

Troubling the Waters for Healing of the Church



A journey for White Christians
from privilege to partnership

Credits

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Preface



I am often asked what signs of hope I see for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The invitation for White Christians to journey from privilege to partnership is one very hopeful sign. From its beginning in 1988, the ELCA has made a firm commitment to become an increasingly multicultural and an intentionally anti-racist church. Our continual failure to fulfill that commitment raises significant questions regarding the integrity of our witness to God's love in Christ for the whole creation and causes deep concern for our viability in an increasingly and richly diverse context.

Many will be uncomfortable with the phrase "White Christian." We still prefer to identify ourselves with the culture and country of our immigrant ancestors. Even more disturbing is the word "privilege." It is far easier for us to identify what we lack than confront the benefits that come to us by virtue of being White. Yet until we, in a spirit of humility and repentance, are willing to explore the power, privilege, and prejudice that belong to us as White Christians, it may be impossible for us to become the multicultural church I believe most of us sincerely desire to be.

This study is an invitation to explore who we are. Therefore it begins and ends in baptismal waters. Water, together with God's Word of promise, is cleansing and healing as we are bathed in God's grace in Christ. Yet these waters are also troubling, for in them each day the power and privilege to which we have become so accustomed is put to death. We are raised to new life in Christ, reconciled to each other. We are set free in faith to work for justice and peace. Therefore let us not be passive, unknowing participants in systems that perpetuate power and privilege. Rather, let us join as partners in the relentless pursuit of a more just world.

The ELCA social statement "Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity and Culture," is very clear. It says, "Racism, both blatant and subtle, continues to deny the reconciling work of the cross. God's forgiveness frees us from the enslavement of racism. For some, this may mean giving up power or privilege; for others, it may mean giving up anger or prejudice. Let us know this reconciliation in our lives!" (p. 5)

May the journey you begin through this study lead not only to new insights, but also to bold action. We look forward to being transformed by the Spirit from persons of privilege to partners in building not only a more inclusive and multicultural church, but also a more just world.

God's peace be with you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mark S. Hanson".

Mark S. Hanson, Bishop Emeritus

Definitions of Racism and White Privilege



The ELCA Social Statement “Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture,” defines racism as “a mix of power, privilege, and prejudice” (p. 4). This complex mix moves racism—and any system of oppression—out of the realm of simple individual feelings and actions into the realm of cultural and institutional systems. It is a definition that addresses the systemic nature of racism within the United States since the arrival of Europeans.

Power is the key that locks the system of racism and any system of oppression in place. Prejudice is a set of negative beliefs generalized about a whole group of people. All people hold prejudices, but only the dominant group has the power to enforce laws, establish institutions and set cultural standards that are used to dominate those who are the subject of their prejudice. For example, only White people had the institutional power to establish separate and unequal schools for White children and children of African American or American Indian heritage. Only White people had the institutional power to establish and enforce past Jim Crow laws and current drug laws that disproportionately target crack cocaine users who are more often people of color over powder cocaine users who are mostly White. White people established standards of beauty and defined the cultural norm of individualism. All White people do not have individual power, but all White people benefit from dominant White cultural and institutional power.

White privilege is the spill over effect of racial prejudice and White institutional power. It means that a White person in the United States has privilege, simply because one is White. It means that as a member of the dominant group a White person has greater access or availability to resources because of being White. It means that White ways of thinking and living are seen as the norm against which all people of color are compared. Life is structured around those norms for the benefit of White people. White privilege is the ability to grow up thinking that race doesn’t matter. It is not having to daily think about skin color and the questions, looks, and hurdles that need to be overcome because of one’s color. White privilege may be less recognizable to some White people because of gender, age, sexual orientation, economic class or physical or mental ability, but it remains a reality simply because of one’s membership in the White dominant group.

Why a Resource for White Christians on Privilege and Partnership?

The ELCA Social Statement defines racism, with its mix of power, privilege and prejudice, as sin and “a violation of God’s intention for humanity” (p. 4). The church has participated in the sin of racism as it has used its power to intertwine White cultural norms with the stories of the Gospel. The church has perpetuated the definition of “White” as right and pure, and “Black” as sinful and unclean. Pictures of a White Jesus—although born in the Middle East—permeate churches. In essence, White privilege needs to be addressed because as Christians we have “missed the mark” and fallen short of God’s intention for humanity. The church has fallen short of God’s intent for us to be one in Christ (Galatians 3:28), and missed the mark of “loving your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:39), particularly neighbors of color who have experienced firsthand time after time the effects of White privilege, the effects of power and control.

The church has perpetuated the definition of “White” as right and pure. . . Pictures of a White Jesus, although born in the Middle East, permeate churches.

This resource addresses the need to examine the sin of racism and its affect on mission and ministry within a multicultural society. It does that by addressing White Christians. The time has come to examine the question of why the ELCA, and other mainline Protestant denominations, remain so White and so exclusive of others. The church cannot become inclusive without first telling the truth about how it consciously and unconsciously operates in exclusive ways.

In this resource, participants will seek to discover what has been lost because of racism and its accompanying White privilege and what needs to be found (Luke 15). Participants will enter the river with Naaman the great Syrian military leader (2 Kings 5) and will explore what needs to be left behind in order to be healed. Participants will work to recognize the truth of who we have been and who we are. The truth needs to be revealed—the truth about the history, legacy, and “present-ness” of racism and White privilege in our society and in our church. The great reformation text is applicable here—“If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free” (John 8:31-32). This church (the ELCA) of the Reformation needs to confront the truth that we remain predominantly White, while society is continually becoming more multicultural.

This resource was developed to confront and discuss openly the truth of our past and present in order to be set free to move from privilege to partnership. It was developed to work toward the vision of “that Rainbow Church, that beloved community” where all are treated as people created in the image of God. Only when we become like the Shepherd and the woman who intently searched after what was lost, or become like Naaman and are willing to enter into



the river of truth, will we be healed and set free to re-form our church so that it looks and acts more like what God desires and intends for the Church universal and for all of creation.

Why address White privilege? Because as White people and as disciples of Christ we need to move from privilege to partnership. We need to know and understand privilege in order to work in new ways toward partnership, in which we intentionally appreciate, respect, learn from, and equally share power with our neighbor whose cultural identity and past is different from ours. The journey requires intentionality in moving out of our safe and secure sanctuaries of home and church and into our local and global neighborhoods to meet, listen and enter into relationship with our neighbors of color — those with whom we have missed the mark of loving as our self.

The ELCA Social Statement "Freed in Christ" states, "Because of sin and indifference, intentional measures are necessary for vision to become reality" (p. 5). This resource is such an intention.

Entering the Waters

Troubled waters of large rapids can be dangerous to those who have the courage to enter. Those waters need to be negotiated with a skilled and experienced guide and trust in those with whom one journeys. Waters of a whirlpool are purposefully stirred up and troubled in order to provide healing. The troubling waters of this journey will require the courage to enter dialogue that seeks truth. It will require trust in the group of participants and the guidance of the facilitator. And it requires an openness to enter into the process for the purpose of healing from years of racism, unspoken White privilege and separation from people and communities of color.

The African American spiritual “Wade in the Water” repeats the words, “God’s a-goin’-a trouble the water” (*Renewing Worship R159*). The roots of this song can be traced back to a slave song from before the Civil War that served as a coded song with escape instructions. The words have been changed through time, but the reference to God’s help in leading to freedom is still clear.

This yearlong process begins with the premise that White Christians need healing from the effects of racism in order to find new freedom for full multicultural partnership. The journey is based in the same hope and prayer of the song “Wade in the Water,” that God will trouble the waters in a way that provides healing—healing from what has been lost in personal identity in being “White”—healing from fear and separation—healing from attitudes of prejudice and superiority. The process is based in scripture to discern where God is leading and guiding the church.

The journey toward freedom and partnership for White Christians is made more difficult by the invisibility of the chains that hold one captive to cultural systems and institutional structures based on White privilege. Exercises in this resource help to make those realities visible. Activities and discussion lead White Christians to address the specific role White people play in maintaining systems of racism. The resource raises questions of what it means to be White and how greater awareness, understanding, and commitment can lead to development of a new White identity that is consciously aware of systems of racism and actively working for change.

This yearlong journey begins at the baptismal font to remember the lifelong journey of daily dying and rising to new life. Each session begins and ends with a reminder of the healing and cleansing waters of Baptism. The resource is not based on guilt or blame, but rather on the responsibility as Christians to see, know, and understand truth. Participants will examine the history of the United States, the Church, and their own personal history for the legacy of White privilege. Within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), despite a commitment in 1988 to become a church of 10 percent of the people of color or language other than English, the church remains majority White, non-Hispanic. Despite good intentions and past hopes, the journey to be a multicultural church is unfinished. Simply opening the doors and saying, “All are welcome,” is clearly not enough. This process is an intentional journey to enter into addressing hard questions of what needs to die in order for new life to rise.



The commitment to enter into this study should not be made lightly. It will mean re-examining old learnings and seeking after new ways of relating. It may mean giving up some old cultural traditions. It may include pain, tears, and challenge. Entering troubled waters to seek healing requires courage, trust, and a willingness to join with others to seek a church of full partnership. Welcome to the journey.

Journey Overview

SEASON OF ADVENT: A time of new beginning. These sessions engage participants in looking at God's promise and vision and in beginning the journey to examine White privilege.

Session 1: Beholding God's Vision

Genesis 1: The Story of Creation
Introduction to Study and Group Guidelines
Rivers and Revelation

Session 2: Remembering Stories

Luke 1 – The Story of the Promise of the Birth of John the Baptist
Share the Story of My Cultural Journey

Session 3: Brokenness and Promise

Creating the River
Genesis 3 and 4 – The Vision is Broken
Create the River of America

SEASONS OF CHRISTMAS AND EPIPHANY: A time of new insights and understanding. These seasons provide time and guidance for remembering one's own story and for listening and learning from people of color and for hearing history and stories often untold.

Independent Reading, Viewing, and Conversations

Session 4: Listening and Learning

Share the Epiphany Journey

SEASON OF LENT: A time for repentance. Weekly sessions lead participants in Bible study and discussion to examine the legacy of racism and White privilege in the United States, both in the church and in one's own personal history.

Session 5: Searching for What is Lost

Luke 15:1-10 – Parables of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin
"Whiteness" Exercise

Session 6: Entering the Story of the United States

Recall the Early History of North America
Develop the Timeline of the United States

Session 7: Examining Attitudes of Privilege

Definitions of Social Dominance, Racism and White Privilege
Matthew 15:21-28 – Jesus and the Canaanite Woman
Social Dominance and Privilege

Session 8: Entering the Story of the Church

Examine Foundational Attitudes and Beliefs
Develop the Timeline of the Church



Session 9: Examining the Construction of Culture

Luke 10:25-37 – The Parable of the Good Samaritan
Examine Culture and the Lutheran Church

Session 10: Entering My Story of Privilege

Chains of White Privilege
Celebration of Resistance of People of Faith

SEASON OF EASTER: A time of new life. Through the story of Naaman, participants will explore the process of healing from the disease of racism and examine the steps to a new White identity and a multicultural church.

Session 11: Entering the Healing Waters

2 Kings 5:1-14 – The Healing of Naaman
Journey toward Healing from Racism

Session 12: Walking the Journey toward New White Identity

Journey of White Racial Identity Development

Session 13: Building toward a Multicultural Church

Journey from Exclusion to Inclusion for White Congregations
Explore Steps for Change

SEASON OF PENTECOST: A time for action. The story of Peter and Cornelius will guide participants in prayer and vision and in taking steps to live out the vision of an inclusive church.

Session 14: Stepping Out in Faith

Acts 10:1-11:18 – Story of Peter and Cornelius
Steps to Act on Faith Commitments – Prayer

Session 15: Beholding God’s New Vision

Acts 10:1-43 – Story of Peter and Cornelius
Steps to Act on Faith Commitments—Vision, Giving Up Old Messages, Commitment to Risk Taking, Gathering Community

Session 16: Taking Steps to Act

Acts 10:44-48 – Story of Peter and Cornelius
Steps to Act on Faith Commitments – Taking Action, Receiving Hospitality

Session 17: Reporting Back and Reflecting

Acts 11:1-17 – Peter and Accompanying Believers Report to Jerusalem
Steps to Act on Faith Commitments – Reporting Back and Reflecting
Meet with Congregation Council and Other Appropriate Groups for Report and Action

Session 18: Experiencing Change . . . Praising God . . . Continuing the Journey

Acts 11:18 – Story of Praise and New Beginnings in Jerusalem
Steps to Act on Faith Commitments – Experiencing Change, Celebrating and Praising God, and Continuing the Journey

Preparation

Audience

The resource is designed for groups of 12-20 people within a Christian context. The primary audience would be people from one congregation who commit together to participate in this study for a period of one year. It is recommended that they be commissioned by the congregation prior to the beginning of the first session in Advent and have opportunities to share their insights and learning within the context of worship or educational settings throughout the year. The pastor(s) and leadership of the congregation need to be actively involved either in participation or in regular dialogue and support. Participants should include people who are open to learning and exploring issues of what it means to be White, but who have a range of viewpoints, levels of understanding, and prior multicultural experience. If possible, they should also represent a cross-section of gender, age, and class within the congregation.

The resource also may be used by a group of people from various congregations and religious backgrounds. Participants may come for their own awareness and growth, to work for change together within their congregations and community, or to become experienced in the model to take it back to their congregation for the coming year.

While the resource is written with examples from the Lutheran church, the context is Christian and can easily be adapted for use in other denominations by using related timeline information from that church body, music, and other examples and resources as deemed appropriate.

Participant Preparation

One to two weeks prior to beginning the first session, provide each participant with the following Pre-reading Materials: Definitions and Why a Resource for White Christians, Entering the Waters, Journey Overview, and the Pre-Assessment Form. These materials will be reviewed during the first session. (P4-P13 Participant Section)

Attendance

Participants should be informed that the process requires a commitment to the journey for the entire year. Inform participants of the amount of time required for each session and the session dates as far as they can be scheduled. Each session builds upon the prior one and attendance at each session is important. Make every effort to schedule dates and times to make attendance possible for all participants.

Setting

The meeting space should be comfortable and inviting. The space will need chairs for the number of participants, but not tables, except as needed for supplies and any food that is provided. Consider the amount of space for the number of people. Allow enough space both for participants to be able to gather in a large circle and to be able to move chairs and gather in groups of two to five people for small group discussions. The small group space may also be in side rooms, but do not separate space by too great a distance since people will move in and out of small groups throughout each session. If at all possible, choose a space with a large blank wall to create the river/timeline that will be used throughout the year. Placing the river/timeline in a visible space within the church or meeting area may also serve as a focal point for discussion with other members of the congregation throughout the year.

Format

The resource is designed as a yearlong process, following the seasons of the church year. In this process, participants will have the opportunity to study, learn, and dialogue as a group, to reflect individually and to



take action together as a group. Covering 18 sessions over the course of a year reinforces the concept that this work is a lifelong journey. It also allows time to apply and test new learnings within one's own life and within the congregation and community. Journaling and assignments help to guide participants in reflection and action.

Each session is designed for two hours. During some sessions participants may become actively engaged in discussion that is difficult to cut off. Check on time needs of the group prior to the beginning of each session to monitor time accordingly.

The number of sessions during each season of the church year varies, with the most intensive study during the season of Lent. The group may choose this study as a midweek Lenten focus. The season of Epiphany is a time for directed conversation and personal reading with one midseason session. The season of Pentecost is a time of putting learning into action with five sessions to guide the process.

The sessions during the season of Lent could be combined and scheduled as a weekend retreat. It could be helpful to do that in a place that is outside the cultural setting of the congregation. The sessions of the season of Pentecost could also be offered during a retreat if it were held in a place where participants could have time and opportunity to be actively engaged in the life and ministry of people from another culture. Being on retreat on an American Indian reservation, at a site in an African descent, Latino community, Arab Middle Eastern or Asian Pacific Islander, in a central city, or in a migrant labor camp, for example, would engage participants in the experience of accepting hospitality as Peter and his fellow believers did within Cornelius' household. Those experiences would need to be carefully planned and coordinated with the host community, but would provide a powerful learning experience in breaking old barriers. Contacts may be available through church ministries, community resources or ethnic associations.

Note: Much of the session time is spent in small groups. Suggestions are given for each session for the number of participants to be in each small group discussion or activity. Feel free to adjust the size of small groups depending on the number of participants attending each session.

Intersection with Congregation

The congregation is encouraged to be involved in this journey throughout the year, beginning with a commissioning service to set aside the group of people who are committed to the process. The commissioning would be part of the worship service(s) on the last Sunday of the church year or first Sunday in Advent. The congregation's participation in this service would be a visible sign of the congregation's promise to hold the participants in prayer and to support them in the journey as they work to discern where God is calling the congregation in moving from privilege to partnership. Members could commit to become prayer partners with participants in the process and the group can regularly be held up in the prayers of the church.

Placing the river/timeline in a visible place in the church can serve as a focal point throughout the year for participants to informally share their learning and growth as the timeline develops during the year. A time for sharing in worship or in an educational setting can be scheduled during each season of the church year for participants to share a scripture they have studied or new learnings or insights. Texts used during the process can be used as a basis for Sunday sermons.

In Session 17, participants will meet with congregation leaders to share their insights and understanding and to hold initial dialogue on where they see the need and possibility for growth. Participants will seek allies in the congregation who can be invited to participate with them in implementation of actions.

In Session 18, participants will plan a liturgy to be used with a worship service to celebrate the work of the year. That service of celebration may be held again on the last Sunday of the church year or first Sunday in Advent and be coordinated with the commissioning service for a new group who will begin the journey.

Water as Reminder of Baptismal Journey

Water is a central symbol throughout this process as a reminder of the waters of Baptism. The baptismal journey of daily dying and rising to new life is manifested through this process of examining old learning, leaving behind old messages and coming to new understanding and action.

The process begins around the baptismal font in a commissioning service. If the participants are from one congregation, it is best to include the commissioning as part of the worship service at the beginning of the study. If not from one congregation, the commissioning service can be included in Session 1.

Water remains a central element of each session with a bowl of water being placed in the center of the group or in a visible place throughout each session. Each session begins and ends with an invitation to remember the waters of Baptism and God's promise to be present in this work.

Layout of Sessions

Each session guides the facilitator with directions for large and small groups. Questions for small groups are printed both in the facilitator guide and in the participant materials. Material for presentation by the facilitator is printed in italics. This material is best presented in the facilitator's own words, but it can be read aloud to the group if that is more comfortable. Longer quotes from outside sources are included in the participant materials. Participant materials need to be copied prior to each session. Permission is granted to reprint all materials. Readings are assigned at several places in the process and are included in the participant materials.

Songs

Songs included throughout the resource are primarily from *With One Voice* (WOV), published by Augsburg Fortress. The suggested songs were chosen to fit the theme of each session. Other songs may be substituted that are more familiar to the group or that are found in songbooks available to the group.

If using the *Renewing Worship Songbook*, published by Augsburg Fortress, songs that use water images or relate to various themes during the year include the following:

R101	Come Now, O Prince of Peace	R217	We Are All One in Christ <i>Somos Uno en Cristo</i>
R136	As the Deer Runs to the River	R241	A Place at the Table
R159	Wade in the Water	R172	Welcome Table
R160	Song over the Waters	R209	Deep River
R163	I'm Going on a Journey	R242	Let Justice Roll like a River
R212	Behold, How Pleasant <i>Miren qué bueno</i>		

Assignments and Journaling

Each session concludes with an assignment. These assignments relate to the session and are an important part of the entire session. The application between sessions provides an opportunity to test new ways of thinking and seeing and to give time for reflection.

Participants are encouraged to journal throughout the year. Directions for journaling are included in the handout for each session, but participants may choose their own direction. Journaling will provide an opportunity to reflect on the process and also provide a record of one's own growth through the year. Journals are participants' own private recordings from which they are free to share as they wish.



Materials Needed

Notebooks for Journaling

3-ring binders for Participant Materials

Copies of Participant Materials for each session

Role of poster paper for river and timeline

Crepe paper streamers:

- 2 rolls blue
- 1 roll each: white, black, yellow, red, brown*, orange (*Brown streamer crepe paper is difficult to find. Crepe paper sheets can be cut into strips, or mauve or burgundy streamers can be used.)

Bibles (Texts used in this resource are from the NRSV.)

With One Voice or other songbooks

Newsprint and markers

Supplies:

- Masking tape
- Scissors
- Glue Sticks
- Crayons or markers for drawings
- 8.5" x 14" paper for drawings (Session 2)
- Construction paper in black, yellow, red, brown and orange (Session 3)
- Construction paper for chains of privilege (Session 10)

Facilitator Helps

Carefully read and prepare each session, gather materials and make copies of all handouts. Consider the particular needs and concerns of the group; adjust suggested times, and adapt questions as needed. Read or talk with others to gather additional background or understanding as needed.

Pay attention to thoughts and feelings in preparing the session. Consider the areas that may be difficult and those that provide opportunity for growth and challenge. Being open to one's own struggle in the journey will enhance the journey for the group. One's own openness and even vulnerability in sharing will set the tone and level of discussion for the entire group.

Working as co-facilitators is helpful in this process. Because racism was put in place with emotion, it requires emotional sharing and release to unlearn. As facilitators, it is important to notice and be aware of one's own emotions in the journey and to take time to share with one another and reflect on one's own growth through this process. As co-facilitators, one person can be more alert to the emotions and climate of the group as the other person leads. Observations of the group can enhance the planning and preparation for the next session.

The guidelines presented in Session 1 are important in establishing a climate and tone that assures people will be heard and respected. The guidelines can serve to address needs within the group if a participant

is not being heard or if one is dominating the conversation. Encourage listening, invite others to speak, and gently but assertively guide the group toward full participation. Listening and respect are key guidelines to regularly reinforce.

Be alert to the dynamics of the group, noticing whether people are engaged and involved. People who are quiet may be reflecting and internalizing the conversation and may be deeply engaged even when not speaking and sharing. Watch for non-verbal cues that indicate involvement and participation. If unsure, check with people verbally, and invite and encourage them to speak when they are ready. Allow time for silence. There may be times when the group as a whole needs time to reflect on a question, a response, an activity, or presentation. Silence and unease may be healthy times of growth.

As a facilitator, the amount of energy expended will be reflected in the energy level of the group. Moving around while presenting or facilitating can help to keep participants involved and focused. Movement from large group to small groups helps to stimulate people in different ways. Focus on story is important in deepening awareness and understanding and finding personal meaning. Invite participants to go deeper in their exploration as that seems helpful and appropriate.

Additional background reading will be helpful in providing deeper understanding and background for leading this journey. The following three books were used as resources in preparing this study and are strongly recommended reading for facilitators:

Howard, Gary R. *We Can't Teach What We Don't Know: White Teachers, Multiracial Schools*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1999.

Shearer, Jody Miller. *Enter the River: Healing Steps from White Privilege Toward Racial Reconciliation*. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1994.

Tatum, Beverly Daniel. *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? And Other Conversations About Race*. New York: Basic Books, 1997. Epilogue, 2003.

Additional resources are listed in the bibliography.

Evaluation

At the conclusion of the process, ask participants to fill out evaluation forms for use within the congregation and as a guide to facilitators of a subsequent group. Make copies of the evaluations and send them to the Department for Research and Evaluation of the ELCA as noted on page 101. Responses on the evaluations are important in continuing to develop materials and resources.

Commissioning Service



This service should be led by the pastor and is intended to be included in a Sunday worship service preceding the beginning of the yearlong journey. If participants include members of two or three congregations, you may wish to include this service at each congregation. Involvement of the congregation is important in recognizing that these people are embarking on a journey that may have an impact on the life and ministry of the congregation. Participants will share their insights and learning throughout the process and will report back to the congregation and its leadership at the end, including steps to begin to move from privilege to partnership.

Invite participants to come forward and gather around the baptismal font.

PASTOR: Dear Friends, you are gathered here to embark on a yearlong journey of study and action, and we are here to surround you and to set you apart for this journey on our behalf. *Troubling the Waters for Healing of the Church: A Journey for White Christians from Privilege to Partnership* will carry you and all of us onto a path of seeking new ways for us to be church in a multicultural society. As you explore God's Word and seek to better understand the people and the history of this country and of our church, we pray that God will guide you and lead you.

We are gathered here at the font to remember the waters of Baptism. As you begin this journey, I invite you to dip your finger in the water, make the sign of the cross on your forehead and listen to these words often spoken at the Service of Holy Baptism:

We are born children of a fallen humanity; in the waters of Baptism we are reborn children of God and inheritors of eternal life. By water and the Holy Spirit we are made members of the Church, which is the body of Christ. As we live with [God] and with [God's] people, we grow in faith, love, and obedience to the will of God (*Lutheran Book of Worship* (LBW), p. 121).

Martin Luther reminded us of the importance of Baptism as a daily dying and rising to new life. In this journey you will be examining the realities of privilege and the legacy of racism. You will be seeking to die to old understandings and to be open to new callings of the Spirit for mission and ministry for all of us in this place. Are you willing to commit yourself to this journey and to live out this call of your Baptism?

PARTICIPANTS: I AM, AND I ASK GOD TO GUIDE ME.

PASTOR: Will the congregation please stand? Today we set aside this group of people for the journey into the troubled and troubling waters of how, through racism, we have fallen short of God's intention for humanity. Listen to these words of the Apostle Paul:

"As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 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 3:27-28).

Will you support each of these people and pray regularly for them as they seek to discern God's vision? Will you listen to them and walk with them as they work to discern where God is calling us to move from privilege to partnership?

Commissioning Service

CONGREGATION: WE WILL, AND WE ASK GOD TO GUIDE US.

PASTOR: We commission you for this study and commit to hold you in prayer. As you stand around this font, may you remember the life-giving water of Baptism and may you walk in the trust that God makes all things new.

Let us pray.

Dear God, today we set aside these siblings to seek your truth of who you call us to be as your one people. As they explore the meaning of White privilege, may they have the courage to ask hard questions and be open to the movement of your Spirit. Open their minds and hearts, and each of our minds and hearts to more fully know what it means to live in full partnership with all people of all backgrounds. As we come to this Advent season of promise and hope, awaken us to your vision and stir us to new life. Amen.

Season of ADVENT



Session 1

Beholding God's Vision

Purpose

This session introduces the participants to one another, provides the purpose and background for the yearlong study, and sets the tone for sharing, based on openness, trust, and respect. The foundation of this program will be laid within the framework of Baptism and of God's vision as it is reflected at the beginning of the biblical story in Genesis and at the end in Revelation. Participants will reflect on the meaning of God's vision for them as they commit to participate in this yearlong journey of moving from privilege to partnership.

Session Objectives

From this session, participants will be able to:

- Reflect on God's vision for the earth and its people, as shared in the first biblical book of Genesis and ending with the last book of Revelation.
- Summarize the direction and purpose of this study.
- Express their thoughts and feelings about entering this journey.

Provide nametags for participants and welcome people as they arrive.

Opening Devotion (20 minutes)

Introduce this session by inviting participants into a devotional time. Call their attention to the large glass bowl of water you have placed on a small table in the center of the group. Remind them of the commissioning service and that it is the water of our baptism that calls us to enter into the waters of this study. Our baptism reminds us of our need for daily dying and rising to newness of life. Water is a sign of cleansing and rebirth and will be a central symbol of this study. The bowl of water will be a reminder of our baptism and of God's call and claim on us. As you begin the study, ask participants now to come forward, dip their finger in the water and make the sign of the cross on their forehead. Invite them to begin and end each session in this way as a personal reminder that God is present in this work and in their daily lives.

This session begins with the creation of the waters in the story of Genesis and will conclude with the vision of the river of the water of life in the last chapter of Revelation. These waters and all that they symbolize of God's vision, provide the framework for the year. We enter the study, starting at the beginning with the story of creation.

Invite participants to place anything they are holding on the floor and to sit comfortably in their chairs. Lead the following reflection and reading from Genesis 1:

As I ponder upon the first chapter of Genesis, I believe it is a "stage setter" or a "layer of the foundation" for the rest of Scripture as to the kind of creator God we have and the kind of creation that was and is intended. As we enter the story, we experience a creator God who is diverse and harmonious and desires to be in relationship with creation and for all creation to be in that diverse and yet harmonious relationship.

Season of ADVENT

Session 1 (continued)

This creation God of Genesis 1 is an intentional God – intentional about creation’s design and purpose.

Enter the story to experience and feel it in new ways. Close your eyes and be still for a moment. Be in touch with your own breathing. Hear and imagine God’s vision as creation unfolds in your mind’s eye. Reflect on the words and feelings, sights and smells of this beautiful and powerful story. Let the images come alive. Listen and reflect on the names of creation, nothing the same, each with its purpose, yet working and flowing together. Feel the rhythm of creation as it comes to be. Move back with me to the beginning of creation as God first breathed life into our earth.

Read Genesis 1:1–31; 2:1-2

Listen for a moment longer to your breathing. Reflect on what it means for God to breathe life into you and all around you.

After some moments of silence, call people back to the current space and time. Invite them to open their eyes again and to look with new sight at those around.

Guide participants in a discussion of the reading and reflection:

- What thoughts and feelings did you have as you listened to the story of creation?
- Did you experience the story in any new or different ways? If so, how?
- What do you see as God’s vision for creation?
- Why do you think we begin this study on understanding who we are as White people with the story of creation?

Sing: WOV #767 “All Things Bright and Beautiful”

Conclude the devotion with prayer. Use the following prayer or say your own.

Creator God, we give you thanks and praise for the wonders of your creation. We marvel at the intricate diversity in all that you have made. We are filled with wonder at the unity and harmony of all things. We thank you for breathing your life and spirit into each of us. We ask you to be with us and to guide us as we begin this study. Walk with us through all the joys and challenges of this coming year. Sustain our spirits and open our hearts and minds to one another and to your leading. In your holy name we pray. Amen.

Introductions (30 minutes)

Welcome participants to this study and thank them again for their commitment to engage in this time together through the year.

Model the introductions for the group by 1) introducing yourself, 2) sharing why you have committed yourself to facilitate this study, and 3) tell who or what is important in your life at this point in time.

Ask participants to introduce themselves to the group, sharing 1) their name, 2) what has brought them to this study, and 3) who or what is important in their lives at this point in time.



Overview (15 minutes)

Participants should have received the Pre-reading Materials and Journey Overview one to two weeks prior to this first meeting; however, it is important to review the journey and commitment that is expected.

- Invite questions or concerns related to the pre-readings of Definitions of Racism and White Privilege, Why a Resource on Privilege for White Christians, and Entering the Waters. List concerns on newsprint and remind participants that you will be coming back to these issues throughout the study and you are not looking for agreement at this time.
- Review the Journey Overview, listing all meeting dates currently scheduled. Check scheduling needs for future sessions.
- Review the focus and emphasis for the sessions in the Season of Advent.
- Emphasize the importance of the community of this group for shared learning and growth, and the expectation that all participants put attendance at all sessions as a priority.
- Ask for any questions or concerns.
- Remind participants that if they haven't completed the pre-assessment form to do so before the next session. Check that all people have the form. Emphasize the importance of filling out the form as a means to reflect on personal growth and to evaluate the effectiveness of this resource at the end of the year. Remind them that the form is for their personal use. They may keep the form in their folder or you can collect the forms and keep them in a safe place until the end of the study process.

Group Guidelines (10 minutes)

Have the following guidelines pre-printed on newsprint. Read through the six guidelines as significant points to constantly keep in mind. Add brief words of explanation for each, using the following explanations as examples. Leave the guidelines posted during the sessions.

- *Listen to each other's stories.* Give each person full attention as they speak, listening as much with your heart as with your ears.
- *Respect each person's journey.* Understand that we all have different prior experiences and learnings. We are all at different places on the journey of understanding ourselves as White people and our place within a larger race-based society. Emphasize that all of us are on a continual journey of growth and that we can respect each person even when our places on that journey differ. When we disagree with one another or challenge one another, we do it with respect, and not as an attack.
- *No one can speak a third time until everyone has a chance to speak once.* We use this as a guideline to keep us mindful of the need to hear everyone in the group and to give time and space for everyone to speak. Some need more time to think and process before speaking; we lift up this rule to help us self-monitor. We will also monitor ourselves as a group if some begin to dominate the conversation.
- *Be willing to share and grow.* This is essential for the process. Growth is not always easy. We usually grow the most through those times in which we have been most uncomfortable. We may need to challenge old understandings and even find some of our belief systems shaken. But we are in the journey together. We will grow most as a group if each of us individually is open to the process, sharing our doubts, questions, and vulnerabilities.
- *Speak only for yourself.* Share your own experiences and feelings and be aware of the tendency to generalize or speak for others.

Season of ADVENT

Session 1 *(continued)*

- *Respect confidentiality.* This is very important for us to build trust with one another and to feel safe within this group. During our time together we will be sharing some of our life stories and experiences and we need to hold those stories as sacred among us. In sharing with others outside this group, we may talk about how we have changed or grown, but it is important not to share another person's story unless they have given permission. It is important for all of us to know that what is shared in confidence with this group will be held in confidence.

Ask for any questions or clarifications. Also ask for any additional guidelines that anyone would like to add and be prepared to add those to the list.

Ask for an indication of agreement from each person around the circle.

Rivers and Revelation (40 minutes)

Introduce the symbol of the river and its meaning and significance for this study. (5 minutes)

As we heard in the opening devotion, on the second day of creation—early in the beginning of the universe—God brought the waters together, dry land appeared and the creation of life began. Water has been and continues to be a source for life. Satellites continue to probe the planet Mars in order to determine the presence of water—and, therefore, the presence of life.

Water is essential to our physical lives, and as a visible sign in baptism, is also central to our spiritual lives. The African American spiritual “Wade in the Water” includes the often repeated line, “God’s a-goin—a trouble the waters.” Whether it was sung in times past as a coded slave song or sung today as a song of Baptism, it speaks to the troubling waters that can save.

Water can be troubling and overpowering when we feel and fear its strength, and yet troubled waters can be healing, as in the stirred waters of a whirlpool. In this study we will focus on water both as it troubles us and heals us.

We will begin our study by entering the river of our stories, sharing an experience of powerful troubled waters and of healing waters.

Model the sharing of river/water stories. One facilitator can share stories of both an experience of a fast-flowing river or other powerful troubled waters and an experience of a peace-filled and healing river or waters. If two facilitators are present, each could share one of the stories. Address feelings of fear, powerlessness, disturbance, calm, peace, etc., related to the stories.

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Invite participants to gather into groups of three. (15 minutes)

In their small groups invite participants to take four minutes each to share their stories. They can choose to have each person first share their troubled water story and then their healing water story, or have each person share both stories together. Remind them to address the feelings related to those stories. Encourage the groups to watch the time, making sure everyone has an opportunity to speak. Indicate time halfway through to help them mark the time.

Staying in their small groups, call their attention to the center. Briefly process the story sharing:

- What thoughts or feelings did you have as you shared your story or listened to others?
- What meanings or insights did you have about the power and significance of water in our lives?



Invite participants, staying where they are, to listen to a reading of several passages from the book *Enter the River* by Jody Miller Shearer. (5 minutes)

In a poetic sense, each story in this book is a stream, each stream leads to the river, and the river is a source of healing. We live in a world afflicted with racism. The affliction leaves us wounded. The river runs over our wounds, enters their depth, cleans them, and leads us on to more healing (p.13).

In many ways the journey to understand racism is also a journey to the river. It is not a journey across or back again, but a journey to enter in. Only when we enter in as equals will the river heal us. The river is mighty, flowing full of healing, but tinged with the pain of our history. Do not enter lightly or alone.

. . . Understanding the strengths and weaknesses of my own culture and the power I carry on either side of the river comes first. Only then can I hope to enter the river and find healing (p.32).

God also created the healing river. I cannot get away from it. The river draws me on, moves me forward, washes over me, washes over us all.

Which river is this? It is the Mississippi and the Jordan. It is the power of love and the necessity of redemption. It is our present, past, and future. It flows through the heart of our nation and the soul of our belief. The river is the hope of racial reconciliation (p.176).

Quotes from [Enter the River: Healing Steps From White Privilege Toward Racial Reconciliation](#) by Jody (Tobin) Miller Shearer. 1984 Herald Press: Scottsdale, PA 15683. Used by permission.

Invite participants to again turn to their small groups and share their reactions to this reading and their feelings of entering the river of this study. (10 minutes)

- What touched you in Shearer's description of entering the river as a metaphor for this journey from privilege to partnership?
- How do your experiences and feelings of entering troubled and healing waters speak to your feelings of entering the troubled and healing waters of this journey?
- Is there anything you need from this group to help you enter the waters of understanding racism and what it means to be White?

Gather participants back into the large group. (5 minutes)

- Ask them to share insights or understandings that they would like to share with the larger group.
- Ask for any needs that were expressed in entering the waters of this study.

In summary, you may wish to share the following water stories and feelings that were shared by a participant in a resource pilot event in Seattle, Washington:

- **Troubling Water Story:** *Growing up on the free flowing Stillaquamish River was exciting and fun. But early in my teens the Corps of Engineers built a dam on the river. Not only did it contain the water, but it seemed to bring everything to a standstill.*
- **Healing Water Story:** *The water of the ocean became my place of healing. The constant ebb and flow of the waves and sounds seems to soothe my soul.*
- **Entering the Waters of this Study:** *My feelings on entering the troubled and healing waters of this study are like that river dam – holding back feelings! I need or want this study to help me chip a hole in that dam so I can truly understand racism and what it means to be White. And I need the group to push me forward so I don't run back and try to stick my thumb in the hole to stop the process or flow.*

Season of ADVENT

Session 1 *(continued)*

Assignment and Journaling

Encourage participants to begin a journal for reflections throughout the year. Ask them to write down their thoughts, insights or questions after each session and to record their feelings and perceptions throughout the course of this study. Encourage them to reflect on any changes they notice in their own awareness, understanding, or behavior related to race. Remind them that this journal is their own private reflection, and may be a source for discovery and growth.

Hand out the worksheet of “Story of My Cultural Journey.” Ask participants to reflect on these questions during the coming week and to take notes as thoughts and memories come forth. There will be time during the next session to draw their cultural journey.

Closing (10 minutes)

Remind participants that this study began with a reading from the first chapter of Genesis, and will close with a reading from the last chapter of Revelation. Ask them to listen to these verses in light of the prior discussion of the rivers.

Revelation 22:1-2: Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river, is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

Ask for a sharing of words, phrases, or images of God’s vision for creation in this text.

Ask for any images, feelings, or thoughts that they will carry with them as they leave.

Ask for any prayer requests. Close with prayer.

Invite participants as they leave to again touch the water as a reminder of their baptism.

Season of ADVENT



Session 2

Remembering Stories

Purpose

In this session participants will reflect on the challenge laid before Zechariah to fully trust God's promise. They will look at the stories of their own cultural journeys, recalling who and where they came from and reflecting on how that has influenced and shaped their lives.

Session objectives

From this session, participants will be able to:

- Connect the story of Zechariah and Elizabeth with their own stories.
- Reflect on the symbol of the river as a metaphor for the journey of their lives.
- More fully understand their cultural journeys.
- Appreciate the power of sharing stories and finding meaning within those stories.

Opening Devotions (10 minutes)

Invite people to remember the water of their baptism as you begin the session.

"Wade in the Water" is an African American spiritual, one of the many historical songs that came from the spirit of a people struggling to be free. Many of the songs carried codes for escape, such as the reference in this song to wading in the water to escape from scent-seeking dogs. While the words may have changed through time, the song "Wade in the Water" continues to speak to God's liberating presence and power. As we are troubled in this study to see things in new ways, we may also experience healing and new freedom.

Song: Renewing Worship #R159 "Wade in the Water"

Read Genesis 1:6-10 and Revelation 22:1-2.

- What images or thoughts came to mind as you listened to those readings again?
- Share any images or thoughts you had about troubled waters or the healing waters of life during this past week.

God's creative and redeeming power is present from the beginning of Genesis through the last chapter of Revelation. Throughout the Bible flow the image of the movement of waters and the life-giving river opened. As we wade into the waters of the stories of our own lives during this session, we do so knowing that the water of God's love surrounds us, heals us and gives us life.

Conclude with prayer.

Season of ADVENT

Session 2 (continued)

Welcome and beginning (5 minutes)

Check in with participants on how they are doing. Invite anyone to speak to any experiences or thoughts they had related to the discussion of the previous week.

The Story of Zechariah: Luke 1:5-25; 57-66 (20 minutes)

The story of Zechariah and Elizabeth is not included in the regular cycle of readings that we hear each Sunday and may not be familiar to some of us, but it is a story that sets in motion a new beginning of God's presence with people. The story of the New Testament begins with Zechariah performing his duties in the Temple according to all the prescribed customs. Zechariah finds it difficult to trust in the promise and vision and is forced into silence. When he is asked to name his son according to the cultural tradition, Zechariah breaks with the culture and follows God's command.

Listen to the story, but listen in a new way. As we begin this journey, listen with the lens of White privilege. What identity do you have with Zechariah as a person of power and privilege within his community? What vision did Zechariah see and how did he respond? What is the meaning of Zechariah's break from cultural tradition in naming his son? In this season of Advent in what ways are you called to begin anew? What are you asked to speak?

Read Luke 1:5-25; 57-66. Invite participants to follow along in their Bibles.

Engage participants in discussion and reflection on the text.

- Who is Zechariah in this text? What is the vision he sees? How does he respond?
- What meaning do you find in Zechariah's inability to speak and the return of his voice?
- Why do you think fear came over all their neighbors? Of what were they afraid?
- What meaning do you find for yourself in this text as you read it through the lens of White privilege?
- To what new ways of thinking or seeing are you being called?
- What are your hopes or fears for this study being a turning point in your journey?

My Story of Cultural Journey

Introduction (5 minutes)

In the busyness of our lives, we seldom take time to look back and reflect on where we came from. We often overlook the people who gave us life and brought us to where we are today. Re-membling is a process of putting back together the parts or members of our past in order to find more complete wholeness. We need to re-member ourselves—to put ourselves back together in community. Looking back may be filled with joy and celebration or tears and sadness and pain, but we enter into the stories of our past to walk back out with new awareness and understanding.

In searching out who we are as White people in this society and church, we need to walk back into the waters of our own cultural journeys to search out who our people were. One of the ways racism has deeply hurt White people has been to take away our identity as part of an ethnic community. All of our ancestors came to this country with ethnic identities. Often that part was taken away or given up in order to become "White"—to become part of a more privileged class. One step in our unpacking of what it means to be



White is to re-claim who we are—to take pride in who our people were and where they came from, and who we are today.

Jody Shearer said it well in his words in Enter the River.

In many ways the journey to understand racism is also a journey to the river. It is not a journey across or back again, but a journey to enter in. Only when we enter in as equals will the river heal us. The river is mighty, flowing full of healing, but tinged with the pain of our history. Do not enter lightly or alone. . . . Understanding the strengths and weaknesses of my own culture and the power I carry on either side of the river comes first. Only then can I hope to enter the river and find healing (p.32).

In his book We Can't Teach What We Don't Know, Gary Howard reflects on the journey back into the river to find healing. He writes of his son Benj who lost his best friend Matt to a tragic death in the gorge of the Rio Grande River. Leaving college, he wanted to go back to the river and come to terms with Matt's death.

Benj's move to Taos was a mythic act of courage. He had chosen to go into the den of the beast, to face directly the fear and the pain and the confusion he felt. In Taos he met the young man who had been living with Matt at the time of his death, and together they formed a strong bond that helped to heal their mutual wound. In the gorge of the Rio Grande they built a monument of remembrance to their friend and helped each other through a long, cold New Mexico winter.

The next spring Benj got a job with a white-water expedition company in the Grand Canyon of the Colorado River. . . . He now takes his customers on eight-day adventures through the wildest water in the West and has fallen in love with the beauty and mystery of his new canyon home. What began for him as a journey of pain and loss in the Southwest has gradually transformed his life into a time of healing and discovery. He was wiser than I at the time he chose to go to Taos, and I am thankful now that I did not give into my fears and temptations to interrupt his deeper instincts for growth (pp. 65-66).

Reprinted by permission of the publisher from Howard, Gary, We Can't Teach What We Don't Know: White Teachers, Multiracial Schools (New York: Teachers College Press, © 1999 by Teachers College, Columbia University. All rights reserved.), pp. 62, 65-68.

We enter into our stories to find new healing and wholeness.

Drawing “The Story of My Cultural Journey” (20 minutes)

Invite participants to spend the next 20 minutes drawing the story of their cultural journey. If they wish, they can visualize it as a river, but there is no limit to the imagery, words or other style they wish to use.

Review the sheet “The Story of My Cultural Journey” as a guide for this exercise. Using the notes they have taken during the week, point out the instructions to “Identify ways you could depict your answers in picture, symbols, etc. Draw your cultural journey.” Point out that as they draw, new thoughts and memories may emerge. Remind them that this is a sharing of story, not an artistic work.

Hand out 8.5 x 14 (or larger) sheets of paper and have enough markers or crayons available for participants. Tell participants that when they return from their drawing in 20 minutes, they will meet in small groups to share their stories to the extent they wish to share. Before sending them off, have participants count off by the number of groups you will need to have groups of four.

As a facilitator, if you have not already drawn your own journey in relation to the questions, you can also use this time to do so.

Season of ADVENT

Session 2 (continued)

Small group sharing (35 minutes)

As participants gather in their groups of four, ask them to each take eight minutes to share the story of their cultural journey. Keep a timer to call time at each eight-minute interval to give everyone equal time.

Large group process (15 minutes)

Call the participants back into the large group to process the activity.

- What thoughts or feelings did you have as you worked through the questions and prepared your drawing?
- How did it feel to share your story and to listen to the story of others?
- What common threads or connections did you find in the sharing?
- What differences did you experience among the stories in your group?
- What awareness did you have of yourself as being White?
- What did you learn or discover through this process?

Journaling assignment (5 minutes)

Remind participants to continue to use their journal to reflect on their feelings and thoughts. As they are able in the coming weeks, invite them to ask family members about issues of heritage or memories of stories of inclusion or exclusion in this country. What role did cultural identity play in earlier generations? What experiences or events helped to shape or change that identity through the years?

Closing (5 minutes)

Close again with the reading from Revelation 22. Invite participants to listen to these verses again in light of the experiences and sharing of this session.

Revelation 22:1-2: Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

Ask for a sharing of any images, feelings or thoughts that they will carry with them as they leave.

Ask for any prayer requests. Close with prayer.

Again invite participants, if they wish, to remember their baptism with the symbol of water.

(Note: If it is difficult for your group to schedule three sessions during the Season of Advent, you may schedule this session after Christmas.)

Season of ADVENT



Session 3

Brokenness and Promise

Purpose

This session moves from the vision of creation to the brokenness of human community. Participants will engage in the struggles of issues of dominance and broken relationships told in the Genesis stories of Adam and Eve and Cain and Abel. They will work with the image of a river in depicting the intersection of the peoples of the United States.

Session Objectives

From this session, participants will be able to:

- Deepen their understanding of the impact of dominance and control on human relationships, from Adam and Eve to present day America.
- Understand the river as a metaphor for life together in the United States.
- Articulate an awareness of the dominating role that White people have played in U.S. history.

Opening Devotion (10 minutes)

Invite people to remember the water of their baptism as you begin the session.

Introduce the song by noting that it was written by John Newton, who was a former slave trader. Invite participants to hold that context in their minds and hearts as they sing and to hear their own context and meaning.

Song: LBW #448 "Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound"

Reflection:

- Ask participants to reflect on the words of this song written by a former slave ship captain.
- What words or images of brokenness did you see or hear in this song?
- How do the words of the song convey a sense of hope in this season of Advent?
- What reflections do you have this Advent season on brokenness and hope?

Conclude with prayer.

Welcome and Beginning (5 minutes)

Check in with participants. Invite anyone to speak to any discoveries or thoughts about their cultural journey or other thoughts related to the study.

Season of ADVENT

Session 3 (continued)

The River

Introduction (15 minutes)

We began our study in the waters of creation and the river of life in Revelation. We will begin there to create an image of human life within the waters of God's love.

Ask participants to take the blue crepe paper and form a river on the long piece of paper on the wall. Unroll the crepe paper and use everyone in the group to work together to shape a river. Move it and shape it so it flows and gives a sense of the flow of a river. Tape it in place.

Recall together words that convey God's vision for creation.

The Vision is Broken: Genesis 3:1-7 and 4:1-16 (15 minutes)

We began our study with God's vision of harmony, peace, and healing in the story of creation and the verses of Revelation 22. But that vision of God was interrupted early in the story of humankind. We shared our own stories and found connections with one another, but we also know that our relationships are often broken and disrupted. In this session we will focus on our brokenness as God's people and as a community of people in this country. We will begin to look at our nation—and our church—as a river of people.

Read Genesis 3:1-7 and 4:1-16. Invite participants to follow in their Bibles.

Discuss the text as a large group:

- What happened to God's vision for creation in these verses?
- How is the relationship between God and humans - and among humans - broken?
- What is the cause of the disruption of God's vision?

Provide commentary as needed:

As we reflect on these verses, which immediately follow the creation story, we are confronted with the brokenness and disruption in creation and in our relationships when creation becomes disconnected from the creator's original intent and purpose. These verses remind us of our human/creature desire to be like God in terms of power, control, and dominance, and our lack of accountability and responsibility to be in healthy and respectful relationships with God and all of creation. Relationships require mutuality, equality, nourishment, and responsibility to be in accordance with the creator's intent. As is evidenced in these two accounts and throughout human history, we humans have often failed in understanding what it means for us to be made in the image or likeness of God. Our temptation "to be like God," is to have power over someone, to be in control of who and what we can, with little awareness of consequences. We have failed to see that God uses power not to control or dominate but to reveal strength in vulnerability. The promises of Advent are made real not in Jesus' domination on earth, but in his going to the cross and dying. God's power is manifested as God brings forth courage in us to speak the truth to power—speaking truth in government, church, and our personal lives. This story of brokenness involving Adam and Eve and Cain and Abel highlights the story of human relationships throughout the centuries in terms of privilege and control between peoples, races, and countries.



The River of America (35 minutes)

Gary Howard, in his book We Can't Teach What We Don't Know, gives us an image of the river as the river of America. As you listen to this reading, think of the symbolic river of life that you created. How is God's river impacted by the coming of people into that river? Consider what happens to the flow of a river and the impact on the land around it when it is dammed or put into concrete walls or otherwise dominated. What role has dominance played in the river of America?

Gary Howard writes of his journey down the Colorado River and through the Grand Canyon with his son Benj as guide:

On my first journey into the Canyon, I learned that the Colorado is not merely one river. Along the 276-mile stretch between Glen Canyon Dam and Lake Mead, many streams and tributaries join the Colorado. Each stream flows down a unique and separate side canyon, bringing water and silt from miles away, far beyond the rim of the Canyon. The color of the river changes constantly as fresh deposits enter the main channel. And the colors of the many tributaries themselves are in continuous flux, depending on the level and distribution of rainfall in their particular drainage systems.

On a recent journey down the Colorado, the river was flowing clear and blue when we put in at Lee's Ferry. Soon, the Paria River brought a silt of whitish clay into the main channel, and the water took on a cloudy appearance. Later, the Little Colorado was flowing at high volume and added its thick and reddish-brown water to the Colorado, leaving it a rich and creamy ochre-brown. At the Havasu River we encountered a water of crystal-clear turquoise, the namesake of the Havasupai Indians who live in a small village in the side canyon, "the People of the blue-green water." Throughout the eight days of our journey, as we passed each new side canyon and observed each subtle shift in the texture and hue of the river, I thought of our rich cultural diversity as a nation.

At its original source, the river of America was formed by the Native People of the continent. With their many languages, cultures, and traditional land bases, they were, and are still today, a richly varied stream. Then came the people of Europe, from different lands and cultures, and changed the river of America considerably upon their arrival. To this mixture came the people of Africa, who came locked in chains in the cargo bays of slave ships, not as willing immigrants. In spite of the pain and tragedy surrounding their arrival, Americans of African descent have added their rich and ancient cultural traditions to the river of America. Latino people were present as well, many of them mestizo, a mixture of Indian and European blood, a new people formed by the confluence of different streams that have contributed to the larger river. And the people of Asia and the Middle East came from their many cultures and homelands, adding even more currents of uniqueness to the larger river.

The river of America, like the Colorado, never stops changing. New streams are continually forming, bringing diverse religions, languages, cultures, tastes, styles, and traditions into the composite channel. As a nation, we are constantly influenced by both internal and external currents of change. Cultural groups within our borders evolve, adapt, migrate, intermarry with other groups, and transform themselves over generations and decades of change and flow. External events in Southeast Asia, Central America, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and Africa stimulate the flow of more people and cultures into the larger river. As is true for the side canyons of the Colorado, those of us already on the river below cannot see all the historical and cultural terrain these new arrivals have traversed in their journey to join us in the river of America. We cannot know all that they have experienced in their homelands, yet they touch our lives, change us, and make us deeper and richer as a nation because of what they bring to the river.

I realize that this vision of the river of diversity may appear considerably idealized. In actual experience there has been much pain and struggle in these waters, particularly in those places where various cultural streams have met, in both the United States and other nations of the West. In fact, I have

Season of ADVENT

Session 3 (continued)

learned from my son that the wildest rapids along the Colorado are created in the confluences, those places where tributaries join the main river. Over eons of time, large floods in the side canyons have occasionally washed huge boulders into the main channel, sometimes completely stopping its flow. The river would build up tremendous pressure behind these temporary dams, and when it finally broke through, a major rapid would be left as a memory of the tumultuous event. These places of turmoil are the most exciting for white-water rafters, but they are also the most dangerous. The same is true for the confluence of cultures. The places where we meet across our differences as human beings can provide stimulating and adventurous opportunities for new learning, but they have also been places of pain, conflict, and loss. . . .

River guides say that the most dangerous places along the Colorado are the “hydraulics.” These are deep holes of powerful recirculating current created on the downriver side of large boulders in the main channel. River guides know that the larger hydraulics can endanger even their 40-foot power rafts, holding them captive in the middle of the current or capsizing their passengers at the whim of the river. A guide must be familiar with the nature and location of these holes and respect their power. On the river of diversity, the holes are a metaphor for the dynamics of White dominance, which have been recirculating for centuries in our institutional practices and cultural assumptions and have always endangered our journey toward unity and social justice (pp 66-68).

Reprinted by permission of the publisher from Howard, Gary, *We Can't Teach What We Don't Know: White Teachers, Multiracial Schools* (New York: Teachers College Press, © 1999 by Teachers College, Columbia University. All rights reserved.), pp. 62, 65-68.

Tell the group that they will be creating a sense of the impact and interaction of the peoples of the United States within the river of life that was created. Remind them that God's river is always present. Divide the group into five groups, counting off from 1-5.

Give each of the groups a color of crepe paper: red, white, black, brown, yellow and orange, representing the indigenous peoples of America and people of European, African, Latino, Asian and Arab/Middle Eastern heritages. Invite them to talk about the gifts of their assigned people and discuss where and how to place a tributary of that group on the wall.

- Ask them to consider the placement, flow, size, etc., of their tributary so that it can depict the flow of the people relative to the other groups and to its view of its place in the river.
- At the “head waters” of their tributary, have them write several gifts that the people of this heritage bring to the river.

When each of the groups has decided on how they will place their tributary, invite the groups to come up and work with one another in creating the river. Tape the final product in place.

Discuss the process and the image of the river:

- What feelings and thoughts did you have as you worked to describe the gifts and the placement of your assigned group's tributary?
- What did you notice in the interaction of the group as you worked together to put your various tributaries in place?
- What do you see in this river now?
- How are the stories of Adam and Eve and Cain and Abel played out in a larger way in the story of the river?



ELCA Social Statement— A Time to Confront Racism (20 minutes)

Hand out copies of the ELCA Social Statement “Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture.” Invite participants to read the entire statement at another time. At this time, ask participants to turn to page 16, #2. “A Time to Confront Racism.” Read and discuss the statement, keeping in mind the river and the stories of Genesis 3 and 4.

- Read this section of the statement, inviting individuals to each read a paragraph out loud.
- Paragraph 1 defines racism as a mix of power, privilege, and prejudice. How does the river manifest that definition?
- Paragraphs 2, 3 and 4 talk about the various ways racism affects the lives of both White people and people of color. How does the river portray those effects?
- How has your life in the river of America been affected by racism?
- What meaning or insights do the stories of Genesis 3 and 4 bring to an understanding of racism and what it means to be White in America?
- Ask for other thoughts, insights or questions.

Christmas and Epiphany Assignment and Journaling (10 minutes)

Remind the group that the seasons of Christmas and Epiphany will be seasons for going out to listen and to discern the gifts that are received from people of other cultures and races.

Hand out squares of black, red, brown, yellow and orange paper. As they talk with others and read and listen during these next weeks, ask participants to be alert to the gifts that people of other races and cultures bring to the whole human community. Ask them to write those gifts on the slips of paper and bring them back for the first session in Lent. Those gifts will be added to the tributaries.

Encourage participants to spend time noticing people they interact with in their daily lives, especially noting the people of color with whom they have contact. Review the following guidelines: Be alert to the person or people that you may have been reluctant to approach or whom you have wanted to get to know better. Pray about the person and consider approaching him or her to have a conversation. Be careful not to be dominating or demanding. Be honest and authentic in truly wanting to get to know this person. Be willing to step outside your comfort zone. If the response is no, accept it graciously. Work at building a relationship. Share your journey in engaging in this study and your commitment to learning more about who you are as a White person and what that identity means in relationship to other people and your place in the world. Ask the person if they would be willing to share some of the story of their heritage if you share some of yours. You may want to begin with a sharing of Christmas, Kwanzaa, Three Kings or other festivals.

As you engage in conversation, notice if you want to jump in and give an explanation about how you see what the person is talking about, or if you want to defend someone or some system. Simply listen. Try not to respond, interpret, defend, or explain away what the person may be feeling or trying to share with you. Listen with an open and receiving heart and mind. Hear, listen and take in the stories of others as a very precious gift.

Hand out a list of books and videos for reading and viewing. Encourage participants to read or view at least three resources on the list if they will not be able to engage in direct conversation with a person.

Ask them to continue to write in their journals. Have them note their feelings and thoughts as they relate to people who are new to them or as they discover new information and learn more of the journey of other people in this country.

Set a date midway through Epiphany for the group to come together to share their learnings, struggles, challenges, questions, and joys. They may also wish to schedule a date to view a video together as a group.

Season of ADVENT

Session 3 (continued)

Closing (10 minutes)

Ask participants to each share one thing they have learned, appreciated, or see differently as a result of these three sessions.

Read Genesis 9:12-17.

Invite one of the participants to read the following commentary:

As we enter more deeply into the season of Advent, we reflect on our preparation to receive God's promises. We have begun to enter more deeply into the journey of reflecting on our place among God's people. We leave the session with a word of hope and promise.

In these verses of Genesis 9, the writer continues to draw the picture of who the creator God is. In this post-flood story we hear and see the restoration and promise of creation and its relationship with the creator. The restoration and promise takes a visible sign that portrays who God is and God's design and intention for creation. From time to time we see in the sky this beautiful sign of God's promise to restore the brokenness of creation's relationships—we know it as the rainbow. It is not one-dimensional but full of color and symmetry. Each color is distinct but not separated from each other. The rainbow reflects the creator's intent for the races and cultures of the world, each is distinct and unique but is also to be in relationship and partnership with one another in mutuality and respect. The colors of the rainbow are not placed in different parts of the sky but are joined together in one arc of beauty and symmetry reflecting God's intent for the races and cultures of the world.

As we see today, and so often throughout human history, the various races, cultures, and religions of the world are at conflict with one another either through outright war and violence, or through racial disparities, discriminatory policies of the governing authorities, and use and abuse of privilege. The creator God's desire and design for creation is not being fulfilled—"the bow in the sky" is broken. As we approach the time of God's coming to us in human flesh, we are challenged to consider what it means for us to be created in God's image—to live out that image of God in the world.

What does it mean to be God's image in the world, but to be an example of the creator's intent for the original rainbow—to be a sign of God's promise to restore brokenness in the human family and the whole ecosystem. God's intent for creation, for each of us, is to be our unique and distinct self but to remember that the sign of God's covenant is the rainbow. The rainbow joined together in one bow, one arc, one human family that hurts and suffers when any other part of it is taken advantage of, abused, dominated, or killed. God's promise is an overarching promise. God placed a bow in the sky. And God sent God's own son to help us know and understand what it truly means to be human with one another as God was human with us. Go in God's promise and peace.

Close with prayer.

Invite participants to carry the covenant promises of God with them by remembering the water of their baptism.

Season of EPIPHANY



Session 4

Listening and Learning

This session should be scheduled approximately halfway between the last session in Advent and the next scheduled session in Lent.

An alternative session can be scheduled for participants to come together to view and discuss a video. Or if the group chose to read a common book, have participants come together for a book discussion.

Purpose

During this time together, participants will share their learnings and insights from their conversations with people of color, their readings, or viewing. They will be challenged to continue to stretch their comfort zones and to hear new voices in the remaining weeks.

Session Objectives

From this session, participants will be able to:

- Identify perspectives and view points that are different from what they had been taught.
- Express an appreciation for hearing the voices and perspectives of people of color.
- Continue to grow in their desire to broaden their search to hear and learn.
- Share reading and video lists that tell more of the story of the United States and its people.

Opening Devotion (15 minutes)

Invite people to remember the water of their baptism as you begin the session.

Song: WOV #651 "Shine, Jesus, Shine"

Reading: 1 Kings 19:9b-13

Questions for Reflection

- Would God have reason to ask, "What are you doing here, church? Why aren't you out in the community among my people?"
- What fears do we have that keep us from going out?
- What are the voices and noise that are clamoring for our attention?
- Which sounds do we need to hear?
- How do we come to hear what God is asking us to do and where God is calling us to go as a church?

Conclude with prayer.

Season of EPIPHANY

Session 4 *(continued)*

Welcome and Beginning (10 minutes)

Check in with participants. Invite them to share stories or new learnings of their cultural journeys as they gathered with family and friends during the Christmas season.

Sharing the Epiphany Journey (60 minutes)

Invite participants to share their experiences.

- Conversations with people of color—What have they heard and learned? How has the experience been for them? What feelings have they had? What have been the challenges? What gifts did they discover in people?
- Books they have read—What new insights, perspectives, or understanding were presented? How did that compare or contrast with their previous learnings?
- Videos they have viewed—What questions were raised for them? What new perspectives or insights did they come to?

Invite participants to share their excitement or appreciation for what they have learned or what they have come to see differently. What do they hope to continue to learn? How do they hope to continue to grow?

Invite participants to share fears, hesitations or concerns that they have encountered in themselves or others. What support do they need for their next steps?

Invite participants to share their plans for conversations, reading, or viewing in the remaining time. Be prepared to offer suggestions from the reading or video list based on the challenges and hopes they have expressed.

Assignment and Journaling

Encourage participants to continue to listen for the seldom heard voices in the next weeks. Encourage participants to continue to journal and to discern the places where God is calling them to go—despite their fears.

Closing (5 minutes)

Sing again WOV #651 “Shine, Jesus, Shine”

Close with prayer, including any special requests or needs. Invite them to carry a reminder of the water of baptism with them as they leave.

Season of LENT



Session 5

Searching for What is Lost

Purpose

This session helps participants explore the loss for White people living in a racist society. Participants will engage in the stories of the lost sheep and the lost coin from Luke 15 and will explore the meaning of the texts through the lens of racism. Participants will be introduced to the concept of individualism as a White cultural value and will explore the resulting loss of human community.

Session Objectives

From this session, participants will be able to:

- Read Scripture through a different lens to find new meaning.
- Articulate what they have lost as a result of being “White.”
- Understand individualism as a cultural value and the tension it creates for human community.

Opening Devotion (10 minutes)

Invite participants to remember the water of their baptism as you begin the session.

Often when we look at racism, we can identify how racism hurts people of color. We don't often see how it hurts White people. This session will focus on what we as White people have lost because of racism. The parables of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin will guide us in our search. The season of Lent will be a time of searching for where we have strayed from God's wider community.

Song WOV #734 “Softly and Tenderly Jesus Is Calling”

Reading: Luke 15:1-10

Invite participants to share any thoughts, feelings, or stories about being lost and how it felt to be found.

Sing stanza 1 of #734 as a prayer.

Welcome and Beginning (20 minutes)

As participants come back together after the season of Epiphany, invite each of the participants to share what they learned from their conversations, reading or viewing.

Ask them to share feelings about not having known about or learned these things earlier in life.

Review the schedule for the season of Lent, including meeting dates and an overview of each of the session themes and activities.

Season of LENT

Session 5 (continued)

The Lost One: Luke 15:1-10 – Parables of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin

Introduction and Readings (10 minutes)

Introduce the study for the season of Lent:

The season of Lent is a time of repentance. In Greek the word for repentance is metanoia—meaning to change, to turn away from and towards something; to give up and regain or restore that which was lost. Repentance means to literally turn around—to look at the direction one has been going and to turn around and walk in a new direction. During the season of Lent, we will look at the direction we have gone both as a country and as a church in race relations. We will take a long and hard look at what it has meant—both for ourselves and for people of color—for us as a people to have walked in this direction. We will struggle with the question of what has been lost through our history of domination in race relations, and we will struggle with the legacy of that loss. We will begin to ask how repentance can begin to help heal that which has been lost between the races—trust, mutual respect, gifts and talents, and so much more. We will look deeply into the wound of racism in order to excise the infection and stimulate healing from the inside out. It is not a process that will be completed in six weeks; rather, we embark on this path as a life-long journey of repentance, coming always to deeper and deeper healing.

In his book *The Hidden Wound* (1989), Wendell Berry gives us powerful words with which to embark on this journey:

... I have been unwilling until now to open in myself what I have known all along to be a wound—a historical wound, prepared centuries ago to come alive in me at my birth like a hereditary disease, and to be augmented and deepened by my life. If I had thought it was only the black people who have suffered from the years of slavery and racism, then I could have dealt fully with the matter long ago: I could have filled myself with pity for them, and would no doubt have enjoyed it a great deal and thought highly of myself. But I am sure it is not so simple as that. If white people have suffered less obviously from racism than black people, they have nevertheless suffered greatly; the cost has been greater perhaps than we can yet know. If the white man has inflicted the wound of racism upon black men, the cost has been that he would receive the mirror image of that wound into himself. As the master, or as a member of the dominant race, he has felt little compulsion to acknowledge it or speak of it; the more painful it has grown the more deeply he has hidden it within himself. But the wound is there, and it is a profound disorder, as great a damage in his mind as it is in his society.

This wound is in me, as complex and deep in my flesh as blood and nerves. I have borne it all my life, with varying degrees of consciousness, but always carefully, always with the most delicate consideration for the pain I would feel if I were somehow forced to acknowledge it. But now I am increasingly aware of the opposite compulsion. I want to know, as fully and exactly as I can, what the wound is and how much I am suffering from it. And I want to be cured; I want to be free of the wound myself, and I do not want to pass it on to my children.

Excerpt from *The Hidden Wound*, by Wendell Berry. Copyright © 1989 by Wendell Berry. Reprinted by permission of North Point Press, a division of Farrar, Straus and Giroux. LLC

Give participants some moments of silence to reflect on the reading.

In light of the words of Wendell Berry, invite them to again listen to the Parables of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin. As they listen, have them keep in mind the context of these parables in the Gospel of Luke. In the preceding chapters 13 and 14, the parables and actions of Jesus focus on reversing the images of the



realm of God and who will be invited into God's reign. Invite them to listen with new ears. Where do they see themselves as White people in the parable? Who is it that is lost?

Read Luke 15:1-10 pausing between the reading of the two parables.

Small Group Discussion (20 minutes)

Ask participants to count off to form groups of four to discuss the reading and text.

- How did you experience and feel the sense of loss in these parables?
- With whom or what have you normally identified in this text? Did you identify any differently in this reading today?
- Who do you see as being lost from the larger community and at what consequence to the community?
- What would it mean to you if White people are the ones who are lost?
- The "Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity and Culture" Social Statement identifies effects and losses on White people because of racism. What have you lost because of racism?
- In the parables, and in life, what does it take for discovery and restoration to occur?

Large Group Feedback (15 minutes)

- Invite each group to share their thoughts and insights with the larger group.
- What meaning or insights do these parables bring to an understanding of what it means to be White?
- What feelings or thoughts do you have about thinking of yourself as a part of a group identified as being White?

The Lost One—Searching for Community

In most cases, the concept of thinking of oneself as part of a White group will be new to most participants. In order to build awareness of being White, engage participants in the following exercise.

"Whiteness" Exercise (15 minutes)

Ask participants to move into groups of three. In their small groups, tell them that one at a time they will each speak to the question, "When are you White?" They will each have two minutes, and you will call time at the end of each two-minute segment. Tell them that silence is OK. The two people who are listening can only fill the silence by repeating the question, "When are you White?"

When the time is complete, ask participants to take five minutes to process the exercise with each other in their group. What was it like to be asked that question? (i.e., Was it easy or difficult to respond? What feelings did you have?) What did you notice or learn?

As a large group, ask for feedback to the exercise. Ask people to indicate how often they have thought about this question and their level of awareness of being White every day.

Season of LENT

Session 5 (continued)

Background

Present the following background:

Most of us have spent little time thinking of ourselves as being White. As Robert Terry has said, “Being White in America is never having to think about it.” For the most part, we grow up in the United States surrounded by images of Whiteness, reading about history from a White perspective, reading White authors, dealing with White people as the people in authority, and functioning with cultural norms that are based in western, European heritage. Our life is seen as normal and we generally do not wake up everyday looking at the color of our skin and having to prepare ourselves for how we will be treated because of our skin color. Peggy McIntosh speaks of our ability to be oblivious to our skin color—and all of the other advantages we receive—as White privilege. She talks about an invisible knapsack that we walk around with constantly. We did not ask for and we may not want it, but we have it. It is unearned and is simply given to us at birth. We may have other factors that work against us by virtue of gender, economic class, age, physical ability, or sexual orientation, but in our daily lives, the institutional systems that govern our lives are led by White people and are set up with White people in mind.

We tend, as White people, to see ourselves as individuals, rather than as members of a group. We describe ourselves as members of the human race, rather than as members of the White race. We see others as racial beings, and describe them as such, but we do not see ourselves or describe ourselves as White racial beings. We tend to group people of American Indian and Alaskan Native, African, Asian, Latin and Arab/Middle Eastern heritages as “multicultural,” but do not include ourselves as White people as one equal part of that multicultural mix. Our temptation is to define others and assign group characteristics, but to see and define ourselves as individuals.

Small Group Discussion (10 minutes)

Ask participants to again gather in their small groups.

- Reflect again on the question, “When are you White?”
- How important was identification of yourself as a part of a race of people in your growing up?
- Is race a usual part of your self-identification and introduction to others? Why or why not?
- Share your feelings about being identified as a part of “White people.”

Large Group Feedback (15 minutes)

- Ask participants how they are feeling.
- What are the questions, challenges, and struggles of dealing with being part of a White group?
- In the existence of racism, what is the loss for us as White people?
- Invite each person to share one thing they are thinking or feeling as result of this session.



Assignment and Journaling

Hand out the article “White Spaces” by Tobin Miller Shearer. Ask them to read the article before the next session.

Remind participants to continue to journal. Invite them to reflect in their journal on what it means to be part of a White group and the loss they experience because of being White.

Closing (5 minutes)

Read Luke 15:1-7.

Sing WOV #734 “Softly and Tenderly Jesus Is Calling.”

Close with prayer.

Invite participants to carry a reminder of the water of their baptism with them on their forehead.

Season of LENT

Session 6

Entering the Story of the United States

Purpose

In this session participants will explore the timeline of United States history, noting the dates and events that manifest systemic racism. Involvement in the shaping of the timeline will help participants grow in their awareness and understanding of White dominance.

Session Objectives

From this session, participants will be able to:

- Name events in United States history that were acts of oppression toward people of color.
- Articulate the pervasiveness of White dominance throughout United States history.
- Understand the definition of racism as a structural and systemic concept.
- Express feelings related to the history that was learned and the history that was not taught.

Opening Devotion (15 minutes)

Invite participants to remember the water of their baptism as you begin the session.

Remind participants of the “lost parables” from the previous session. The song recalls the wanderings of the lost son and asks for God’s presence in our own wanderings.

Song: WOV #733 “Our Father, We Have Wandered”

Reading: Paragraphs 2-6 in the article “White Spaces.”

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Reflection Invite participants to share new or deepened understandings of how knowing who we are as White people might bring us nearer to the realm of God. Recall Tobin Shearer’s White spaces of isolation, control, loss, and loathing. How have participants experienced those places? What new meaning or insight did this article bring to understanding the cost of racism for White people?

Conclude with prayer.



Welcome and Beginning (5 minutes)

Check in with participants. Ask for other questions or thoughts that were not shared during the opening reflection.

Unpacking the Timeline of the United States

Background (20 minutes)

Call the attention of the group to the river that was created in session 3. State that the purpose of this session is to more fully understand the intersection of the people who have come to live in the current borders of the United States. It is also designed to more deeply understand the impact of the teaching of our history as a country. State that together you will develop a timeline of the United States within the river. In a later session, you will add the timeline of the Lutheran church or other denominational churches.

- Point to the stream of the red crepe paper. As a group, collectively recall the early history of North America prior to 1492. Address questions, such as: When did people first move into this land? Who were the people who lived here? What languages did they speak? How did their cultural traditions vary across the land from east to west? Who were the leaders of the peoples? What role did spirituality play in their lives? What were their forms of government? What were their forms of agriculture and commerce? How did those vary across the land from ocean to ocean? What knowledge and gifts did they have as a people?
- Talk about the ability or inability to answer those questions. Compare the ability to answer those questions about North America to the ability to answer those same questions about Europe over that same time frame.
- Point to the tributaries of black, yellow, brown, and orange on your river. Collectively share the stories and histories of Africans, Asians, Latinos and Arab/Middle Easterners. What was the story of the lands from which they came? When did they come to this land? How did they come?
- Noting the five streams of people coming into this land after 1492, whose history do you know best? Why?
- What is the meaning of being an “American” and not knowing the history of this land and its indigenous people?
- What does it mean to be “American” for people of American Indian/Alaskan Native, African, Latino, Asian, and Arab/Middle Easterner heritages? Whose history and stories are they taught in school?
- What does it mean that “America” was “discovered” in 1492? What meaning does that language convey about the place of White people in history?
- What is told of history in this land from 1492 to 1607? Whose story is told from that point on?

Read the following quotation from Howard Zinn’s *A People’s History of the United States* both as a summary to the above discussion and introduction to the work on the timeline.

When the Pilgrims came to New England they too were coming not to vacant land but to territory inhabited by tribes of Indians. The governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, John Winthrop, created the excuse to take Indian land by declaring the area legally a “vacuum.” The Indians, he said, had not “subdued” the land, and therefore had only a “natural” right to it, but not a “civil right.” A “natural right” did not have legal standing.

Season of LENT

Session 6 (continued)

The Puritans also appealed to the Bible, Psalm 2:8: "Ask of me, and I shall give thee, the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." And to justify their use of force to take the land, they cited Romans 13:2: "Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation" (pp. 13-14).

From *A People's History of the United States: 1492-Present*, by Howard Zinn, © 1995, 1999, 2003 Howard Zinn. Published by HarperCollins Publishers, Inc. Used by permission of the author.

Small Group Discussion: Shaping the Timeline (25 minutes)

Divide into four small groups. Assign each of the groups a section of time:

1. 1607-1787
2. 1788-1864
3. 1865-1920
4. 1921-Present

Ask each group to:

- Review the preliminary list of dates.
- Brainstorm additional dates and events in their section of time.
- Read the sections from *A People's History of the United States* that apply to their section of years.
- Discuss the relationships of people of European, African, Asian, Latino, Arab/Middle Eastern and indigenous heritages during this period of time.
- Choose one event on the timeline and talk about that event using three questions that are helpful in reading an historical account: 1) Who is telling the story? 2) Who is actor and who is acted upon? 3) How is the story different from other stories about the same event, especially those stories told by people who "lost"?
- Put their selected dates and events on the timeline or draw a symbol or symbols that depict this period of time.

Large Group Feedback (25 minutes)

- Ask each group to present their section of time, highlighting dates and events, perspectives in the telling of the story and relationships of people of different heritages.
- When the timeline is complete, ask participants what they see and their thoughts and feelings about what they see.
- How are the foundational attitudes expressed in Zinn's book reflected in the timeline?
- Who has determined and controlled the course and direction of the timeline and the telling of the story of United States history?

Small Group Discussion (15 minutes)

Ask participants to re-gather in small groups to reflect on what this timeline means for them.

- What have you lost in the traditional telling of United States history?
- Where is your own story lost in this telling of United States history?
- What has been the benefit of being White in the United States?
- How does the telling of the story shape and influence your understanding of the world and your place in it?



Large Group Feedback (5 minutes)

Invite each small group to share responses from their discussion.

Assignment and Journaling

Hand out the article “Understanding White Privilege” by Frances E. Kendall. Ask them to read the article before the next session.

Remind participants to continue to journal. Invite them to reflect on the experience of building the timeline and their thoughts and feelings as they reflect on the meaning and impact of the timeline in their own lives.

Closing (10 minutes)

Invite each person to share what they learned, appreciated, or see differently as a result of this session.

Close with prayer, lifting up struggles, concerns, and new learnings that were expressed.

Invite participants to remember their baptism as they leave.

Season of LENT

Session 7

Examining Attitudes of Privilege

Purpose

It is difficult to deal with issues of White privilege and to change deeply socialized attitudes and ways of being. In this session participants will examine Jesus' own struggles with issues of privilege and will explore their own place within a privileged system.

Session Objectives

From this session, participants will be able to:

- Define racism and social dominance as a structural paradigm.
- See their own struggles with privilege within the context of Jesus' struggle with privilege.
- Understand the tension between the feelings of anger, guilt, and shame and the need for responsibility.

Opening Devotion (15 minutes)

Invite participants to remember the water of their baptism as you begin the session.

Begin the session with an acknowledgement that the journey of becoming aware of unspoken privilege can be difficult. This is a spiritual journey that Jesus walks with us.

Song: WOV #660 "I Want Jesus to Walk with Me"

Ask participants, as they are comfortable, to close their eyes and enter into the story of the Canaanite woman. Invite them to visualize the events as they unfold and to listen for words or phrases that stick with them.

Reading: Matthew 15:21-28

Give some time of silence to reflect on the text. Ask participants to share words and phrases that they heard.

Invite the participants to share a time when they have asked Jesus to walk with them.

Invite the class to name any people who they would like to lift up in special prayer for Jesus' healing touch.

Conclude with prayer.



Welcome and Beginning (15 minutes)

Check in with participants. Ask for thoughts, feelings, or questions related to the assigned reading. If individuals are struggling with issues that will be dealt with in this session, invite them to continue to listen and wrestle with those issues. Affirm participants for their questions and struggles. Acknowledge the painful work that this journey requires and call attention again to the struggle that even Jesus had in recognizing and changing the perspectives he had been taught. State that the system of dominance has been put in place over a long period of time and that we have been carefully taught our place within that system. Recognizing the system and how we have been set up within it, and unlearning our role is a difficult and painful process. As people of faith, we know that Jesus walks with us in the journey and brings us healing.

Social Dominance and Privilege In Jesus' Story and Ours

Jesus and the Canaanite Woman: Matthew 15:21-28 (30 minutes)

Divide the group into three groups. Tell them that you will be reading the story of Matthew 15 a second time. This time, they will listen and respond as one of the people in the story. Ask them to listen and participate in the story from that person's perspective. After the reading, they will be talking with one another from the first person perspective of their assigned person.

- Group one listen as Jesus' disciples
- Group two listen as the Canaanite woman
- Group three listen as Jesus

Reading: Matthew 15:21-28. Invite participants to follow in their Bibles.

Within the small groups, talk about your experience within the story:

- How do you see yourself?
- How do you see yourself in relationship to the others in the story?
- What feelings and reactions do you have to what is happening?

Gather as a large group and invite the three small groups to talk to one another from their perspective in the story, using the first person when they speak. It's okay if they have differing perspectives within their collective identity.

When the conversation seems to be losing its intensity, invite participants to step out of their characters and back into the circle of the group.

- Ask for feedback on the conversation.
- What did you notice about the attitudes and interactions?
- What feelings did you have as your person in the story?
- Did you feel any conflicts or tensions within yourself? If so, what were they?
- What meaning or insights did you have as the conversation played out?

Season of LENT

Session 7 (continued)

Use the commentary on Matthew 15 as a reference. Hand out the commentary for participants to take home and to reflect on during the week.

When one looks at this text through the lens of White privilege what an amazing revelation this is! It has much to say about Jesus and his humanity, his attitude toward this Gentile woman, the courage and intentionality of this woman, and the implications this has upon our church in dealing (or not dealing) with our own privilege (personally and institutionally). This text has much to say about privilege, the application of it, and how it was challenged—all of which from the first century is applicable to us in the 21st century. It goes without saying that the Jews of Jesus' day had a definite underlying belief that they were a privileged people, e.g., God's chosen people, and that belief had an affect on their relationships with other races. As we enter this text we get the sense that Jesus would really rather not deal with this Gentile woman. First, he does not respond to her. Second, he reiterates that his mission is primarily to the "house of Israel," and third, he makes a clear racial preference for the Jews versus the Gentiles, or "the other" (children and dogs, vs.26).

I am not saying that the main point of this text is that Jesus "had not gotten it" about his own privilege and that after this brief exchange with the woman from Syrophoenicia he all of a sudden got it about the shortfalls of his own privilege. I am saying that this exchange between Jesus and the Gentile woman is an example and opportunity that Scripture provides for us as the ELCA to be open, to be vulnerable, to be challenged, and to be willing to look at and discuss White privilege and its daily operation in our lives, in our church, and in our society. I do believe that Matthew's main point to his intended readers, the newly forming Christian community of the latter part of the first century, is that the Gentiles—of whatever race, country, or culture—were to be a part of this new community of believers.

Christendom confesses Jesus as fully God and fully human. As to the human part the Church confesses that Jesus was fully human, but without sin. It is not a new theological thought to say that Jesus as he lived his life out on earth was to some degree coming to a clearer understanding of who he was—from his first Passover visit to Jerusalem with Joseph and Mary to his going to the cross. Just as Jesus did not want to deal with this Gentile woman, so too, we as the dominant racial group in the ELCA and in society do not want to deal with the voice(s) calling us and challenging us to look at why we are still 97 percent White in a society that is less than 70 percent White. The voices are calling us and challenging us to seriously look at what White privilege is, how it affects us as White people, and affects our relationship to communities of color in our local communities and society. It was the persistent voice of this courageous Gentile woman that called to Jesus saying that "the other people" (the dogs, vs.26) belong to the masters and should be able to receive food from their table. Though we may not have "the other people" kneeling in front of us, I believe in many instances we do have people knocking on our church doors asking for assistance, or speaking in our local communities calling for justice, calling for allies to work for justice. We are called in this text to consider what has been and is our response to these voices/knocks at the door. How do our privilege and our stereotypes of "the other" affect the way we respond? Are we open, vulnerable, and willing to listen? Or, do we respond like the disciples—send them away to someone else (vs.23)? Or, are we resistant and wanting to avoid and not interact as Jesus did (vss.23 & 24)?

One of the key lessons from the text for members of the ELCA and other predominantly White denominations is that Jesus was in the end willing to sit down "eyeball to eyeball, heart to heart" with his neighbor who was different from him in culture, country, and religion. When we do that in our settings we begin to listen to the story of others, their version of history, their version of how things happened in this country, why events happened the way they did, and who benefited from all that and who continues to benefit. Our goal for this church is that we (as the White people in it) be as courageous and intentional



in being open to looking at and dealing with our privilege and its affects as this Syrophoenician woman was in calling Jesus to see her for who she was a fellow child of God and not a member of “those other people.”

Our Story of White Privilege (10 minutes)

As we have already seen, in the ELCA Social Statement, “Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity and Culture,” racism is defined as racial prejudice + institutional power + White privilege. All people have racial prejudices, but the strength in racism is the institutional power that reinforces the position of one social group over others, and the privilege, which that affords. It is helpful to look at that definition in light of the United States timeline and to understand racism as an institutional system of White dominance. It is not about us as individuals, but about us as a collective. When we see ourselves as White people separate from this reality, we try to discount our privilege because of our social class, gender, age, etc. The hard reality—and painful reality—is that we cannot separate ourselves from this story. It is our story collectively of all people in this country. I did not own slaves, but I am part of the story of a people whose history together is built on White dominance. And for my own healing, I need to understand and own that story in order to build a new White identity that can work with others to find a new place in the story.

Gary Howard in his book We Can’t Teach What We Don’t Know talks about the privilege that comes to us as a result of our collective identity of being White:

Many privileges have come to Whites simply because we are members of the dominant group: the privilege of having our voices heard, of not having to explain or defend our legitimate citizenship or identity, of seeing our images projected in a positive light, of remaining insulated from other people’s realities, of being represented in positions of power, and of being able to tell our own stories. These privileges are usually not earned and often not consciously acknowledged. That our privileged dominance often threatens the physical and cultural well being of other groups is a reality that Whites, for the most part, have chosen to ignore. The fact that we can choose to ignore such realities is perhaps our most insidious privilege (p. 62).

Seeing ourselves as a member of a group benefiting from privilege is a challenge for many of us who are White. We have been trained and conditioned to see and define ourselves as individuals, not as a group of people. Defining ourselves apart from “those other White people” allows us to see others as racist but not to see ourselves as racist. It is a painful journey.

In her book Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? And Other Conversations About Race, Beverly Daniel Tatum addresses this struggle:

The view of oneself as an individual is very compatible with the dominant ideology of rugged individualism and the American myth of meritocracy. Understanding racism as a system of advantage that structurally benefits Whites and disadvantages people of color on the basis of group membership threatens not only beliefs about society but also beliefs about one’s own life accomplishments . . . If viewing oneself as a group member threatens one’s self-definition, making the paradigm shift from individual to group member will be painful (p. 103).

Based on the article by Frances Kendall and these readings, let’s talk about White privilege.

Season of LENT

Session 7 (continued)

Small Group Discussion (25 minutes)

Gather into groups of four for discussion:

- How do you see yourself within a collective White identity? What is hard about seeing yourself as part of a White group?
- Name privileges you experience every day because you are White.
- In what ways have you tried to distance yourself or see yourself as separate from other White people?
- What does it mean to you to own an identity of yourself as a member of the White collective?
- How would you explain the reality of White privilege to someone outside this group?

Large Group Feedback (15 minutes)

- Ask each small group to share thoughts, feelings and comments on the questions.
- What messages have you received from the larger society of what your role is to be as a White person?

Assignment and Journaling

Hand out the readings by the Rev. Clemonce Sabourin, Vine Deloria, Jr. and José Miguel de Jesús. Ask participants to read and reflect on these readings prior to the next session. Invite them to note how the writers see White attitudes and values expressed in the church.

Invite participants to journal on their thoughts and feelings related to who they are as a White person and their place of privilege within a system of White racism.

Closing (10 minutes)

Invite each person to share a word or thought of their feelings or struggles from this session.

The journey of Lent is a hard journey as we are called to turn around. It would be so easy to give up. Looking at who we are and how we have been separated from God's beloved community is hard work. Jesus knows the depth of struggle, and promised to be with us.

Close with prayer, asking for Jesus, who knows our struggle, to walk with us and strengthen us for the journey. Pray that we may continue to be vigilant in this work.

Invite participants to leave with a reminder of the water of baptism.

Season of LENT



Session 8

Entering the Story of the Church

Purpose

Despite God's vision and God's call to be one, the church has historically been a part of the system of oppression and dominance. In this session, participants will explore attitudes and beliefs that have supported the system of racism.

Session Objectives

From this session, participants will be able to:

- Honestly assess the history of the church in being and living as God's beloved community.
- Name ways in which the Bible has been misused to dominate and control people of color.
- Examine how Judeo-Christian values have been co-opted to support racism in the life of the church and United States society.

Opening Devotion (15 minutes)

Invite participants to remember the water of their baptism as you begin the session.

In the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, we read of Jesus' telling of the Parable of the Sower and The Seed. Some seed fell on the path and was eaten by birds; some fell on rocky soil and withered because it had no root; some fell among thorns and was choked out; and some fell on good soil and bore abundant grain. We pray that the words and challenges of this study will fall on good soil.

Song: WOV #713 "Lord, Let My Heart Be Good Soil"

After telling the people the parable, Jesus challenged his disciples to see and to hear.

Reading: Matthew 13:13-17

Reflection Questions:

- What has been challenging and difficult for you to hear in this study?
- What are the barriers that keep us from seeing and hearing a deeper truth about our history and our White dominance and privilege?
- What joys have you experienced or what new windows or doors do you see opening as you see and hear and learn?
- Where have we as a church had a dull heart, unhearing ears or unseeing eyes?

Conclude with prayer.

Season of LENT

Session 8 (continued)

Welcome and Beginning (5 minutes)

Check in with participants. Invite participants to share thoughts, questions, or concerns they may have.

Racism and the Role of the Church

Introduction (10 minutes)

State that this will be a difficult session as you work to name some hard truths of how the church has been an instrument in supporting, and even legitimizing racism and White dominance.

We have all been taught to cherish our faith, to hold fast to our traditions and to love our church. To confront central truths that we have been taught is not easy for any of us. What we have learned from our parents and grandparents' knees, from our Sunday school teachers and pastors is held near and dear to us. Those people never meant to lie to us, to deceive us, or to teach us untruths. The social reality of racism is that it is generational and has been passed down through the centuries; the teachings of the church have been co-opted to support it. If we are to find our healing among the nations and to live as God's beloved community, we need to enter the troubled waters and to look into its very depths to hear and see truth.

Stand at the beginning—the “headwaters” of the timeline—and ask participants to name things they were taught or that they have heard that reflect how the Bible has been misused against people or to support the attitudes and actions on the timeline. [Examples of what may be named are: Jews as Jesus killers; the curse of Ham; slaves be obedient to your masters; women keep silence in the church; the poor you will always have with you; God is on our side] If participants have difficulty beginning, give one or two examples.

When the sharing seems to be complete, say that you will add four concepts to the list (if they aren't already listed). State that these concepts are central to Judeo-Christian belief systems: dominion, chosen people, singleness of truth, and patriarchy.

Small Groups (20 minutes)

Ask participants to form groups of four. Ask them to discuss the power and effect of the things that were listed, including the four tenets of the Judeo-Christian worldview that you listed.

- Recall the words from Genesis 1:28, “...have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” How has “dominion” been used over the course of time in ways that are contrary to God's vision?
- How have the concepts of dominion, of being chosen, and of singleness of truth and divine sanction of patriarchy shaped how the people who held those concepts saw themselves?
- What effect have those concepts had on others? How are they played out in the timeline?
- Choose one or two other teachings that are listed and discuss their effect on the people who held them and on people outside of that group.
- How do those concepts and teachings continue to underlie actions and attitudes within our nation and our church?
- How were you taught these concepts? How have they shaped your worldview? What role have those teachings played in how you see yourself and others?



Large Group Feedback (25 minutes)

- Invite each group to share insights from their discussion.
- What thoughts and feelings have you had in moving through this discussion?
- How were these foundational attitudes and teachings of the White church addressed in the articles written by Miguel de Jesús, Vine Deloria, Jr. and the Rev. Clemonce Sabourin?
- How have those values served as barriers to people of color?
- What insights and understandings did their stories bring to your picture of what it means to be White and Christian?
- What does all of this mean for who we are as God's people and what we are called to do?

Unpacking the Timeline of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Note: The ELCA history may be found on the ELCA website. If your group is of another denominational background or includes people from various backgrounds, use timeline(s) from those denominations. Check the denomination's website or contact a regional or national office for the information.

Small Group Discussion (15 minutes)

Invite participants to gather in the same groups that they were in as they developed the timeline of the United States.

Assign them the same sections of time:

1. 1607-1787
2. 1788-1864
3. 1865-1920
4. 1921-Present

Ask each group to:

- Review the list of dates on the handout.
- Add other dates and events during this period of time as you recall them.
- How would you describe this period of time in Lutheran (your denomination's) history? What image could you create to visualize this time period?
- Discuss the relationships of people of European, American Indian/Alaskan Native, African, Asian, Latino, and Arab/Middle Eastern, heritages within the church during this period of time.
- How are the foundational values reflected in this timeline?
- Put selected dates and events on the timeline or draw a symbol or symbols to depict the events and feelings of the time.

Season of LENT

Session 8 *(continued)*

Large Group Feedback (20 minutes)

- Ask each group to present their section of time, highlighting dates, events, and relationships of people of different heritages.
- When the timeline is complete, ask participants what they see.
- How does the timeline of the church reflect the timeline of society?
- What message does the timeline convey of what it means to be Lutheran?
- Compare the timeline of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, including its “headwaters,” with the vision of the river of creation and God’s whole community.
- How is racism (defined as a mix of prejudice + power + privilege in the ELCA Social Statement) part of the fabric of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America? What attitudes are held about people of color (prejudice)? + Who holds the institutional power? + Whose culture and traditions are the norm (privilege)? [Note: Other denominations use your organization’s defined definition of racism.]

Assignment and Journaling

Encourage participants to take time this week to take a walk to reflect, to watch, and listen to people’s interactions, to notice words or actions that reflect the Judeo-Christian values and teachings that were named. Encourage them to take time to journal—to write, or otherwise record—what they notice and how they feel about all they have talked about.

Closing (10 minutes)

Reading: Matthew 13:13-17

Reflection: Invite each member of the group to share one thing they heard or saw in a new way in this session.

Close with prayer.

Invite participants to leave with a reminder of the water of their baptism.

Season of LENT



Session 9

Examining the Construction of Culture

Purpose

In this session participants will explore the story of the Good Samaritan. As they enter the roles of the various people in the story, they will examine the cultural attitudes and actions of those people. Participants will be introduced to the layers of White culture that reinforce and hold traditions and practices in place.

Session Objectives

From this session, participants will be able to:

- Talk about the people in the story of the Good Samaritan and find themselves in those roles.
- Unpack the cultural pyramid to understand White cultural norms and values that guide practices within the church.
- Begin to define what is needed to break the cycle of White dominance.

Opening Devotion (5 minutes)

Invite participants to remember the water of their baptism as you begin the session.

In our time together in this session, we will explore an old parable in a new way. The parable of the Good Samaritan is often shared as an example of our call to serve our neighbor. We will enter it again to listen for new insights and meaning. We begin in song with the tune of our neighbors in Ghana.

Song: WOV #765 "Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love"

Conclude with Prayer

Welcome and Beginning (5 minutes)

Check-in with the group. Invite participants to share thoughts, questions or concerns they may have. Invite them to share what they noticed or heard as they were alert for expressions of attitudes of dominance.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan: Luke 10:25-37

Enter the Text (15 minutes)

In the immediately preceding verses, Jesus blesses his disciples for seeing what they have seen and hearing what they have heard. In the parable, both the religious leaders and the Samaritan “see” the man in the ditch, but who really “sees” him? What messages is Jesus giving to his listeners then and to us today?

This parable is preceded by an exchange with a lawyer who wants to test Jesus. A lawyer in Jesus’ day was someone whose life work was the interpretation of the Law of Moses and its application in the contemporary setting of the people of Israel. His assumption is that for anyone to hope to have a part in the life of God’s people now and in the age to come, one must conform to the moral and ritual requirements laid down in the Law of Moses, but he wants to know what Jesus considers to be the most important of these.

Read Luke 10:25-29. Invite participants to follow in their own Bibles.

Assign characters to small groups and ask one person (or more where needed) from each small group to act out the text as it is read. Give a brief background of each of the characters.

TRAVELER: We have no identification of the traveler, but it seems to be assumed he is a Jew. The person is left for dead at the side of the road.

ROBBERS: Did the robbers see this as an easy way out to live off the well being of others? Was this their last resort for survival? No mention is made of their identity.

PRIEST: An Israelite who had been set apart from everyone else to serve God. A priest must be made clean, by washing and sacrifice, before he could take on his holy work. He is to avoid touching a corpse, unless it is that of a close relative, because death is linked with sin. Touching a corpse would make him ritually unclean and unable to perform his work in the Temple. A priest is to be both a teacher and a living example of God’s holy ways.

LEVITE: Also an Israelite, of the tribe of Levi, the priestly tribe. Within the tribe of Levi, different families and clans are responsible for caring for different parts of the tabernacle. Levites also need to be set apart through a special ceremony of washing and offering sacrifices. A Levite is to remain clean, to be pure in body and mind, to serve God in the tabernacle.

SAMARITAN: A person hated and despised by Jews. Samaritans were people from various races who came into the land of Samaria after Israel was defeated and its people were carried into captivity. Samaritans worshipped God according to the first five books of the Old Testament, but because of their mixed race and incomplete religion, the Jews regarded them as enemies and would go out of their way to avoid them.

INNKEEPER: No identification is made of the innkeeper’s background. The person is there to provide a service.



Set the stage for the story by creating a picture of the road. Jerusalem is on a ridge about 2,500 feet above sea level, and Jericho is about 1,200 feet below sea level, dropping approximately 3,700 feet in less than 20 miles. Most of this road passes through narrow, rocky, barren, uninhabited land, and so was a convenient place for robbers to attack travelers.

Ask the “actors” to take their places.

Read Luke 10:30-37, reading slowly and pausing as needed for the acting out of the story.

Invite the actors to take their seats and read the text a second time as participants listen.

Small Group Discussion (10 minutes)

In small groups enter the story from your character’s perspective:

- How did you see yourself in the story?
- How did you see others in the story?
- How did your view of yourself and of others guide your actions?
- What other factors helped to determine your actions?

Large Group Discussion (20 minutes)

- Ask each small group to present the story from their character’s perspective.
- With whom do you most identify in this parable? Why?
- How do you see prejudices, cultural practices, and institutional policies as factors in how this story is played out?
- Why did Jesus so specifically name the person who helped a “Samaritan”?
- Hearing this story from the perspective of the lawyer—who was trying to justify himself—what challenges might Jesus be laying before him?
- What challenges might Jesus be giving us through this story?
- Jesus knew that the lawyer, and the other Jews who were listening, likely would have found it too distasteful to identify with the Samaritan. Note that the lawyer cannot even say the name “Samaritan.” He responds to Jesus’ question of who is his neighbor with “The one who showed him mercy.” The listeners wouldn’t want to be like the Priest or Levite, so that leaves the hearer identifying with the man in the ditch. What does it mean to be the man in the ditch? What challenge does that raise in you? From whom do you need help for support and healing?

Unpacking Culture and the Church

Invite participants to describe White culture. Write their descriptions on newsprint as they name them. If it is difficult for the group to name White culture, ask why.

Present Levels of Racism and the Cultural Pyramid (15 minutes)

Hand out copies of Levels of Racism and the Cultural Pyramid. Walk participants through the chart of the levels at which racism expresses itself and into an understanding of the structure and depth of culture and how it is manifested in the church.

LEVELS OF RACISM:

We could dissect the definition of racism—prejudice + power + privilege—into the three levels in which racism plays itself out—individual + institutional + cultural. All three are part of a systemic whole. Note how the chart presents them as interwoven and inseparable. Each of us as individuals holds prejudices about people of other groups. We can each work to change our prejudices by getting to know people from those groups, broadening our experiences, etc. That is an important part of our work, but that in itself will not overcome racism.

Both the church and society have worked to address the institutional level. The civil rights movement brought new laws for voting and banning visible barriers of separation, but these laws have done little to change the institutional systems. The ELCA wrote representational principles into its governance documents to be a church that includes people of color and language other than English, but the face of the church has changed little in fifteen years. Issues of power are central to holding institutions in place. Without a change in who holds the power, who makes the decisions, who controls the resources, institutions of health care, education, employment, finance, government, media, religion, etc, will not change. White institutional control holds racism in place and ensures that White people will benefit most from the decisions that are made.

The third link, cultural racism, encompasses all the values, belief systems, ways of thinking and interacting, and ways of doing things that define the norm for all people. Because White people hold the power in the institutions in this society and our church, White people never have to think about being White. Indeed, I have never been asked, “And how long have you been Lutheran?” As long as those who benefit from the system, live quietly within the system, do not question the powers of authority, and do not challenge the belief systems and norms that hold it in place, racism will survive and thrive. As long as we recognize or even envy after the cultures of others, but don’t think that we as White people have a culture, racism will be alive and well. No one can live apart from culture. Culture is the stuff of life. It defines when and how we get up in the morning, how we interact, how we cook and what we eat, how we describe the world and our place in it. Culture is central to our being. As White people, we have difficulty seeing ourselves as cultural people because our culture is like the air we breathe. As long as we do not recognize our culture for what it is, as one culture among many, we live and act out of our position of dominance and will not be able to be an authentic part of a multicultural world.

CULTURAL PYRAMID: (You may wish to draw a pyramid on newsprint of What, How and Why.)

The cultural pyramid helps us unpack the layers that hold our White way of life in place. It is a pyramid or iceberg that lies deep beneath the surface. Often we bump against one another even before we physically meet and can never come together because the bottom stuff gets in the way. Most often when we talk about culture, we focus on those things that are listed at the top of the pyramid. They are the outward manifestations of culture. They are the stuff of ethnic festivals and ethnic potluck gatherings. They are the



music, clothing, dance, jewelry, and art that are often used to define groups. When we come to better know a culture, we move to an understanding of how people live in relationship with one another; how they interact and celebrate, how they view and treat authority; how they communicate and handle emotions. It involves a comfort level of being able to function without having to think about it.

When we become immersed in a culture, we know its foundational values and belief systems that give rise to all the how's and what's of culture. We understand why life is as it is.

We will build the pyramid back up to see how White foundational values and norms define our life together.

At the "headwaters" of the timeline we listed White cultural values and foundational beliefs that included dominion, chosenness, singleness of truth and divine sanction of patriarchy. In an earlier session, we defined individualism as central to a White way of life. Those are values that shape us and mold us. Not every culture or group of people holds those same foundational values. None of the values are right or wrong. We are not judging values or rating them. We are working to recognize White cultural values as values that exist and help to form our lives.

The continuum reflects a range of where value may be placed within a culture.

- Within White United States culture, valuing singleness of truth means that someone can know and hold the truth. It can be written down and passed on and we can go to books and libraries and even the internet as sources of information. When it's written, it must be true. When some people speak, we know it's the last word.*
- The emphasis on individualism is lived out in hierarchies and making it on one's own. It is manifested in achieving individual grades in school and in suits and uniforms so we know whether we're talking to the custodian, hotel desk clerk or the CEO or manager.*
- In White society, we value linear ways of thinking and doing things, we move from left to right; we know the order in which to complete tasks; we know that we progress through the grades in a set order of learning. We follow an agenda.*
- In White United States society and institutions, the mind is highly valued. We need to think things out, to be able to explain and get our minds around it. We look somewhat suspect at decisions that are made just because it feels right. We carefully guard our emotions and are taught not to let our feelings show. We put our music into notes on a page and follow the script. We don't want to move to the music in church or say "Amen" in the middle of a sermon.*
- A White value is expressed in "Time is money." Because time is given monetary value, we don't want to waste time. We structure our time together, set a beginning and ending time, and don't want church to last more than an hour. We don't want to arrive too early and have a meeting last too long. We eat fast and move fast.*

Culture is deep. It shapes who we are, how we see the world, how we set up our institutions, and how we get through each day. It is important to say again, that none of these cultural values or ways of doing things is bad. What is important is that we recognize our culture and our ways of being as one way, and not the only way. When we see and recognize our culture as our culture, then we can also see and recognize other cultures as having meaning, and that there may be more than one way of defining things and more than one way of doing things. And none of them is wrong in and of themselves, some just may be more valued by one group than by another.

Season of LENT

Session 9 *(continued)*

Small Group Discussion (20 minutes)

Form groups of four. Invite participants to use the cultural pyramid as a reference in the discussion.

- How do you benefit from being White in the church?
- How do you see the White cultural norms and values shaping the way things are done?
- Talk about a tradition in your congregation—the time of services, the order of worship, the type of music, the programs of evangelism or education, etc.—and explore why that tradition is important. What is its value base?
- Physically or mentally walk through a part of the church building. What images greet people? What messages are conveyed of the culture that defines this place?
- Name a cultural value that is important to you. Talk about your struggle when that value comes up against someone else's value, e.g. the use of time, order of decision-making, etc. What would it take for you to give up that value as definitive?

Large Group Feedback (20 minutes)

- Invite responses to each of the small group questions.
- Read paragraphs 2-4, pages 15-16, "A Time to Take Culture Seriously" in the ELCA Social Statement.
- What will it take to move beyond assimilation and truly welcome other cultural norms and values and ways of doing things as part of the church?
- What does the parable of the Good Samaritan mean to you now?

Assignment and Journaling

Ask participants to notice the culture of their local congregation this week. Notice how time is viewed and used; how people think and communicate; how people make decisions within groups. Notice also the pictures on the walls and expressions of words and music. Encourage them to record what they see differently and to note their feelings and thoughts in their journals.

Closing (10 minutes)

Invite participants to take a moment of silence and reflection to be in touch with what they are feeling and to center themselves in God's presence. Invite them to prepare to lift their feelings, thoughts or concerns to God in prayer. Ask each person to end their petition with the words, "God, hear my prayer."

Use WOV #775 "Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying" as response to each prayer petition.

Begin the time of prayer by singing the song twice.

Invite participants to remember their baptism as they leave.

Season of LENT



Session 10

Entering My Story of Privilege

Purpose

This session will explore the personal impact of racism by helping participants examine their own legacy of privilege. The work of repentance, of turning around, is to know and understand racism as institutional, cultural, and personal. The final work of repentance is to see the sin of racism within oneself and to know the need for healing.

Session Objectives

From this session, participants will be able to:

- Examine the effects of racism in the chains of privilege in their own lives.
- Understand White privilege as a historical and generational reality of racism.
- Name the sin of racism, the need for repentance, and the work for healing.
- Celebrate the ways in which people of faith have walked the path of resistance.

Opening Devotion (10 minutes)

Invite people to remember the water of their baptism as you begin the session.

The journey of confronting racism is hard and the work is tiring. We can be tempted to see racism in others and overlook its presence and reality in our own lives. Our reading challenges us to first look at ourselves. Our song is a prayer for God to be with us through the journey.

Reading: Luke 6:39-42

Song: WOV #731 "Precious Lord, Take My Hand"

Racism, as we have seen, is institutional. It's woven into the fabric and history of our country. Racism is cultural. We've seen how deeply it is part of our value system and determines how and why we do things. Racism is also personal. Each of us is part of the systemic whole and each of us is implicated in the system of racism. It is far easier to find racism in others, than to see it and own it in ourselves. In 1970, in his book For Whites Only, Robert Terry wrote about the challenge for us as White people.

For most white Americans, the orientation used to interpret the racial situation has not understood whites to be the problem. We have been taught that America was the great melting pot and any blockage of blacks from entering the mainstream was not white unwillingness but black inability. Our old white orientation interprets blacks, not whites, as the problem To shift the whole issue around, to understand whites as the basic problem, is to change consciousness radically (p. 25).

Season of LENT

Session 10 *(continued)*

Changing consciousness, turning around in our thinking and acting is the work of repentance. It means owning our own sin and committing ourselves to the hard daily work of living in new ways. In this session, we will seek to examine the log of racism in our own eyes so that we can turn around toward healing and new life in the community of God's people.

Conclude with prayer.

Welcome and Beginning (10 minutes)

Check in with participants. Ask participants to share what they noticed about the culture of their congregation or the community during this past week. Invite them to share examples of White culture that they noticed. How did they feel about what they noticed?

Unpacking the Personal Legacy of Racism—Chains of White Privilege

Introduction (5 minutes)

Lift up for participants the difficulty that we, as White people, have in recognizing and owning our own racism. We fear being called a racist. We become defensive when racism is raised as an issue and want to find other causes for a problem. We want to point to “those White people” as racist, but not ourselves. Share your own story or confession. You may use the following as an example in introducing the “chains of White privilege” with your own story.

For my own healing, I have needed to see my own racism. I heard messages and stereotypes about people of color. I was raised with pictures of a White Jesus and White disciples and accepted it as fact. I learned about White heroes and White civilizers of the world. I learned about White people as scientists, inventors, mathematicians, authors, and composers. I was taught that the world was open to me, if I just worked hard enough. I wasn't taught how to “act my place” in order to be safe and survive. Racism is deeply personal. It is part of my life everyday. The privileges surround me in daily life. I didn't earn the right not to be followed around in stores. I didn't earn the right to have band-aids match my flesh color. I didn't earn the right to have people in authority in government, education, business, and finance look like me and act like me. All of these just simply are. I learned to take all of these things for granted. Because I learned racism, I can also work at unlearning it. But it will take the rest of my life.

Too often I hear in myself—and in others—that I'm not a racist. I'm not privileged. After all, I grew up on a farm. We had few resources. I was poorer than most of the young people in my high school. I had to sew my own clothes. We never went out to eat or went on vacation. I haven't had advantages. I have had to work hard for everything I have. But then I have to look hard at the log in my own eye. I have to get on my knees and repent. I have to look at the chains of privilege and know that I am White. I benefit. I am privileged.

My privileges trace back through parents who had enough resources so that I could get a loan to go to college, back to my grandfather being able to buy a second farm so my father, the third son, would have a place to farm, back to my ancestors five generations ago being able to buy land and build their own church and speak their own language when they arrived in this country, back to the freedom my ancestors had in 1843 to choose to leave Pomerania, a former area of Germany, in order to be free to practice their Lutheran religion and have their own schools.



Privilege runs deep. As a White person, I can't escape it. I am chained to racism by my privilege. My turning around—my healing—lies in seeing it and knowing it and then working everyday to dismantle the system that set it up.

Building the Chain of Privilege (40 minutes)

Tell participants that they will have the next 40 minutes to work individually in their own act of repentance in naming and owning their own chain of privilege. Ask participants to look at the instructions for building their chain of privilege. Review the instructions and answer any questions participants may have. Assign groups of four before breaking up individually.

- Consider who you are today and your location in all factors of life; your employment, education, housing, transportation, community, entertainment and travel opportunities, family, friends, and social groups.
- How has your life today been shaped by people, places, and events that preceded you? For example, how did you reach your level of education; who paid for it, what resources were available to you, how were you given information or access to resources, how were those resources shaped or put in place by previous generations? How have you been able to live where you do; to get the job you have; to be able to travel where you will; etc.
- Using the paper links, create a paper chain that shares the story of your legacy of access or stream of opportunity that brought you to where you are today.

Small Group Discussion (35 minutes)

In your group of four, share the story of your chain of privilege.

Large Group Discussion (20 minutes)

- What thoughts and feelings did you have as you worked on your chain?
- What new meanings, insights, or understanding did you experience?
- How has being White shaped your experience and reality?
- What have you lost because of racism?
- What does it mean to you to repent of racism?

Season of LENT

Session 10 *(continued)*

Closing (15 minutes)

Introduce the closing by reminding participants that we are not alone on this journey.

Many have gone before us in working against racism, and because of our work, we may help others who come after us. As a church we have acknowledged our sin of being swept up within the system of racism, but people of God have always been resisters against oppression. People like Bartolomé de Las Casas, a contemporary of Columbus who struggled to improve treatment of the Arawak people; Levi and Catherine Coffin who helped over 2000 slaves to freedom on the Underground Railroad, William Lloyd Garrison, an abolitionist writer, John Brown, who led a raid on a federal arsenal to undermine slavery, the Rev. Andrew Schulze who brought Lutherans together to stand against racism through the Lutheran Human Relations Association, the Rev. James Reeb, a Unitarian clergyman killed during the Civil Rights Movement in 1965. These people and so many, many more have also framed and shaped us. They give us a model of what it means to live fully aware of racism and acting against it. They are White people who gave us a model for resistance and for healing.

Invite participants to remember those people who helped to bring them to this place with the courage and conviction to name and confront the truth and to work for healing. Invite them to recall their names and faces as they listen to the reading from Hebrews.

Reading: Hebrews 12:1-3.

Invite participants to come forward to the timeline and to add the name of one or two people who were important in their own lives in breaking down barriers and working for justice. Remind the group that we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses who have troubled the waters for the healing of the nations. We follow in their steps. In closing, invite each person in the group to share one thought or feeling they will carry with them into Holy Week and Easter.

Conclude with prayer.

Assignment and Journaling

Encourage participants to continue to journal on their thoughts and feelings. Invite them to set aside time during Holy Week for silence and reflection.

Invite them to leave with a reminder of the water of their baptism.

Season of EASTER Session 11



Entering the Healing Waters

Purpose

This session will invite participants to enter into the healing process. Using the biblical story of Naaman, participants will explore the process of healing, and will come to understand the process of healing as a lifelong journey that requires coming back to the river many times.

Session Objectives

From this session, participants will be able to:

- Apply the story of Naaman to their own lives and their search for healing from racism.
- Experience a sense of both the anticipation and the fear of “entering the river” for healing.
- See the story of Naaman entering the river seven times as a metaphor for the lifelong journey of working against racism.

Opening Devotion (10 minutes)

Invite participants to remember the water of their baptism as you begin the session.

As we begin the sessions of the Season of Easter, we come as resurrection people filled with the hope of gathering at the river envisioned in Revelation. We look for the healing power of the water of life.

Song: WOV #690 “Shall We Gather at the River”

Reading: Revelation 22:1-2

Reflection Questions:

- What thoughts and feelings did you have as you walked through Holy Week and celebrated Christ’s resurrection?
- What meaning do these verses from Revelation have for you now?
- What thoughts and feelings did you have as we sang “Shall We Gather at the River”?
- What words of hope do you bring to this phase of our study?

Conclude with Prayer

Season of EASTER

Session 11 *(continued)*

Welcome and Beginning (10 minutes)

Check in with participants. Invite additional comments and thoughts, observations or insights that participants would like to share.

Review the schedule for the Season of Easter, calling attention again to the times and dates for meeting. Invite any questions participants may have.

The Healing of Naaman

Introduction (15 minutes)

Acknowledge the work of Jody Miller Shearer in his book *Enter the River: Healing Steps from White Privilege Toward Racial Reconciliation*. Words from Shearer's book introduced the image of the river in session 1. In his book he recalls the biblical story of Naaman the Syrian who entered the Jordan River to be cleansed. His comparison of the affliction of racism to Naaman's leprosy is at the heart of this session.

Invite participants to listen or follow along as you read 2 Kings 5:1-14.

Ask participants to name words or phrases that stuck out for them.

Divide the group into six small groups, assigning one character to each group: 1) Naaman, 2) the young Israelite girl, 3) Elisha, 4) the king of Aram, 5) the king of Israel, and 6) Naaman's servants.

Tell the groups that they will be listening to the story again, this time from their character's perspective. What is your role in the story? What are you called on to do? How do you act or react and why?

Set the stage for the reading of the text:

Naaman, was a commander of the Aramean or Syrian army. Aram at this time between 800 and 840 B.C. held great strategic power and was the center of wealth and culture in the area. Naaman as army commander, had received every honor that military skill and good fortune could bring, but he was a leper. Despite all that he had achieved and all the resources at his command, he knew he had a horrible disease. There were conflicts between Aram and Israel. In an Aramean raid, a young Israelite girl had been taken from her home and carried back to Aram where she served as a maid to Naaman's wife. Knowing of Naaman's leprosy, the girl spoke out of her faith and trust in God and told her mistress of the prophet in Samaria. The king of Aram then sent Naaman to the king of Israel with a letter commanding the king of Israel to heal Naaman. Knowing the power and might of Aram, the king of Israel "tore his clothes" at the request. Elisha, however, heard of the command and sent word for the king to send Naaman to him. Naaman, despite his prejudices against Israel, traveled to come to Elisha, but when he arrived, Elisha didn't even come out to greet him. Instead Elisha sent a messenger out to the mighty man of Naaman and told him to bathe seven times in the River Jordan. Not only was Naaman angry that Elisha wouldn't come out to him, but the Jordan is a muddy river with muddy banks—a sharp contrast to the beauty of the rivers of Damascus. So Naaman refused and turned to leave in anger. His servants, however, persuaded him to go and wash. Reluctantly putting aside his pride, Naaman, the proud soldier, washed in the muddy river seven times and was healed.

Read 2 Kings 5:1-14 a second time.



Discussion of Roles (20 minutes)

Ask participants to spend a few minutes sharing within their character.

- Define your role and position in the story.
- What are you called on to do?
- How do you act or react and why?
- From your character's perspective, how do you see the events in this story?

Bring the group back together, asking each group to speak from their character's perspective, sharing their role and actions in the story and how they see what happened.

The Healing from Racism

Ask participants to enter for a moment into the role of Naaman. Imagine yourself as Naaman coming to the muddy riverbank, how do you enter the first time? Would you strip of everything, or possibly try leaving on some of the armor or robes? And what about the second time, and third, and fourth, and fifth, and sixth and seventh? By the seventh time would you be completely vulnerable, dipping completely under the surface? Would you trust your community — your servants — to be standing on the bank giving you protection? Would you have come to completely trust the muddy waters of the Jordan for healing? What does it take to find healing from your disease?

Ask participants to now form groups of six, with one person from each of the previous six groups. Ask each group to re-write this story as a story of healing from the leprosy of racism.

Small Group Discussion (35 minutes)

Search the story for its meaning and application to the disease of racism, including as you can, the role of the different people in the story. Consider questions, such as: How do we know that we are afflicted with the disease of racism? What are the voices that lead us toward healing? What are the "waters" — the activities, learning's, experiences — that we need to enter in order to begin the healing of our disease of racism? What is the role of our community, family, or friends as we enter the river for healing? What does it mean to enter the river to find healing? What prejudices or old understandings do we have to lay aside in order to enter the healing water? What is the meaning of going in seven times? Prepare to present your story in whatever way you wish.

Large Group Sharing (20 minutes)

NOTE: At this point, there will be two or at most, three groups, since the groups re-formed into groups of six.

- Invite each group to share their story of healing.
- What did you hear, see or notice in the telling of the stories?
- What meaning do you find in this story for your own journey?
- What meaning do you find for the journey of your congregation?

Season of EASTER

Session 11 *(continued)*

Journaling Assignment

Encourage participants to continue to journal. Invite them to reflect this week on what it means to enter the Jordan. How do you see yourself in need of healing? What will it take to find that healing?

Closing (10 minutes)

Remind participants that our journey of healing is a life-long journey. We have already entered the river for healing, and we will continue on the journey of healing from racism throughout our lives. Invite participants to share an event, a person, or a memory that has been a step for them in this journey.

Celebrate those steps in a closing prayer.

Invite participants to remember their baptism as they leave.

Season of EASTER Session 12



Walking the Journey toward New White Identity

Purpose

The work to find healing within a new White identity is a lifelong journey. This session will introduce participants to the statuses or stages of racial identity development. The chart of racial identity development can serve as a guide to understand the complex dynamics of growth in finding what it means to be White.

Session Objectives

From this session, participants will be able to:

- Understand the theory of racial identity development.
- Examine their own journey using the statuses of racial development as a guide.
- Identify their own places for challenge and growth.

Opening Devotion (15 minutes)

Invite participants to remember the water of their baptism as you begin the session.

In this session we will examine stages of White identity and seek to discern how we can grow in our self-understanding. As Jesus called people to leave behind their old ways to follow him, so we are called to new paths and new directions as people of God.

Reading: Mark 1:16-20

Song: WOV #784 "You Have Come Down to the Lakeshore"

Reflection Questions:

- How do you hear Jesus calling to you in this work?
- What is Jesus calling you to do?
- What do you need to leave behind?

Conclude with prayer, praying for strength and courage to follow where Jesus calls.

Season of EASTER

Session 12 (continued)

Welcome and Beginning (5 minutes)

Check in with participants. What thoughts did they have about Naaman during this past week? Do they have any new stories to share of a step into the waters?

Racial Identity Development

Background (20 minutes)

Hand out the chart of racial identity development. Present the background and use of this theory.

Since Peggy McIntosh's article on White privilege was published in 1989, more and more people have been working to understand what it means to be White. As people have shared their stories of their own growth and development in understanding racism and their place within it, people gathered the stories and began to notice the similarities within those stories. Throughout the 1990s, a number of researchers independently were studying White identity, and all found similar patterns in people's growing consciousness and awareness of themselves as White racial beings and what that means.

Janet Helms, Rita Hardiman, and other researchers, have described that development in a series of stages, or more recent terminology—in statuses. Each status indicates a way of thinking, seeing and understanding the world from a particular racial lens. It is a way of finding meaning of how I belong within a particular racial group.

As in all growth, we move into a different status when something shakes that way of seeing and understanding, and it is no longer sufficient for us to give meaning to what we see. In repeated studies, growth has been shown to move in the pattern in this chart.

That doesn't mean that everyone moves through all of these statuses. Some people remain in the status of pre-encounter all of their lives and it remains sufficient for them to make sense of their world. Any of us can stay at any one of these statuses. And some of us may skip a particular status.

The work to find healing within a new White identity is a lifelong journey.

We also don't move through these statuses in a neat and precise order and then act consistently out of those statuses. Movement and growth is always fluid. It is more a spiral of growth than a straight line of linear growth. While I may primarily be thinking or acting out of one particular status at a moment in time, I may hear something or experience something that will trigger me back into a different status and I may say something that I thought I had unlearned long ago. The statuses follow in a sequence, but they are not always orderly or timely. Growth is not neat, easy, clean or precise. We need, therefore, to look at this chart with some caution on how we use it.

The chart can serve as a very helpful guide for us on the journey. When I'm caught deeply into feelings of guilt about racism, or I hear those feelings expressed in others, I can know that it is something I have to live through or help a person walk through. As White people, we don't come to a new understanding of what it means to be White, without moving through some painful steps. It can be helpful to know that what we are experiencing is growing pains. It doesn't feel good when we are in some of these places, but we can trust that with time, and with the help and support of other people, we will come through it.

The chart can also serve as a helpful guide in listening to and responding to other people. If I have been helped and prodded along the way in my own development, I also am responsible to journey with others. And I need to be patient. Growth does not happen easily or quickly. I may need to repeatedly ask someone not to tell a racist joke; I may need to regularly ask hard questions about how the decisions that



are made may affect people of color. But I can't give up. I need to step back to where I was at that place in my thinking and to remember what helped me to question and grow.

It is important to remember that this is a tool for understanding, not for judgment. It is a tool to help us on our journey together; it is not a way to categorize or condemn people.

Tell participants that you will walk through the statuses with examples from your own life to help them understand the journey. You will then give them time to look at their own journey and to share that in a small group.

Share your story, as honestly as you are able, through each of the statuses. Be as courageous as Naaman in leaving your baggage on the riverbank and entering the process of healing. Work to recognize where you are, and if you have not moved through all of the statuses, share where you see your need for growth. If you see yourself in the last stage, be certain to recognize and state that there is no end point to growth. None of us can ever "arrive."

It is important to have prepared your thoughts ahead of time. More memories will come in each re-telling of your story. For help in understanding each status, read pages 87-94 in *We Can't Teach What We Don't Know* and pages 93-113 in *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? And Other Conversations About Race*.

Individual Reflection (25 minutes)

Ask participants to take time to recall their own story, remembering words, interactions, and things they may have thought. We may feel embarrassed by those things, but remembering is also an act of healing. Invite them to chart their journey alongside the descriptions.

Small Group Discussion (35 minutes)

Gather into groups of four.

- Share one or more experiences of challenge and growth in your journey of racial identity.
- What was good about being in a particular status? What was difficult?
- Where do you see yourself now?
- What are your challenges to grow?
- How do you see the tension in yourself between where you are now and former statuses?

Large Group Discussion (15 minutes)

- What was good or hard about working through this chart?
- Was it helpful to you? If so, how?
- What meaning does the chart give for our continuing growth?
- How can other people be helpful to you on this journey?

Season of EASTER

Session 12 *(continued)*

Assignment and Journaling

Encourage participants to journal on their memories of their growth, especially remembering those people or events that were helpful in moving them forward on the journey.

Hand out the reading on allies. Ask them to be aware of how they can be allies to people who are oppressed.

Closing (5 minutes)

Invite participants to join in singing WOV #784 “You Have Come Down to the Lakeshore” in prayerful meditation, reflecting on the journey they have already traveled and where Jesus is calling on them to follow.

Allow time for silence and meditation.

Close with prayer.

Invite participants to remember the healing power of the water of baptism as they leave.

Season of EASTER Session 13



Building Toward a Multicultural Church

Purpose

In this session participants will explore how their learning becomes real in the life of their congregation. Participants will work through the racial journey of their congregation, describing the current life and ministry, and identifying steps and possibilities for change.

Session Objectives

From this session, participants will be able to:

- Describe the levels of growth of a congregation.
- Honestly explore and describe the current culture of their congregation.
- Examine possible steps for growth and change.

Opening Devotion (10 minutes)

Invite participants to remember the water of their baptism as you begin the session.

The prophet Amos spoke harsh words to the people of Israel. The people had grown complacent and comfortable. Amos denounced their false sense of security and their empty worship. He challenged them instead to seek justice. In this session we will seek to hear God's challenge for us today.

Reading: Amos 5:21-24

Reflection Questions:

- What do you hear in these verses?
- What is God calling us to do?
- As you look back at the river we created, how does God's justice and righteousness flow through it?

Song: WOV #763 "Let Justice Flow like Streams"

Conclude with prayer.

Welcome and Beginning (10 minutes)

Check in with participants. Invite comments and thoughts on the racial identity development chart from last week and on the article on allies. State that you will be sharing more about what it means to be an ally in this session and in the sessions during Pentecost.

Season of EASTER

Session 13 *(continued)*

Racial Identity of Congregations and Communities

Introduction (20 minutes)

Like individuals, congregations, communities, and organizations function out of a particular way of thinking, interacting, and seeing the world. Congregations and organizations have their own culture that determines what they celebrate and how they look, how they do things and why they do it that way. In order for a church (on the local level or nationally) to welcome and embrace new cultures, it must first understand its own culture and how that culture shapes and forms its own norms, values, and standards. It is a key first step to understand why some music and forms of worship are valued more highly than others, why some forms of leadership and styles of decision-making are seen as the way to do things, and why some ways of viewing time and space are simply givens. With that groundwork in place, congregations can wrestle more honestly and openly with their values and the expressions of those values. And they can listen with greater care to the expression of other cultural values. If a congregation can see its culture as one culture—one way of doing and thinking and seeing—and other cultures as having an equal set of norms, values, and standards that give rise to their cultural expressions, then transformation can happen. People can talk together and discern which values and expressions will work together to form a new congregational culture that embraces more than one culture.

Write the five stages of a congregation's development on 8"x11" pieces of paper. Put those papers on the floor, spaced out in a continuum.

Ask participants to stand at the place that they see their congregation at this time.

Invite them to talk with another person who is standing at their same place, or at the nearest place. Ask them to describe to the other person why they are standing there.

Ask participants to notice the continuum of the group. Invite people along the spectrum to share why they describe their congregation at the place they are standing.

Description of Congregation Stages (35 minutes)

Hand out the chart with the congregation stages. Review the chart, sharing examples of how congregations may look, think, and act along the continuum. Make comparisons to the racial identity development of individuals and the growing awareness in that continuum. Refer to the deepening awareness of the cultural pyramid that this chart reflects, and the growing realization that other cultures also are grounded in their own values and norms. The final stage of transformation would reflect a congregation in which varieties of music, worship styles, artwork, and foods are represented. But it also would include separate and equal value structures with constant dialogue in working out how things get done. There would be a common recognition of systems of oppression and a shared responsibility in working against systems of oppression and mutual accountability in calling attention to when people are being left out.

Ask participants to gather in groups by congregations. If eight or more people are present from one congregation, have them break into separate groups of four to six people as needed. If one or two are present from a congregation, have them join people who identify their congregations at a similar level.

Give each group a sheet of newsprint and markers. Invite them to draw — words, images, symbols, stick figures — how their congregation looks, thinks, and acts. Consider who the people are, the nature of art and architecture, how people relate with one another, who makes decisions and how. Reflect on how the congregation does worship, education, youth ministry, stewardship, outreach, social ministry, etc.

When groups are ready, invite them to share their drawings with each other. What do they notice in the drawings?



Imagining Congregational Change (35 minutes)

Give participants another sheet of newsprint. Ask them to look at the description at the next level of growth. What would the same congregation look like at that level? What would be some of the changes? Identify the challenges that the congregation would face in implementing those changes. What conversations would need to happen?

When groups are ready, invite them again to share their drawings, identifying the changes that would indicate growth in becoming more multicultural and identifying the challenges and barriers along the way.

Invite discussion on the drawings:

- What did you experience as you worked on your drawing?
- What did you notice in the drawings of others?
- What will it take for congregations to enter the Jordan for healing?
- How can congregational culture change happen?

Keep the drawings for the next sessions during the season of Pentecost. Tell participants that you will spend the next sessions exploring how to be active agents for change as you actively seek God's vision for the healing of the nations.

Assignment and Journaling

Ask participants to continue to be aware of their congregation, paying close attention to what they see and how things are done. Ask them to note where they see signs of openness and possibility for change. Who might they see as possible allies in working for change? Encourage them to note in their journals the things they notice.

Closing (10 minutes)

Invite each person to share a word of Easter—a thought, word, or feeling of healing that they have experienced during this season of Easter.

Song: WOV #737 "There Is a Balm in Gilead"

Close with prayer.

Invite participants to remember the water of their baptism as they leave.

Season of PENTECOST Session 14

Stepping Out in Faith

Purpose

This session engages participants in the story of Peter and Cornelius as told in Acts 10 and 11. Participants will explore this story of crossing a cultural chasm that had been put in place over a long period of time and held in place by tradition and the teachings of authority. The session will address the vision, the fears and hesitations and the risktaking of the people in this story of Acts.

Session Objectives

From this session, participants will be able to:

- Describe the various roles of the people in Acts 10 and 11 in crossing the cultural chasm.
- Name the old messages and fears that the people needed to face and overcome.
- Reflect on the power of the vision that led Peter and Cornelius to act.
- Recognize the ten steps of Acts as steps for action today.

Opening Devotion (10 minutes)

Invite participants to remember the water of their baptism as you begin the session.

Share with participants that you are entering the season of Pentecost in this study. Remind them that this long season of the church year focuses on the work of the Holy Spirit, leading and guiding the growth of the church. On the day of Pentecost the Spirit stirred the disciples to preach and teach.

Reading: Acts 2:1-12

Peter and the disciples responded to the question, "What does this mean?" by sharing the story of God's power and the pouring out of God's Spirit. They told of Jesus who died and whom God raised up. They reminded the people of the words of the prophet Joel, "I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions." (2:28) It is the story that has been told and sung through the years. As we begin the study of this season, we pray that the Spirit will blow through our wilderness times—our times of struggle and uncertainty—and that the Spirit will stir us from our placidness toward action.

Song: WOV #684 "Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness"

Conclude with prayer, inviting God's Spirit into this work.



Welcome and Beginnings (10 minutes)

Check in with participants. Invite them to share things they noticed about their congregation. Where do they see places for growth and change?

The Story of Peter and Cornelius: Acts 10:1 – 11:18

Introduction (5 minutes)

We have been on a journey as White Christians to find our place in a multicultural society and church. We have reviewed our history as a nation and a church and have reflected on the dominant role that those of European heritage have played. We are faced with the reality that the ELCA remains a predominantly white church. We stand at the brink of this cultural chasm and ponder how we enter the multicultural waters.

The early church stood at the cultural chasm between Jews and Gentiles. The early Christians debated and struggled with the question of whether people needed to embrace the ways of Jews before becoming Christian. Jews had long-held beliefs of their place as God's chosen people. They had laws and traditions that were intricately interwoven into their lives to keep themselves pure and to maintain their relationship with God. To associate with Gentiles—to receive them as equals—was unheard of.

In the story of Peter and Cornelius in Acts 10 and 11, both Jews and Gentiles had to examine their beliefs and attitudes about one another. They stood on the brink of the cultural chasm, and they took a step that brought people together in the water of baptism. The question of the place of Jews and Gentiles did not end in that water in Acts. The cultural struggles of the early church were not over, but some people's feet were wet and the church was on a new journey.

Enter the Text: Acts 10:1 – 11:18 (25 minutes)

Hand out Bibles if participants don't have them, or have copies of the text available as a handout. Introduce the individuals or groups of people who will be mentioned in the text:

- Peter
- Cornelius
- The messengers from Cornelius
- Simon the Tanner (and his household)
- Cornelius' household or community
- The six circumcised believers who accompany Peter
- The apostles in Jerusalem

Form seven small groups and assign a role in the story to each of the groups. If you have fewer than 14 participants, assign both Simon the Tanner and the believers who accompany Peter to one group, and if necessary, both the messengers and Cornelius' household to another group.

Season of PENTECOST Session 14 (continued)

Give the following brief cultural background to the people in the text.

Peter was a lifelong Jew who had learned all of the teachings and laws of Moses and the prophets. He was schooled in what it meant to be a good Jew and to observe the laws of what was clean and unclean. He had carefully followed all of the laws of what he could and couldn't eat and would have had a strong reaction to eating what he had been taught was unclean. Eating what was unclean would defile him. He had also been taught that Gentiles are unclean and that as a Jew he was not to associate with Gentiles.

Simon the Tanner was a tanner of hides. He was also a Jew, but would be seen by some as somewhat of an outsider because of his occupation. He lived in Joppa and provided a place for Peter to stay during his time in Joppa.

The six circumcised believers were also Jews who had been schooled in all of the laws. They would have learned well what to eat and what not to eat, who to associate with and who not to.

The apostles in Jerusalem were, of course, all Jews. They were people who had lived and traveled with Jesus. They were people of authority.

Cornelius was a Roman centurion, a leader of the occupying force, a Gentile. He was a man of great authority and power who answered to Rome and whose allegiance was to be given to Caesar and the gods of Rome. He was trained to see himself as superior to the lowly Jews whose land he occupied.

The messengers from Cornelius—the two slaves and the devout soldier—would likely have been Romans, or other non-Jews. Their loyalty would have been to Cornelius, knowing that their livelihood, and possibly their existence, depended on Cornelius and on obeying his orders. They would not have trusted Jews nor have been taught to look kindly at them. They would have known that Jews would look at them suspiciously as occupiers of the Jewish land.

Cornelius' household would also be Gentiles. They would have lived a life apart from the Jews. They lived in the land and would, therefore, have been observers of the Jews but would not have associated with them.

Peter and Cornelius—and their respective communities of Jews and Gentiles—were separated by religion, cultural and ethnic backgrounds, economics, and politics. There was much that divided them and created a great cultural chasm between their two worlds.

Ask participants to stand together in their character role and to be prepared to speak and act out the parts of their character as it is told in the text. Individuals (Peter and Cornelius) may choose one person in their small group to act out the person and another to read the words spoken by their character.

Invite one person to read the parts of the angel and the voice and Spirit that spoke to Peter.

As the narrator, begin the reading, pausing to give time for characters to move as directed in the text and to read their words as noted.



Small Group Discussion (20 minutes)

Ask participants to meet in their small groups to further explore the text and to discuss the events of the story through the eyes of their assigned person(s). As they review the questions, ask them to prepare to share their responses from the first-person viewpoint.

- What is your role in the story?
- What were your fears?
- What was God calling forth in you?
- How did you feel about it?
- What did you do?

Large Group Sharing (25 minutes)

- Invite each group to share their responses, speaking from the first person. Ask additional questions if needed to get a full sense of the person's role in the story.
- What meaning does this text have for us and for our church today?

Note the variety of roles of people in this story. Each role was different, but each was important to the whole story. God calls each of us to act and to be in partnership with one another as we strive toward God's vision of justice and peace.

Crossing the Cultural Chasm: Taking Steps to Act

Introduction (10 minutes)

Introduce the ten steps of Acts that serve as a guide from the story of Acts 10 and 11. Read through the ten steps and the questions of application for each step. State that you will be spending the next sessions following the steps laid out in this story of Acts.

- 1. Prayer:** Both Peter and Cornelius were so deeply engaged in prayer that they were able to see and hear God's vision.

Do you pray with the expectation that you will see and know God's vision for your life and for your congregation?

- 2. Vision:** Cornelius and Peter each received a vision of what God was calling them to do.

As you engage in prayer together and share in prayer-filled dialogue, what vision is emerging of what God is calling you to do as a congregation?

- 3. Giving up Old Messages:** Peter, Simon the Tanner, the believers who accompany Peter, and the apostles in Jerusalem all had to give up deeply imbedded beliefs about who and what is clean and unclean. They had to move across a barrier and associate with people they had been taught to avoid all of their lives. They had to see Gentiles as God's beloved people and not as untouchable, profane, and unclean. Cornelius, his messengers and his entire household had to receive Jews as messengers to them. In turn, they had to see that they had something to offer as they invited Peter to stay with them and gave him hospitality.

What old messages, stereotypes, past hurts, or traditions must you give up about other people in order to step forward into new relationships and new ministry? Who are people in the community who

Season of PENTECOST

Session 14 *(continued)*

are not welcomed in the congregation? If the congregation and community are primarily White, why is that? What are the spoken or unspoken messages within the community that keep people of color out?

- 4. Commitment to Risk-Taking:** All of the people in the story had to step outside their comfort zone and take a risk, whether it was opening their home to the “other” as did Simon the Tanner and the members of Cornelius’ household, or venturing into unfriendly territory as did the messengers and the believers who came with Peter, or Peter and Cornelius who took bold public actions, or the apostles who allowed the old law of distinction to be discarded. Each of the actions was a risk in breaking out of cultural traditions and ways of life. Each took a commitment of faith to step forth.

What fears do you have in moving toward the vision? What barriers might hold you back? What consequences may you have to face? Given the fears and risks, what is your commitment to making White privilege visible and living out a vision of partnership?

- 5. Gathering Community:** The entire story is a story of community. No one acted alone. Both Cornelius and Peter realized the importance of community in sending out messengers, and having others with them to give them support and to be witnesses to the events.

What does it mean to move forward with community? Who do you need to have with you? Who do you need to talk with? What help or support do you need and from whom?

- 6. Re-telling the Story:** Over and over Peter and Cornelius repeated their stories of God’s call and direction. When Peter came to Jerusalem, he had to explain the story to the apostles, step by step. Central to the entire story is the telling of the story of Jesus.

What story do you have to share with others? What have you seen or heard in a new way during the months of this study? Who needs to hear your story?

- 7. Action Step:** Cornelius took a first step in calling his servants and sending them to bring Peter to him. Peter’s first step was inviting the messengers into Simon’s home. Each step of this story builds on a previous step and each step is important in leading to the step of baptizing Gentiles — an action step that shook the foundations of the belief system.

What is a first step you can take?

- 8. Receiving Hospitality:** Cornelius and his household invited Peter to stay with them several days. In his vision Peter had seen a sheet filled with foods he had been taught to see as unclean and avoided all of his life. They were foods common to the diet of a Gentile. As Peter accepted the hospitality of his Gentile hosts, he had to sleep in a strange place and eat the foods of Gentiles. At this point Peter fully accepted the Gentiles as genuine partners in the faith. Having eaten their food and accepted their hospitality, Peter no longer was in control. As shown in the vision, Peter had to let go of his cultural values and recognize and accept values of the Gentiles as also being of God. This step of receiving hospitality reflected the depth of change, both in Peter, and in what the church would be. The Gentiles were not simply recipients of the Holy Spirit and of “mission efforts,” but were full partners in the faith.

Who within your community or congregation do you regularly avoid? Whose hospitality do you find difficult to accept? From whom do you need to receive hospitality? Whose gifts need to be accepted within the congregation?

- 9. Report Back/Reflect:** Peter had to report to the apostles in Jerusalem, explaining all that he had done. He reported each of the steps and God’s direction in moving him to act. He reflected on all that happened and what it meant. To whom will you need to report and when?



10. Experience Change — Leading to Celebration and New Action: When the apostles heard the story, they first were silenced. Then they praised God, recognizing that Gentiles, too, could hear and receive God’s saving grace.

How have you been changed? For what do you praise God? With new understanding comes the need to again engage in prayer to seek God’s continually unfolding vision, and to take new risks and new action steps.

Steps to Act: Prayer (15 minutes)

- In Acts 10:1-2 and 9, we read that both Cornelius and Peter were in prayer.
- Invite participants into a time of prayer, beginning with a time of silence.
- Allow at least five minutes in silence, inviting people to lift their fears and concerns before God and to listen to what God is calling forth in them and in the congregation. If they wish, they may write down their thoughts for their own reflection.
- Lead a time of shared prayer by lifting up your fears and concerns and inviting others to voice their petitions.
- Conclude by praying for insight to follow where God is leading and for the courage to go forth.

Assignment and Journaling

Encourage participants to spend time in daily prayer, seeking to hear where God is calling. Encourage them to journal on what they are feeling and hearing. Are they hearing and seeing things around them differently? Are they becoming aware in new ways? What visions do they have of where God is leading?

Closing

Close with the refrain and stanzas 3 and 4 of WOV #684 “Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness.”

Invite participants to remember the healing power of the water of baptism as they leave.

Season of PENTECOST Session 15

Beholding God's New Vision

Purpose

In this session participants will work through the steps of Acts 10 and 11 in the context of their congregation. They will seek together to shape a vision of what God is calling them to be. They will unpack the old messages that could hold them back, express their fears, and articulate their commitments to live out the vision. Together they will name others to invite on this journey and prepare to go out to share the story.

Session Objectives

From this session, participants will be able to:

- Describe a vision of where they see God leading the congregation at this time.
- Name the old messages and fears that the congregation needs to face.
- Share their own individual commitments for living out the vision.
- Identify people in the congregation and/or community to connect with for this journey.
- Share the story with others.

Opening Devotion (15 minutes)

Invite participants to remember the water of their baptism as you begin the session.

Song: WOV #712 "Listen, God Is Calling"

Invite participants to share from their reflections and time of prayer since the last session how they have heard where God is calling the congregation, and/or themselves personally.

Read the following story as a reflection on where and how God may be leading and guiding toward new ways of seeing and stretching.

A PARABLE

Once there was a woman who lived in a little central European village. She was a nurse and had devoted her life to caring for her neighbors. She was there at birth and at death; she bound up scratches, bruises and broken bones as well as sat through the interminable nights with those who were seriously ill.

In the course of time she died. She had no family and so the villagers decided to hold a very lovely funeral for her. But the village priest had to remind them that she could not be buried in the cemetery. For the town was Roman Catholic and the woman had been a Protestant. The villagers protested but the priest held firm. It was not easy for him, as he too had been nursed by her. Nevertheless the canons of the church were very clear: she would have to be buried outside the fence.



The day of the funeral arrived and the whole village accompanied her casket to the cemetery, where she was buried—outside the fence. That night, after dark, a group of the villagers went back and moved the fence.

Sometimes being inclusive is just a matter of moving the fence.

Gracious God, make us fence-movers.—Amen

From Visions of Justice by Dr. Faith Rohrbough (Milwaukee, WI: Lutheran Human Relations Association, 1994). Used by permission.

Welcome and Beginnings (10 minutes)

Check in with participants. Invite them to share other thoughts or reflections since the last session.
Taking Steps to Act

Steps to Act: Vision (30 minutes)

- In Acts 10:3-6 and 10:10-16 we read that both Cornelius and Peter received a vision of what God was calling them to do.
- Briefly revisit the drawings from Session 13 on where the congregation currently is and how it would look at the next step.
- Give each person an 8 1/2 x 14 piece of paper and have sufficient markers or crayons available. Ask each person to draw a vision of how they would like to see their congregation ten years from now.
- Invite each person to share their vision.
- After the sharing, ask for common words and themes that were expressed. Record those words and themes on newsprint.
- What are the most important images and words that express the common vision for the congregation at this point in time?
- Write or draw that common vision and celebrate the vision as a group.

Steps to Act: Giving Up Old Messages (20 minutes)

- In Acts 10:13-16, we hear Peter struggling with the messages and traditions he had learned.
- On the back of their individual vision drawings, ask participants to write the old messages, cultural values and traditions, stereotypes, or ways of thinking that continue to challenge them and get in the way of living into the vision they have drawn.
- Invite participants to gather in small groups of three or four to share their old messages and to develop a list of teachings, traditions, and messages that will be challenging for the congregation to give up in living into the group vision.
- Ask each small group to report their list to the whole.
- As a group, name those old messages that will be necessary for the congregation to struggle with in moving toward the vision. What cultural values and norms will need to be identified and addressed? Write those messages on the back of the group vision.
- Remind the group that the old messages and learnings never completely go away. They lie within us and we need to consciously work to unlearn them and put new awareness and understanding in place. We need to always be alert to how close below the surface those messages may lie and

Season of PENTECOST

Session 15 *(continued)*

how they can come forward to disrupt our efforts to make the vision real. We need to be jointly accountable to putting them behind us in order to move forward with the vision.

Steps to Act: Commitment to Risk Taking (20 minutes)

- In Acts 10:7-8 and 17-25, Cornelius, the messengers, Peter, Simon the Tanner, the believers from Joppa and Cornelius' relatives and friends all took risks.
- In small groups of three or four, ask participants to share their fears in moving forward on the vision and to name the price they may have to pay in others' reactions as they name White privilege or question cultural values. What risks might they have to take?
- As a small group, ask them to name the fears the congregation will have to face, the barriers that might hold them back, and the risks the congregation will have to take to live into the vision.
- Invite each small group to share their responses within the large group. List the fears and barriers on newsprint as they are named.
- Invite those within the group who are ready to share their commitments to take risks within the congregation.

Steps to Act: Gathering Community (15 minutes)

- In Acts 10:23b-24, we are reminded that both Peter and Cornelius gathered their community to support them and to be witnesses of the event. They both recognized their need to have allies with them on the journey.
- As a large group, talk about the role of allies in this work. Given the fears and barriers that were named, whom do they need to talk with in the congregation? Whose gifts could be helpful in this journey? Are there people within the community with whom they need to talk and interact? Whose help and support do they need? Who would they like to invite with them on the journey? List the names on newsprint as they are lifted up.
- Gather within the small groups to review the list of names and to help each person identify one or two people with whom they will share the story of this journey within the next month. They may also identify someone who has not already been listed.
- Re-gather as a large group to share the names of those with whom they will share the story.



Closing and Assignment

Steps to Act: Re-telling the Story (10 minutes)

- Throughout Acts 10 and 11, Cornelius and Peter re-told the story as they had experienced it. In Acts 10:34-43, Peter re-told the story of God's saving power through Jesus.
- Telling the story of a community is key to bringing others into that community. In the next month, ask each person to schedule a time to share the story of this journey with one other person.
- To prepare for their sharing, invite them to journal or to reflect on what they have learned or how they have grown through this process. How have they been guided toward an awareness of what God is calling forth in them? How have they grown in their understanding of God's vision for the congregation and community?
- If the person they are sharing with is a member of the congregation, they may wish to invite that person to consider being part of a new group to engage in this study in the coming year, or to invite the person to consider how they might be helpful in the journey.
- If the person is a member of the community, they may share the vision of the congregation, talk about common visions they may have for the community, and ways the congregation and community can be allies in this journey.
- Invite each person to share one apprehension, hope, or joy that they have at this time.
- Close with prayer.

Invite participants to remember the healing power of the water of baptism

Season of PENTECOST Session 16

Taking Steps to Act

Purpose

This session will engage participants in the process of identifying steps for action and the need to see themselves as receivers. Others will need to be invited on the journey, and leadership needs to be actively engaged in the process of decision-making, but participants will identify where action can begin to happen.

Session Objectives

From this session, participants will be able to:

- List specific, attainable beginning steps for action on the journey.
- Develop a timeline with measures for accomplishment.
- Identify people and resources necessary to implement action.
- Identify needs for growth and learning as individuals and as a congregation.
- State commitments for action and places for learning.

Opening Devotion (25 minutes)

Invite participants to remember the water of their baptism as you begin the session.

Begin with prayer, giving thanks for the opportunities to give witness to the story of this journey and asking for God's continued guidance and direction in this work.

Invite participants to retell the story of their conversations with people during the past month.

- What thoughts or feelings did they notice in themselves as they shared their stories?
- What did they learn as they talked with others?
- What new meanings, insights, or understanding did they find through those conversations?

Remind participants of the powerful work of the Holy Spirit in the early church that led Jews and Gentiles to cross the deep and wide cultural chasm of their day. Invite them to give thanks for the powerful work God is doing through them to bring healing and partnership to God's church and to pray for courage to continue to examine the hard places where White superiority creeps in.

Song: WOV #755 "We All Are One in Mission"



Welcome and Beginnings (5 minutes)

Check in with participants, inviting any comments or thoughts that weren't expressed in the opening devotion, or other needs participants wish to share with one another.

Taking Steps to Act

Steps to Act: Taking Action

In Acts 10:47-48 Peter took an action step in response to the action of the Holy Spirit. His ordering the Gentiles to be baptized transformed the understanding of who was included in the church. It was an action step that was built on very specific preceding actions and came about in response to recognizing God's action.

Small Groups (35 minutes)

- Gather in small groups of four or five around common interests of ministry: music and worship, education, youth, stewardship, evangelism and outreach, social justice, etc.
- Brainstorm—and record on newsprint—possible first steps to take as a group within one or two areas of ministry. Remember to think in measurable, attainable steps. Be attentive to where God is leading. Search for what will call people to stretch beyond their comfort zone and will challenge cultural norms.
- Review the list and prioritize steps. Identify two or three action steps that can be taken in the next three months. Identify a timeline, person(s) responsible, and resources needed to accomplish each of the steps.
- Identify action steps to recommend to the congregation's leadership for the next year. Define timelines, responsibilities and resources for each of those action steps.
- Identify other people within the congregation who are important to taking action within these areas of ministry and name the person(s) responsible for sharing the story with them.

Large Group (30 minutes)

- Invite each group to present their 1) three-month action steps with timeline and responsibilities; 2) recommended action steps for one year; and 3) people with whom to talk.
- Review each of the three categories separately and choose priorities so that the final list of each is attainable within the resources of the congregation but will stretch the congregation to grow. Work for consensus in choosing the three-month goals, in defining the list of recommended actions for the year and in identifying people with whom to talk.
- Review the final lists to check timelines and people responsible.
- Set dates as needed for small groups to work on their action steps.
- Set a date within the next four to six weeks to meet with leadership of the congregation to report on the learnings for the year and to discuss the recommended action steps.
- Set a date in three months to report back to one another as a group and to celebrate together.

Season of PENTECOST

Session 16 *(continued)*

Steps to Act: Receiving Hospitality

In Acts 10:48b we read of the profound step of significant change. If Peter had simply baptized Gentiles and left, it would have been a good story, but the chasm of culture would have been left unchanged. The meaning and depth of change is in Peter staying and eating the food of Gentiles.

Small Groups (15 minutes)

- Review the action steps for what may have been missed in allowing White cultural norms and values to be the operative norms.
- Consider how the opinions, values, and voices of people of color will be heard and fully valued and gifts fully received.
- What ways of living and thinking within the congregation need to continue to be examined in order to fully accept and trust the gifts of persons of color?
- How can the congregation be receivers of hospitality and so begin to enter a genuine partnership with persons of color?
- If the congregation and community are primarily White, how can the congregation be stretched to examine ways it maintains White exclusiveness? How can the gifts of persons of color become a presence within the congregation?

Large Group (10 minutes)

- Invite each group to share comments and feedback.
- Make revisions to action steps as needed.
- Lift up the challenge of continually needing to re-examine our actions and to take another step deeper. Conscious of maintaining his Jewish purity in foods, Peter could have refused (politely) Cornelius' hospitality and left. He would still have carried out his mission to the Gentiles, but on his terms and under his control, maintaining his way of life as superior. In receiving hospitality and staying to eat, cultural traditions were broken and Gentiles would not have to become like Jews first in order to become Christian. The ongoing challenge today is how people of color are included in the church. Are they expected to become like Europeans first and to blend in and be like us? To what extent are we willing to fully receive the gifts of people of African, Latino, Asian, American Indian and Alaskan Native, and Middle Eastern heritages? Are we willing to be impacted and significantly changed?



Assignment and Journaling

Point out the dates set in the “Taking Action” section and invite people to name the steps for which they agreed to be responsible. Encourage participants to continue to journal about their feelings as they take steps toward action. What old (or new) fears and hesitations do they notice. What joy and possibilities do they experience?

Closing

Close with prayer, giving thanks for God’s guiding and leading and praying for wisdom and courage to step forth in action.

Invite participants to remember the healing power of the water of baptism as they leave.

Season of PENTECOST Session 17

Reporting Back and Reflecting

Purpose

Acts 11 is a record of Peter's report to the church at Jerusalem. Peter and Cornelius had visions, they gave up old messages, they gathered others with them and all took risks and moved forward step by step in action. Peter then had to explain it to the apostles in Jerusalem, step by step. In this session participants will report back to the congregation regarding steps and learnings of this yearlong journey. They will share the vision, the things they have heard, seen, and learned, and will talk together about where the journey leads in continued action and growth.

This session may be held with identified leaders of the congregation or as a special gathering to which all members of the congregation are invited. If this is a meeting with the leaders of the congregation, plan a two-hour session, expanding the time for sharing the vision and shaping the action steps.

Session Objectives

From this session, the gathered participants will be able to:

- Describe the visioning from this group of where God is leading the congregation.
- Retell the story of the experiences and learnings of this group.
- Identify goals for the congregation for the coming year.

Opening Devotion (20 minutes)

Invite participants to remember the water of their baptism as you begin this session.

The title of the resource for this journey is *Troubling the Waters for Healing of the Church: A Journey for White Christians from Privilege to Partnership*. Water has been a central image to the study and the river has been a symbol for understanding the flow of time and events. This journey is our story told within God's story. The waters of the first verses of Genesis 1 and the waters of Revelation 22, the last chapter in the Bible, frame the journey.

Read: Genesis 1:1-3 and Revelation 22:1-2

Invite participants in the group to share their thoughts and reflections on what it has meant to them to enter the waters of this journey. What have they learned? How have they experienced the strength and power of the troubling waters and how have they felt the healing touch of water?

Join together as a whole group in singing WOV #763 "Let Justice Flow like Streams."

Close with prayer.



Welcome and Beginnings (15 minutes)

Invite each person present to share their name and to share a hope or dream they have for the life and growth of the congregation.

Steps to Act: Reporting Back and Reflecting

Vision (10 minutes)

- Invite a member of the group to share the vision for the congregation as the group has come to see it.
- Invite questions, reflections, or comments about the vision.
- Identify expansions or changes to the vision as they are articulated by the larger group, but be prepared to address concerns that would limit the vision and inhibit growth.

Action Steps (40 minutes)

- Present the three-month and yearlong action steps identified by the group.
- Gather into small groups of five or six people with a member of the study group being present in each group.
- Ask small groups to choose one or two of the identified goals that are of special interest to them. Invite them to talk about how they see this action taking place within the congregation. What results may come about because of this action? How could this lead to further action and deeper learning?
- Invite small groups to identify any additional goals to help to bring the vision into being.
- Regather as a large group, inviting each small group to speak to one or two of the listed goals and to identify any additional goals.
- Work with the group to prioritize among all of the listed goals and establish consensus for taking these steps for action.
- If this is a leadership group of the congregation, work with the group to establish timelines and p or groups responsible for carrying out each action step.
- If this is a larger group of the congregation, identify the leaders who will establish timelines and responsibilities and a date by which they will accomplish that.
- Invite people to join in the action steps and to prayerfully consider their response if they are called.

Closing (5 minutes)

- Gather in a circle with each person placing their right hand on the shoulder of the person to their right.
- Close with prayer, asking God to join this circle together, helping each one to support and lift one another up in living out God's vision.

NOTE: Since this is a larger group meeting, there is no assignment or journaling.

Invite participants to remember the healing power of the water of baptism as they leave.

Season of PENTECOST Session 18

Experiencing Change... Praising God... Continuing the Journey

Purpose

After hearing and reflecting on Peter's story, those gathered in Jerusalem praised God. In this session, participants in this yearlong journey will reflect on what they have learned and will celebrate together. This session is not to be seen as a conclusion, but rather as a refreshment stop on the lifelong journey.

Session Objectives

From this session, participants will be able to:

- Name the things they have learned on this journey and the ways they have grown.
- Reflect on the progress of the three-month action steps.
- Identify continuing support they need for the journey.
- Affirm commitments they have made for long-term action steps and identify any new short-term action.
- Plan a liturgy to be used within the worship service to celebrate the work of this year.

Opening Devotion (10 minutes)

Use the "Brief Order for Confession and Forgiveness" from WOV, pages 10-11, or similar liturgy of confession and forgiveness.

In the time of silence for reflection and self-examination, invite people to name out loud or in their hearts the ways they have been ignorant of racism or unaware of their own privilege or attitudes of superiority.

As the words of forgiveness are announced, invite them as pairs to dip a finger in the bowl of water in the center and to make a sign of the cross on one another's forehead as a reminder of God's forgiving and redeeming love in the waters of baptism.

Close with prayer.

Welcome and Beginnings (5 minutes)

Check in with participants. Invite sharing of their journey over the past month.



Steps to Act: Experiencing Change . . .

In Acts 11:18 the apostles and believers in Jerusalem experienced a depth of change that silenced their criticism. They praised God, and then the journey and the struggles of growth continued.

Small Groups (20 minutes)

- Form small groups of four people.
- Invite participants to reflect back on the cultural journeys they drew in Session 2 in Advent. What new understandings or insights do they now bring to their cultural journey?
- What reflections do they have about their experiences of change or growth during the year and for what or whom do they give thanks and praise?
- Identify needs for continuing on the journey.
- How have they seen or felt God at work during this year?

Steps to Act: . . . Celebrating and Praising God (25 minutes)

- Work as a group to create a liturgy for a worship service to celebrate the work of this year. Work together as a whole group or divide into separate groups to address different elements.
- What messages would this group like to share with the congregation? How would they share that?
- What symbols or images would they like to include?
- What songs or readings express the work of the year?
- Report back as a group and identify the person(s) who will take responsibility for preparing the service and communicating with the necessary people.

Steps to Act: . . . Continuing the Journey (15 minutes)

- Review the list of three-month steps for action.
- Ask the group to evaluate their progress. What steps have been taken? What is left to do? Who will be responsible for any remaining action?
- Name new steps for action to be taken individually or as a group. List those steps on newsprint and define responsibilities and timelines.
- If a new group will be beginning the study in Advent, identify within the group who will be available for support and interaction.
- Remind the group that this year has been another step in their lifelong journey. Encourage them to continue to journal, to pray for one another, and to engage in continuing action and growth.

Season of PENTECOST

Session 18 *(continued)*

Evaluations (15 minutes)

- Hand out the evaluation form and post assessment.
- Give time for people to complete those forms.
- Lead the group through a verbal evaluation, listing on newsprint the things that worked well and the things that could be changed or improved.
- Share the verbal and written evaluations with the leader of the next group.
- Send the written evaluations and verbal comments to: ELCA Department for Research and Evaluation, 8765 W. Higgins Road, Chicago, IL 60631.

Closing (30 minutes)

Invite one person in the circle to share a personal reflection on the year as expressed in the earlier small group discussion. When that person is finished, have him or her invite another person to share. Continue the invitation to share, until everyone has done so.

Close with prayer.

About the WRITERS

Ms. Joyce Caldwell, project coordinator and lead writer, is an associate in ministry in the ELCA. She has a master's degree in Education, with a specialization in curriculum and instruction. She began her ministry in 1975 serving as church staff associate in education and youth ministries in a congregation in southeastern Wisconsin. During her eleven years in that call, she initiated partnership efforts with a congregation in the central city of Milwaukee and began the journey of working against racism within the church. After teaching high school English for a year, she accepted the position of Covenant Congregation Director with Lutheran Human Relations Association. She subsequently served as the Executive Director of Lutheran Human Relations Association for twelve years. During those years, Joyce worked with many people of all backgrounds in developing and writing biblically based anti-racism and bridge-building programs. She led workshops across the United States and facilitated anti-racism workshops and facilitator trainings for the ELCA. Joyce also worked in partnership with the Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee in developing their Beyond Racism program and writing the curriculum. Joyce's passion is to continue to work within the church to expand the vision of what it means to live as God's whole people, and to find ways to make that vision real. She continues to facilitate discussions and lead workshops and is currently serving as Director of the Multicultural Urban-Suburban Emerging Youth Leaders (MUSEYL) program of the Nehemiah Project in Milwaukee, helping high school youth to break down urban/suburban and racial boundaries. She is beginning work on a Ph.D. in Human and Organizational Systems.

The Rev. Paul Benz, co-facilitator and secondary writer, is an ordained pastor in the ELCA. He began his ministry serving an all-White congregation in northeastern Kentucky where one of his first community contacts was with the local chapter of the NAACP. That relationship continued until he left that call to relocate back to the Pacific Northwest where his wife grew up. Paul continued his work in the community while serving as parish pastor on Whidbey Island north of Seattle. He currently is in his fourth year serving as Director of Lutheran Public Policy Office of Washington State where his personal passion for racial justice and working with people of color communities is a vital part of his life and ministry. He believes that until the White community intentionally wrestles with the issue of privilege the racial chasm that still divides this country will continue. Our denomination will continue to be 98 percent White, while our society is only 70 percent White and growing less so every year.

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