulate constructive dialogue and understanding. It is vital that the space for these group meetings encourages all members to participate. Chairs should be positioned in a circle or around a table so that all participants can see one another. The schedule for the session and covenant should be posted in easily visible locations every class meeting. The space should be quiet enough that all persons can adequately hear the podcast.

Listening

We all learn differently. Listening to an interview without visual stimuli will come naturally for some, but for others, this may be a new or challenging experience. Participants should be encouraged to look ahead to the next “Pause Point” and listen for what the interviewee has to say on that topic. Keep a stack of paper and a pencil on hand to take notes, jot down quotes that resonate with you, or draw what you hear. Knitting or other mindless tasks may also help, but beware: a task requiring thinking will probably take away from the experience.

Each interview lasts 20-25 minutes, but stopping for “Pause Points” means it should typically only be about 7 minutes of straight listening. If possible, we encourage you to play the podcast with some sort of portable stereo or speaker system to ensure that everyone can hear well enough. Your group may decide to listen on your own and come together for the discussion, but this is not encouraged because it may prove harmful to engage in these difficult conversations if someone did not listen to the interview beforehand. You can find each episode by searching “Faith and Race Podcast” on iTunes, Facebook, or Google. For instructions on listening options, email faithandracepodcast@gmail.com

The Covenant

It can be really hard to talk about race. Many of us feel unable to participate in the discussion. We may feel scared, confused, or even angry. In order to effectively engage with this complicated and difficult topic, we must create a space that allows for the vulnerability that is necessary for us to move past our own experiences in order to hear someone else.

As God makes covenants with us, so we covenant with God and one another to live by certain principles in these holy conversations. Use the following Covenant, adapted from resources provided by the UMC’s General Commission on Religion and Race, and edit it to fit your group. When you have agreed upon the Covenant, write it on a sheet of newsprint where everyone can see it. Choose at least one member to be responsible for holding the group accountable to the Covenant. When that person (or another group member) feels that the group could use a reminder of the Covenant, he or she should raise a hand and call for silence, prayer, and the re-reading of the Covenant.

After opening your first meeting with prayer and the introductory question, present participants with the following covenant. Give participants the opportunity to add to or edit this covenant until all members agree to uphold the covenant throughout the duration of the course.
• **Do No Harm**
  Think before we speak
  Beware of judging ourselves or others
  Be sensitive to differences in communication styles
  Avoid interrupting
  Give everyone a chance to speak before sharing a second time
  Keep Confidentiality

• **Do Good**
  Own our thoughts and beliefs by using “I” statements
  Listen with a compassionate and curious heart to others, especially when their experiences and views are different.
  Examine our own assumptions

• **Stay in Love with God**
  Pray for one another and this gathering
  Be faithful in word and deed to our commitment to be disciples of Jesus Christ
  Trust the Spirit to work in our holy conversations

**Facilitation**

It is the facilitator’s responsibility to:

• Ensure that the class covenant is upheld in all class meetings. This can be done by reviewing the covenant at the beginning of each session and referring to it when necessary. For example: “Let’s look again at our covenant which asks us to give everyone a chance to speak before sharing a second time.”
• Ensure all participants feel comfortable enough to contribute. Invite quiet participants to speak up, and/or encourage participants who dominate the circle to listen to others.
• Remain neutral. Before facilitating this conversation, examine your own biases on the topic to ensure that you can remain neutral while leading discussion.
• Be prepared. Study materials thoroughly before facilitating a dialogue.
  Keep the conversation focused and on schedule. It is important to address questions and allow participants ample time to process their thoughts; however, as facilitator, you must ensure that the conversation stays on topic and that the timeline of the event is adhered to.
• Handle any issues, tensions, or conflicts that arise by moving the conversation. If something troubling is said, give other participants the chance to address it (ex: Does anyone have a different opinion?). It may be helpful for facilitators to rephrase comments to achieve clarity (ex: I believe you are saying ________. Is that what you meant?).
• Ensure that the conversation is oriented around dialogue rather than debate. Debate focuses on winning while dialogue focuses on finding and exploring common ground and understanding. Encourage participants to keep an open mind, to listen to opinions that differ from their own, and to seek to understand rather than influence one another.
Each podcast portrays a different perspective and will vary in style according to the experience and style of the interviewee. While these differences may cause conversation to vary from week to week, each meeting will follow the same basic outline. Times listed are suggestions for all classes though the initial meeting may run a little longer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 min</td>
<td>Scripted Prayer</td>
<td>Each session will begin with a scripted prayer that correlates to the interview for the day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 min</td>
<td>Introductory Question</td>
<td>This question is designed to aid in participants’ self-reflection, and to promote participation. Each Introductory Question asks participants to begin the meeting by speaking from their experience and perspective, allowing for an easy entrance into vulnerability for the session.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 min</td>
<td>Covenant Review</td>
<td>Each week the facilitator should remind participants of the covenant that will be established in the first session. This covenant will keep the conversation grounded in Christ and community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 min</td>
<td>Scripture Reading</td>
<td>Nominate someone to read the passage of scripture. Typically the episode’s scripture will be mentioned during or relate directly to the interview. Some weeks an additional text will also be provided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 min</td>
<td>Listen and Discuss</td>
<td>The podcast is meant to be heard and discussed in community. The materials for each session include pause points and discussion questions to aid in meaningful engagement with each interview. Be mindful of time. Each pause point should be approximately 3-10 minutes. If you spend a long time on one Pause Point, you may want to skip or move quickly through the next one.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 min</td>
<td>One Word on Your Heart</td>
<td>After completing discussion, the group should be given a moment of silence to reflect. Ask participants to join hands in a circle. Each participant should share one word on their heart at the end of the session. Example: “Hope” “Sadness” “Patience” etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 min</td>
<td>Closing Prayer</td>
<td>Have a volunteer close the session with prayer</td>
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The following terms are from the Diversity Awareness Partnership’s Glossary of Terms. It will be helpful to keep these definitions on hand to reference as needed. Many of these terms will come up multiple times throughout the course of the podcast.

**Assimilation** - (1) Being absorbed into the culture of an existing group; conforming to a corporate culture. (2) The process whereby an individual of a minority group gradually adopts characteristics of the majority culture. This adoption results in the loss of characteristics of one’s native culture, such as language, culinary tastes, interpersonal communication, gender roles, and style of dress.

**Bias** - An inclination or preference, especially one that interferes with impartial judgment.

**Colorblind** - Term used to describe personal, group, and institutional policies or practices that do not consider race or ethnicity as a determining factor. The term “colorblind” de-emphasizes, or ignores, race and ethnicity, a large part of one’s identity.

**Discrimination** - Unfavorable or unfair treatment towards an individual or group based on their race, sex, color, religion, national origin, age, physical/mental abilities, or sexual orientation.

**Diversity** - Psychological, physical, and social differences that occur among any and all individuals, such as race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, economic class, age, gender, sexual orientation, mental and physical ability, and learning styles. A diverse group, community or organization is one in which a variety of social and cultural characteristics exist.

**Inclusion** - A sense of belonging, where an individual feels respected and valued. The process of inclusion engages each individual and makes all members essential to the success of the group or community.

**Prejudice** - To pre-judge, to form an opinion without knowing the facts. A feeling, unfavorable or favorable, toward a person or thing prior to, or not based on, actual experience. A prejudice, unlike a simple misconception, is actively resistant to all new evidence. (My mind is made up; don’t confuse me with the facts.)

**Stereotype** - A relatively rigid and oversimplified conception of a group of people in which all individuals in the group are labeled and often treated based on perceived group characteristics.

**Unearned Privilege** - Privileges accorded to some individuals because they possess or demonstrate certain characteristics associated with the dominant culture in society, such as being heterosexual, white, or male. These privileges are deeply ingrained into U.S. culture.
Begin your discussion by praying aloud:

**Prayer:** Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. O, Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love; For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born again to eternal life. Amen.

Traditional Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi
Submitted by Rev. Linda Settles
Executive Pastor, St. James UMC (Kansas City)
Chairperson of the Values Team of the Missouri Conference, UMC

*Go around in a circle and share your name and a brief answer to this question:

**Introductory Question:** What brought you here today?*

*As God makes covenants with us, so we covenant with God and one another to live by the following principles in these holy conversations.*

**Sample Covenant**

We will...

**Do No Harm**
- Think before we speak
- Beware of judging ourselves or others
- Be sensitive to differences in communication styles
- Avoid interrupting
- Give everyone a chance to speak before sharing a second time
- Keep confidentiality

**Do Good**
- Own our thoughts and beliefs by using “I” statements
- Listen with a compassionate and curious heart to others, especially when their experiences and views are different.
- Examine our own assumptions

**Stay in Love with God**
- Pray for one another and this gathering
- Be faithful in word and deed to our commitment to be disciples of Jesus Christ
- Trust the Spirit to work in our holy conversations
This sample covenant was adapted from resources provided by the UMC’s General Commission on Religion and Race. Review and edit the sample covenant to fit your group. When you have agreed upon the covenant, write it on a sheet of newsprint where everyone can see it. Choose at least one member to be responsible for holding the group accountable to the covenant. When that person (or another group member) feels that the group could use a reminder of the covenant, he or she should raise a hand and call for silence, prayer, and the re-reading of the covenant.

Invite one person to read the Scripture and Social Principles aloud to the group.

Scripture: “There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor free; nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:28, Common English Bible)

Excerpt from the United Methodist Church’s Social Principles: “Racism is the combination of the power to dominate by one race over other races and a value system that assumes that the dominant race is innately superior to the others. Racism includes both personal and institutional racism. Personal racism is manifested through the individual expressions, attitudes, and/or behaviors that accept the assumptions of a racist value system and that maintain the benefits of this system. Institutional racism is the established social pattern that supports implicitly or explicitly the racist value system. Racism plagues and cripples our growth in Christ, inasmuch as it is antithetical to the gospel itself. Unfortunately, historical and institutional racism provide support for white privilege, and white people, as a result of the color of their skin, are granted privileges and benefits that are unfairly denied persons of color. We define racial discrimination as the disparate treatment and lack of full access to resources and opportunities in the church and in society based on race or ethnicity. Therefore, we recognize racism as sin and affirm the ultimate and temporal worth of all persons. We rejoice in the gifts that particular ethnic histories and cultures bring to our total life.” (United Methodist Book of Discipline, Paragraph 162)

About Today’s Episode: Today’s interview with Rev. Dr. Cody Collier centers on why people of faith need to talk about race and what are some good practices for these important conversations. A United Methodist minister, Rev. Dr. Collier has pastored churches in Georgia, Tennessee, and Missouri. He has also served in various administrative roles, including as District Superintendent and in his current role as Special Assistant to the Bishop for Leadership Development. In addition, Rev. Dr. Collier has served on numerous state, national, and international boards and agencies for The United Methodist Church.

Play the podcast! You may choose to pause the recording at the following times to discuss the listed questions.

Podcast Pause Points

[6:10] What feelings emerge for you when engaging in conversations about race?

[16:15] What does our local church do to appreciate and welcome people of different races and backgrounds? How does it feel to assess our diversity? How can we grow in our inclusiveness?
What does a respectful conversation sound like to you? What do you need to be comfortable in a courageous conversation?

Rev. Dr. Cody Collier emphasizes the importance of “the naming, the claiming, and then proclaiming the goodness of God and the possibilities of what can happen.” How can we name, claim, and proclaim where we are in regards to racial justice so that we can move beyond our limitations and live out the gospel?

After a moment of reflection, ask participants to join hands in a circle and share one word on their heart at the end of the session. Example: “Hope” “Sadness” “Patience” etc.

One Word on Your Heart

Invite a volunteer to close the session with prayer.

Closing Prayer

References and Further Reading


General Commission on Religion and Race of The United Methodist Church, “Vital Conversations,” http://gcorr.org/topics/vital-conversations

By Their Strange Fruit [blog about facilitating justice and reconciliation for racial brokenness from a Wesleyan perspective] http://bytheirstrangefruit.blogspot.com/

SPOTLIGHT ON SPONSORS

The Center is a hub for community solutions, the study of urban context issues, and the exploration of ethical faith formation. We connect individuals, organizations, academic institutions and resources regarding issues of social and racial justice on both a local and national stage. The Center seeks to empower every entity we work with to hold up their corner and fight oppression from their own corner of the world.

The Office of Mission, Service, and Justice Ministries assists United Methodist congregations in Missouri to do effective ministry with people in need and to advocate for just relationships in society. The Office seeks to lead people to actively follow Jesus Christ by resourcing congregations for ministry that grows out of four Missouri Conference teams: the Values Team, the Social Justice Team, the Mozambique Initiative Team and the Creative Ministries Team.
Begin your discussion by praying aloud:

**Prayer:** O, God of ages past, we thank you for your love and your mercy. Lord, you have brought us from a mighty long way. You lifted us up, when we were down, in times of trials and tribulations you never left us. You kept us in the midst of challenges and storms as we ministered to your people. Lord, you encouraged us to be humble and “keep the faith.” You blessed us with the power of endurance and a spirit of faith and hope, from which we built the foundation of our churches and enabled us to make a difference in the lives of those you sent us to serve.

In the words of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., a Baptist minister,

“God, we thank thee for thy church, founded upon your word, that challenges us to do more than sing and pray, but go out and work as though the very answer to our prayers depended on us and not upon you. Help us to realize that humanity was created to shine like the stars and live on through all eternity. Keep us, we pray, in perfect peace. Help us to walk together, pray together, sing together, and live together.”

God, we ask your continued blessings upon all the ministers and members who stayed faithful along our tedious journey. In the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

Written by Rev. Dr. Aubry Jones
Last Ordained Pastor of Missouri’s Central West Conference

Go around in a circle and share your name and a brief answer to this question:

**Introductory Question:** Think of a time when you were the minority. For example, you may have been the only woman in a meeting or the only married person in a group of singles. How did this situation make you feel? If you cannot think of a time when you were in the minority, how do you imagine you would feel if you were in such a situation?

Take a moment to reflect on the Covenant you established last week. Is there anything that your group would like to change or add?

**Covenant Review**

Invite one person to read the Scripture aloud to the group.

**Scripture:** “Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” (Deuteronomy 6:4-9, New Revised Standard Version)

**About Today’s Episode:** This episode focuses on history and how it has shaped our world and our church and is based on an interview with Dr. Arnold Parks and Dr. John Wright. Dr. Parks served as a sociology professor at Lincoln University in Jefferson City, MO and now serves as the pastor of Paris
Fork United Methodist in Fulton, MO, and St. Paul in New Bloomfield, MO. Dr. Wright worked for many years as an administrator and teacher in the St. Louis Public Schools, and is a longtime member of Grace United Methodist Church in St. Louis. They are both published authors, and worked together to write *African American United Methodist Churches in Missouri*, published in 2012.

Before the episode, write the following dates on the board and encourage participants to write them down themselves:

1700s
1790s-1820s
1844
1861-1865
1939
1968

As you listen to the podcast, ask participants to fill in the timeline.

Play the podcast! You may choose to pause the recording at the following times to discuss the listed questions.

**Podcast Pause Points**

[11:55]
In what ways did the church help fight to end slavery and racial discrimination?
In what ways did the church contribute to or accept slavery and racial discrimination?
How do you feel as you learn this history?
What is at stake in remembering or forgetting the church’s history in regards to race?

[End]
What is the difference between spending time with someone, and really getting to know him or her?
Dr. John Wright describes his experience of traveling as a “church experience.” Have you had any experiences that have altered your perspective on race and racial justice?
How can our local church strengthen our connection with other churches and communities?

If you haven’t already done so, review the timeline of Methodist racial history established during the podcast. An extended timeline can be found in “References and Further Reading.”

After a moment of reflection, ask participants to join hands in a circle and share one word on their heart at the end of the session. Example: “Hope” “Sadness” “Patience” etc.

**One Word on Your Heart**

Invite a volunteer to close the session with prayer.

**Closing Prayer**
The following timeline is provided for your reference. For an extended timeline, see: “Timeline: Methodism in Black and White,” United Methodist Church website. http://www.umc.org/resources/timeline-methodism-in-black-and-white

Timeline:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>EVENT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1703-1791</td>
<td>Founder of Methodism, John Wesley strongly opposed slavery. In his last letter, he wrote to William Wilberforce encouraging him to “Go on, in the name of God and in the power of his might, till even American slavery (the vilest that ever saw the sun) shall vanish away before it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1790s</td>
<td>Segregation within American churches prompted Richard Allen to walk out of a Methodist church in Philadelphia which led to the creation of the AME Church. Similar experiences in New York led to the creation of the AME Zion Church.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1816</td>
<td>Official formation of African Methodist Episcopal Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1821</td>
<td>Official formation of African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1844</td>
<td>Methodist Episcopal Church split over the issue of slavery. Pro-slavery Methodists form the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861-1865</td>
<td>Civil War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>Colored Methodist Episcopal Church formed out of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. The denomination is now named the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>Methodist Episcopal Church elected first black bishops.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>Various Methodist branches reunited, but did so under the condition that blacks were segregated into a separate Central Jurisdiction. Missouri’s all-black conference was called the Central West Conference.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>General Conference allowed for churches of the Central Jurisdiction to transfer into geographical jurisdictions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>The Methodist Church and Evangelical United Brethren Church united to form The United Methodist Church; as part of the plan of union, the Central Jurisdiction was abolished, formally ending segregation.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

African American United Methodist Churches in Missouri, Parks and Wright, 2012.

Invite a volunteer to open the session with prayer. Call upon the Holy Spirit to live and work in and through our conversation.

Prayer

Go around in a circle and share your name and a brief answer to this question:

**Introductory Question:** What was your initial response to the events in Ferguson in the fall of 2014? What did you feel?

Take a moment to reflect on the Covenant you have established. Is there anything that your group would like to change or add? How are we abiding by the covenant?

**Covenant Review**

Please have one person read the Scripture aloud to the group.

**Scripture:** “The Lord’s word came to me:
‘Before I created you in the womb I knew you;
   before you were born I set you apart;
  I made you a prophet to the nations.’
‘Ah, Lord God,’ I said, “I don’t know how to speak
   because I’m only a child.’
The Lord responded,
‘Don’t say, ‘I’m only a child.’
   Where I send you, you must go;
   what I tell you, you must say.
Don’t be afraid of them,
   because I’m with you to rescue you,’
declares the Lord.
Then the Lord stretched out his hand,
touched my mouth, and said to me,
‘I’m putting my words in your mouth.
This very day I appoint you over nations and empires,
to dig up and pull down,
to destroy and demolish,
to build and plant.’”
(Jeremiah 1: 4-10, Common English Bible)

**About Today’s Episode:** Today’s episode approaches the subject of Ferguson through Dr. Leah Gunning Francis’s new book, *Ferguson and Faith: Sparking Leadership & Awakening Community*. A United Methodist layperson, Dr. Gunning Francis is the current Associate Dean for Contextual Education at Eden Theological Seminary in St. Louis and will be starting as the Dean of the Faculty at Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis in the fall of 2016.
Play the podcast! You may choose to pause the recording at the following times to discuss the listed questions.

Podcast Pause Points
[7:24]
How does your faith affect your views or engagement in social issues?
John Wesley wrote, “The gospel of Christ knows of no religion, but social; no holiness but social holiness.” How does Dr. Gunning Francis use the phrase “social holiness”?
What does “Black Lives Matter” mean for people of faith? How does Dr. Gunning Francis’s reflection on the phrases “All Lives Matter” and “Black Lives Matter” change or affect your understanding of these phrases?

[14:35]
How does Dr. Gunning Francis understand respectability politics? How might insisting on forms of respectability (like pulling pants up, wearing hair certain way, etc.) affect our ability to respond to racial injustice?

[End]
Dr. Gunning Francis says, “There is a Ferguson near you.” What does she mean by that?
What does it mean to “stay woke?” How can we “stay woke”?
Who are the people we can listen to who are on the margins in our own communities?
What statistics about our community would help us to better see these populations?

After a moment of reflection, ask participants to join hands in a circle and share one word on their heart at the end of the session. Example: “Hope” “Sadness” “Patience” etc.

One Word on Your Heart

Invite a volunteer to close the discussion in prayer.

Closing Prayer:
Mother earth weeps and wails as the blood of her babies cries
From the pavement, prison industrial complex, classroom of unaccredited schools, food deserts, and subsidized segregated public housing
Bookended by the imminent domain highways and dead-end
Militarized police attempts to suppress our inalienable right to sing
Raising the question, “How do we sing the Supreme Being’s song in an oppressed land?”
Our hearts pulsate to the rhythm of a nation
Our lungs exhale this world’s toxicants and grasp for life-giving breath
Our mouths shout for freedom, hands up in praise and protection, eyes fearfully-inspired fixed on a horizon of hope
Our feet pray that streets here be paved leading to promised places beyond Oz
God, give us strength to honor our duty
Lord, restore all the Fergusons’ faith to WIN!

Written by Rev. Dr. F. Willis Johnson, Jr.
Pastor of Wellspring Church (Ferguson, MO)
Executive Director, Center for Social Empowerment and Justice
References and Further Reading


Spotlight on Featured Books

“This book is dedicated to the contributions that the African American United Methodist Church has made to United Methodism in Missouri. We, the authors, want our fellow Methodists and all Americans to know the story and struggles of those who took the gospel of Jesus Christ to numerous souls for more than a century and a half and bravely laid the foundation for many of our present day churches. Their story is part of our Christian and church heritage and one that must be preserved and shared. This story is one that reminds us that African American churches can proudly proclaim ‘we have come this far by faith and it is faith that will lead us on.’” (Back Cover)

“The shooting death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, reignited a long-smoldering movement for justice, with many St. Louis-area clergy stepping up to support the emerging young leaders of today’s Civil Rights Movement. Seminary professor Leah Gunning Francis was among the activists, and her interviews with more than two dozen faith leaders and with the new movement’s organizers take us behind the scenes of the continuing protests. Ferguson and Faith demonstrates that being called to lead a faithful life can take us to places we never expected to go, with people who never expected us to join hands with them.” (Back Cover)
Begin your discussion by praying aloud:

**Prayer:** Giver of life, we come before you open and honest while being weak and strong through this journey of life embracing racial justice issues. Allow your Holy Spirit to direct our minds, bodies and souls to be ready to make a difference. Cover us Jesus, protect us Jesus, and guide us Jesus as we want to get this right. We must get this right as lives depend on your grace and mercy in this transformational world. We come before you with bold beliefs that your awesome and amazing love for us will help us shine the light where darkness is hidden. We are not worthy of your forgiveness, but please forgive us for not doing all we can do and should do. We stand ready for our assignment. Send us Lord, we are READY. Amen.

Written by Ms. Yvette Richards
National President of the United Methodist Women
Member at St. James UMC (Kansas City)

Go around in a circle and share your name and a brief answer to this question:

**Introductory Question:** Where did you grow up? Where do you live now? How do those settings affect your understanding of race?

Take a moment to reflect on the Covenant you have established. Is there anything that your group would like to change or add? How are we abiding by the covenant?

**Covenant Review**

Invite one person to read the Scripture aloud to the group.

**Scripture:** “When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired hands have more than enough food, but I’m starving to death! I will get up and go to my father, and say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son. Take me on as one of your hired hands.’’” So he got up and went to his father. While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with compassion. His father ran to him, hugged him, and kissed him. Then his son said, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son.’ But the father said to his servants, ‘Quickly, bring out the best robe and put it on him! Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet! Fetch the fattened calf and slaughter it. We must celebrate with feasting because this son of mine was dead and has come back to life! He was lost and is found!’ And they began to celebrate.” (Luke 15:17-24, Common English Bible)

**About Today’s Episode:** While many episodes in this podcast feature leaders from Kansas City and St. Louis, today’s episode will examine what racial justice looks like in a rural setting by interviewing Lealure Tindall, a lifelong resident of the small town of Fayette in mid-Missouri. Ms. Tindall’s experience shows us that racial justice is not just an urban issue.
Play the podcast! You may choose to pause the recording at the following times to discuss the listed questions.

Podcast Pause Points

[7:43]
How have you seen one mistake multiply in a person’s life? How can we offer grace to people who are “marked” as hopeless by the community?
The expression “school to prison pipeline” describes the process of ushering students, particularly students of color in low-income households, from the school system to juvenile and criminal justice systems. As Christians, how can we work to give people second, third, and fourth chances? How can we highlight the gifts of people who have been dismissed by society?

[10:27]
How would you describe your town or neighborhood’s history in regards to race? How might someone of a different race understand your history differently? What stories of race have been remembered or forgotten where you live?
How could you begin to hear the stories that haven’t been remembered in your community?
What are your experiences with inter-racial friendships, relationships, and families? How have these experiences changed your understanding of race?

[End]
How can we be more intentional about listening to other people’s stories?
How does what we heard and discussed in this episode relate to earlier episodes?

Invite a volunteer to close the session with prayer.

Closing Prayer

References and Further Reading

A Conversation with My Black Son- New York Times Video Op-Docs,

“Implicit Association Test,” Project Implicit [personal assessments of your own hidden biases],
https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html

“Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” Martin Luther King, Jr., 16 April, 1963.
http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Letter_Birmingham.html

Begin your discussion by praying aloud:

**Prayer:**
Behold the Lord, God’s Servant, the Chosen One,
God’s Spirit rests upon the Son to bring justice to the nations.
We need justice in our homes and communities today.
Come, Lord Jesus, with justice for the earth.
We need justice in our schools and on our streets today,
We need justice in our nations and world today.
Come, Lord Jesus, with justice for the earth.
Lord, God’s Servant, the Chosen One,
We call upon you to uproot ungodliness
In every crevice of human experience today.
Come, Lord Jesus, with justice for the earth.
We call upon you Lord, the only Righteous Judge,
To dispense the type of justice that transforms illicit behavior.
Come, Lord Jesus, with justice for the earth.
We call upon you, Lord, to provide the kind of justice
That clears muddy waters of corruption.
Come, Lord Jesus, with justice for the earth.
The earth cries with the voice of the hungry,
The maimed and the slaughtered innocents.
Come, Lord Jesus, with justice for the earth. Amen.

“Come Lord Jesus, with Justice for the Earth” by Rev. Dr. Kwasi I. Kena
Associate Professor Wesley Seminary (Indiana Wesleyan University)
Prayer Submitted by Rev. H. Russell Ewell
Co-Chair, UM Association of Ministers with Disabilities
Associate Pastor, The Village Church of St. Louis (UMC)

Go around in a circle and share your name and a brief answer to this question:

**Introductory Question:** What scripture grounds you? What scripture guides your steps?

Take a moment to reflect on the Covenant you have established. Is there anything that your group would like to change or add? How are we abiding by the covenant?

**Covenant Review**

Invite one person to read the Scripture aloud to the group.

**Scripture:** “Then the Lord said, ‘I’ve clearly seen my people oppressed in Egypt. I’ve heard their cry of injustice because of their slave masters. I know about their pain. I’ve come down to rescue them from the Egyptians in order to take them out of that land and bring them to a good and broad land, a land that’s full of milk and honey, a place where the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites all live. Now the Israelites’ cries of injustice have reached me. I’ve seen just how much the Egyptians have oppressed them. So get going. I’m sending you to Pharaoh to
Bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.’ But Moses said to God, ‘Who am I to go to Pharaoh and to bring the Israelites out of Egypt?’ God said, ‘I’ll be with you. And this will show you that I’m the one who sent you. After you bring the people out of Egypt, you will come back here and worship God on this mountain.’” (Exodus 3: 5-12, Common English Bible)

About Today’s Episode: Today’s episode with Rev. Dr. William L. Johnson, III examines a theology of racial justice and reconciliation. Rev. Dr. Johnson is a St. Louis native who has served as a presiding elder and as a pastor of several African Methodist Episcopal Zion churches across the country. Rev. Dr. Johnson currently serves as a Chaplain at Christian Hospital in St. Louis and as the Minister of Young Adult and Cross-Cultural Outreach at University United Methodist Church.

Play the podcast! You may choose to pause the recording at the following times to discuss the listed questions.

Podcast Pause Points

[7:20]
Rev. Dr. Johnson says the church is called to “unity amid diversity.” When reading Scripture, we encounter many different voices. What voices in Scripture does Dr. Johnson say have special meaning for African Americans? What is your reaction to the belief that God stands on the side of the oppressed? How have you seen this? Does God’s solidarity with the oppressed speak to you or your experience?

Today’s scripture speaks of the “cry of injustice.” Who is crying in our society? Whose voices should we be listening for?

Rev. Dr. Johnson recites the following line from Martin Luther King Jr.’s “We Shall Overcome” speech: “We shall overcome because James Russell Lowell is right: ‘Truth forever on the scaffold, Wrong forever on the throne; Yet that scaffold sways the future, and, behind the dim unknown, Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above his own.’” What do you think Lowell’s statement means? Why do you think it resonated with Martin Luther King, Jr.?

[12:00]
How do you feel after hearing Dr. Johnson speak about reconciliation?

[14:35]
What is the image of God/Jesus that you have carried with you? Was it formed in your childhood? How has it changed?

Take a minute to look over these images and then discuss the following questions: How does each image make you feel? Is it surprising? Why do you think it makes you feel that way? What are the implications of depicting God/Jesus in different ways or as a different race?

Illustration 2: Glanton V. Dowdell, color photograph of the Shrine of the Black Madonna of the Pan African Orthodox Christian Church mural, Detroit, 1967, oil on canvas. This image cannot be used, altered, or reproduced without the expressed written consent of the Pan African Orthodox Christian Church. Used with permission.


[End]

Dr. Johnson believes that God has rolled the stone of oppression away many times throughout human history. When are times that you have seen God roll the stone away? How can people of faith continue to make their way to the tomb?

After a moment of reflection, ask participants to join hands in a circle and share one word on their heart at the end of the session. Example: “Hope” “Sadness” “Patience” etc.

One Word on Your Heart

Invite a volunteer to close the session with prayer

Closing Prayer

References and Further Reading


Jesus and the Disinherited, Howard Thurman, 1949.


Martin Luther King, Jr.’s speech, “We Shall Overcome” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VeHNbGE3tJw
Begin your discussion by praying aloud:

**Prayer:** Gracious God who was in the beginning and will be when time is no more. Open our eyes to see the world not as we want it to be but as you designed it to be, a beloved community where the diversity of your creation is the tie that binds us together. As we look at others may we recognize our divine familial connection through you. As we hear the cries of the suffering help us to recognize it as the voices of our mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers and children. Strengthen our resolve to not turn a blind eye to injustice wherever it occurs. Rather open our mouths to cry out in protest to be the voice of the voiceless, to not be afraid in the face of opposition but to hold firm in defense of the defenseless. Show us where love, faith and hope are needed and empower us to be the light shining in darkness. We surrender ourselves to be your hands, arms, feet and heart in this world as we move closer to the goal You had in mind from the beginning. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness." Amen.

Written by Rev. Karen Anderson  
Pastor of Ward Chapel AME Church (Florissant, MO)

Go around in a circle and share your name and a brief answer to this question:  
**Introductory Question:** How does your faith help or support you in times of discomfort and fear?

Take a moment to reflect on the Covenant you have established. Is there anything that your group would like to change or add? How are we abiding by the covenant?  
**Covenant Review**

Please have one person read the Scripture aloud to the group.  
**Scripture:** “But I say to you who are willing to hear: Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who mistreat you. If someone slaps you on the cheek, offer the other one as well. If someone takes your coat, don’t withhold your shirt either. Give to everyone who asks and don’t demand your things back from those who take them. Treat people in the same way that you want them to treat you.” (Luke 6: 27-31, Common English Bible)

**About Today’s Episode:** In today’s episode, a retired police officer and longtime member of Asbury United Methodist church, Patricia Flernoy, shares her experience living and working in North City in St. Louis, Missouri. In the first segment of this interview, Pat shares with us her reflections on being an African American woman in the St. Louis police force and the role her faith has played in her professional life. The second part of the interview details the changes that her neighborhood, the Greater Ville, has experienced throughout her lifetime.
Podcast Pause Points

[10:10]

Pat’s faith greatly influenced how she approached her job as a police officer. How does our faith affect our involvement in this difficult work? How does our faith ground our interactions with other people? How does our faith call us to approach difference?

Pat was surprised when a man she used to “lock up all the time” showed up in her church. What did she learn from this experience? Is our church prepared to welcome people who have been in and out of jail?

Pat mentioned the importance of building long-term relationships with the communities she policed. What is your reaction to this sentiment? How can we work to build relationships across difference? How can the church help to build relationships across communities?

[End]

What is your reaction to Pat’s description of the developments in the Ville neighborhood? Are you surprised or does this align with your expectations?

What changes in race, ethnicity, and economics have you seen in the neighborhoods you live or worship in?

How can your church engage a changing community?

How does Pat’s testimony fit into a larger narrative that we’ve heard throughout this podcast series?

After a moment of reflection, ask participants to join hands in a circle and share one word on their heart at the end of the session. Example: “Hope” “Sadness” “Patience” etc.

One Word on Your Heart

Invite a volunteer to close the session with prayer.

Closing Prayer

References and Further Reading


_The Ville, St. Louis, MO_ (Black America Series), John A. Wright, Sr., 2001.

Begin your discussion by praying the following prayer aloud. The author provides a note for context:
“As a young girl I remember my father sharing stories about his work integrating lunch counters in Kirksville, Missouri, with a group of students led by a Methodist minister in the early 1960’s. This prayer is inspired by my father, Louis Virdure, Psalm 123, and many other women and men who continue to be drum majors for justice today.”

**Prayer:** To you O Lord we lift up our eyes. In the midst of weariness and worry our eyes look to thee. For You are our great hope. Through struggle we see strength. Through tragedy we develop trust. Through injustice we still believe love and peace shall rise. To you O Lord we lift up our eyes. Through trials of denial and disappointment we see equitable rights and full citizenship. Through sidewalks occupied and protests organized we see power materialized. To you O Lord we lift up our eyes. For if it had not been for the Lord on our side, where would we be? So today, O Lord we celebrate voting rights and wage hikes. We declare full citizenship and all students’ leadership. We bear the cross of love and commit to seek your will from above. To you O Lord we lift up our eyes. Amen.

Written by Rev. Lia McIntosh
Missional Strategist, Congregational Excellence & Mission, Service & Justice (UMC)

Go around in a circle and share your name and a brief answer to this question:

**Introductory Question:** What do you think of when you hear the word racism?

Take a moment to reflect on the Covenant you have established. Is there anything that your group would like to change or add? How are we abiding by the covenant?

**Covenant Review**

Please have one person read the Scripture aloud to the group.

**Scripture:** “Jesus replied, ‘A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead... Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, ‘Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.’ Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?’ He said, ‘The one who showed him mercy.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Go and do likewise.’” (Luke 10:25-37, New Revised Standard Version)

**About Today’s Episode:** Today’s interview with Rev. Dr. Cassandra Gould will discuss institutional sin, prophetic ministry, and freedom movements across time. Rev. Dr. Gould has served as the pastor of Quinn Chapel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in Jefferson City, MO, since 2010. In addition, she also serves as the Vice President of the African American Clergy Coalition of Mid-Missouri and the Executive Director of an interfaith organization known as Missouri Faith Voices.
Play the podcast! You may choose to pause the recording at the following times to discuss the listed questions.

**Podcast Pause Points**

[6:33]

As you look at the following pictures, what words come to mind? How do they make you feel? What can we learn?


[15:42]

How does knowing that God created humans — in all of our diversity — in God’s image affect your understanding of race and racism?

Why would Rev. Gould make a face when someone says, “I don’t see color”? What happens when institutions claim not to see color (for example, police, politicians, churches, and educational systems)?

[End]

Which ministries at our church are mercy ministries? Which are justice ministries? How is God leading us to engage in justice ministries alongside our mercy ministries?

How can I engage in the work for racial justice in my own family, school, workplace, church, or neighborhood? What do I want to share with friends and family about what I’m learning? What difference would it make if each one of us shared what we’re learning about faith and race?

After a moment of reflection, ask participants to join hands in a circle and share one word on their heart at the end of the session. Example: “Hope” “Sadness” “Patience” etc.

**One Word on Your Heart**

*Invite a volunteer to close the session with prayer.*

**Closing Prayer**
References and Further Reading


“Color-blindness is Counter Productive,” The Atlantic 13 September 2015
http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/09/color-blindness-is-counterproductive/405037/


Behind the Scenes

Photograph of interview with Rev. Dr. Cassandra Gould | Photo Credit: Fred Koenig
Begin your discussion by praying aloud:

**Prayer:** Give us grace, O God, to dare to do the deed which we well know cries to be done. Let us not hesitate because of ease, or the words of men's mouths, or our own lives. Mighty causes are calling us — the freeing of women, the training of children, the putting down of hate and murder and poverty — all those and more. But they call with voices that mean work and sacrifices and death. Mercifully grant us, O God, the Spirit of Esther that we say: I will go unto the King and if I perish, I perish.

“Give Us Grace” by W.E.B. DuBois
Submitted by Rev. Sheila Bouie-Sledge
Associate Pastor, Salem UMC (Ladue, MO)

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Go around in a circle and share your name and a brief answer to this question:

**Introductory Question:** What has been the most rewarding part of engaging in these discussions? What has been the most challenging?

Take a moment to reflect on the Covenant you have established. Is there anything that your group would like to change or add? How are we abiding by the covenant?

**Covenant Review**

Please have one person read the Scripture aloud to the group.

**Scripture:** “This is why I kneel before the Father. Every ethnic group in heaven or on earth is recognized by him. I ask that he will strengthen you in your inner selves from the riches of his glory through the Spirit. I ask that Christ will live in your hearts through faith. As a result of having strong roots in love, I ask that you’ll have the power to grasp love’s width and length, height and depth, together with all believers. I ask that you’ll know the love of Christ that is beyond knowledge so that you will be filled entirely with the fullness of God. Glory to God, who is able to do far beyond all that we could ask or imagine by his power at work within us; glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus for all generations, forever and always. Amen.” (Ephesians 3:14-21, Common English Bible)

**About Today's Episode:** In today’s interview, we will listen to the experiences of Rev. Tina Harris, pastor of Grand Avenue Temple (UMC) in Kansas City. Rev. Harris discusses diversity and her experience navigating different worlds and contexts. Today’s episode will be shorter than usual to allow for time to discuss the first season of the podcast as a whole.

**Play the podcast! You may choose to pause the recording at the following times to discuss the listed questions.**

**Podcast Pause Points**

[3:36]

Tina remembers being in the 2nd grade when other children called her the the n-word and she felt like she’d been “punched in the gut.” When did you first become aware of racial difference and discrimination?
[3:36 continued]
How does language hurt or harm people? How do children learn racist language and behavior? What can we do to limit the unconscious biases and prejudices that we pass along to our children and children in our community? How can we help children to embrace inclusivity?

[7:53]
What is the value of being in groups or settings of diverse people? We all have to navigate different spaces. What can we do to make those who are within our spaces feel more comfortable?

[End]
What have you learned while listening to the podcast? What was most surprising? Least surprising? How can we share what we’ve learned in these discussions with others in our religious community? In our families? In our other circles? How can we help children to embrace inclusivity?

After a moment of reflection, ask participants to join hands in a circle and share one word on their heart at the end of the session. Example: “Hope” “Sadness” “Patience” etc.

One Word on Your Heart

Invite a volunteer to close the session with prayer.

Closing Prayer

References and Further Reading

Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community, Martin Luther King, Jr., 1967.


“Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack,” Peggy McIntosh, https://goo.gl/g1OCeN


LOOKING AHEAD

Season 2 of the Faith and Race Podcast is currently in pre-production! Season 2 will further explore the impact we can make in our own location by interviewing an even more diverse set of guests. Make sure you’re subscribed on iTunes so you don’t miss an episode!
Small Group Curriculum

An interview series designed to help churches of all colors host constructive dialogue about faith, race, and the church.

**Episode 1:** “Why We Need to Talk About Race” with Rev. Dr. Cody Collier
**Episode 2:** “The Past’s Presence” with Dr. Arnold G. Parks and Dr. John A. Wright, Sr.
**Episode 3:** “Ferguson and Faith” with Dr. Leah Gunning Francis
**Episode 4:** “Racial Justice in Rural Settings” with Mrs. Lealure Tindall
**Episode 5:** “Black Theology” with Rev. Dr. William L. Johnson, III
**Episode 6:** “White Flight and the Story of a Black Female Police Officer” with Mrs. Patricia Flennoy
**Episode 7:** “Institutional Racism and Justice Movements, Then and Now” with Rev. Dr. Cassandra Gould
**Episode 8:** “Who Are We and Who Can We Be?” with Rev. Tina Harris

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