



# EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN CONNECTICUT

PARTICIPATING IN GOD'S MISSION

## **Racial Healing, Justice, and Reconciliation** **Dwelling in the Word**

*A practice of Bible study and prayer is recommended at the beginning of each gathering.*

*Dwelling in the Word* is a missional practice based on our understanding that God continues to speak to us in the context of our day and calling. Listen for God's voice or sense God's presence in scripture to connect with God's mission in Christ. Listen to the voices of others about what God is doing in their lives. This practice is not about gaining information about scripture.

*Dwelling in the Word* is about imagining how God is calling and sending us to *embody and live the concerns and passion of Christ* in our communities and the world. To learn more:

<https://missionalleadersdotorg.files.wordpress.com/2013/09/dwelling-in-the-word2.pdf>

### **Steps:**

1. Pre-select a scripture passage **and** form a question(s)\* for reflection to explore and discover
2. where God is leading you.

Gather in the spirit of fellowship taking time to pray for one another.

3. Provide a copy of the scripture passage and the questions to allow participants to hear and read them for reflection (see page three for an illustration of a selected scripture and questions).
4. The person designated to lead:
  - Asks participants to listen for or sense a particular word, phrase or image in the scripture passage that they feel led to explore or wonder about.
  - Reads the scripture passage and provides a moment of silence for reflection.
  - Asks participants to share reflections on what aspect of the scripture they were drawn to explore or wonder about.
  - Before reading the scripture a 2nd time, asks participants to reflect on a specific question(s) that focuses their attention.
  - Reads the passage a second time; pauses for silence; and asks people to share their responses to the question(s).
  - Offers prayer to conclude the time in this missional practice or to transition to another activity.

*Here is an example of Dwelling in the Word that was used at the June 9, 2018 Leadership Gathering at The Commons that preceded our discussion of Waking Up White which everyone had read in preparation for our gathering.*

From ***Waking Up White*** by Debbie Irving (Elephant Room Press, 2014), 249.

“Self-examination and the courage to admit to bias and unhelpful inherited behaviors may be our greatest tools for change. Allowing ourselves to be vulnerable enough to expose our ignorance and insecurities takes courage. And love. I believe the most loving thing a person, or a group of people, can do for another is to examine the ways in which their own insecurities and assumptions interfere with others’ ability to thrive. Please join me in opening your heart and mind to the possibility of you—yes, even well-intentioned you—have room to change and grow, so that you can work with people of all colors and ethnicities to co-create communities that can unite, strengthen, and prosper.”

1. Where did your imagination stop?
2. Are there words, phrases, or ideas that grasp at you?
3. How might the Holy Spirit be nudging you?

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*Other scripture, tradition, or cultural resources you may wish to tap into for conversations on race for Dwelling in the Word:*

**Amos 5:15-15; 23-24 (CEB)**

<sup>14</sup>Seek good and not evil,  
that you may live;  
and so the Lord, the God of heavenly forces,  
will be with you just as you have said.  
<sup>15</sup>Hate evil, love good,  
and establish justice at the city gate.  
Perhaps the Lord God of heavenly forces  
will be gracious to what is left of Joseph.

<sup>23</sup>I hate, I reject your festivals;  
I don’t enjoy your joyous assemblies.  
<sup>22</sup>If you bring me your entirely burned offerings and gifts of food—  
I won’t be pleased;  
I won’t even look at your offerings of well-fed animals.  
<sup>23</sup>Take away the noise of your songs;  
I won’t listen to the melody of your harps.  
<sup>24</sup>But let justice roll down like waters,  
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

### **Zechariah 7:4-13 (NIV)**

<sup>4</sup>Then the word of the Lord Almighty came to me: <sup>5</sup>“Ask all the people of the land and the priests, ‘When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months for the past seventy years, was it really for me that you fasted?’ <sup>6</sup>And when you were eating and drinking, were you not just feasting for yourselves?’ <sup>7</sup>Are these not the words the Lord proclaimed through the earlier prophets when Jerusalem and its surrounding towns were at rest and prosperous, and the Negev and the western foothills were settled?’”

<sup>8</sup>And the word of the Lord came again to Zechariah: <sup>9</sup>“This is what the Lord Almighty said: ‘Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. <sup>10</sup>Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other.’

<sup>11</sup>“But they refused to pay attention; stubbornly they turned their backs and covered their ears. <sup>12</sup>They made their hearts as hard as flint and would not listen to the law or to the words that the Lord Almighty had sent by his Spirit through the earlier prophets. So the Lord Almighty was very angry.

<sup>13</sup>“‘When I called, they did not listen; so when they called, I would not listen,’ says the Lord Almighty.

### **Matthew 5:46-47 (The Message)**

<sup>43-47</sup> “You’re familiar with the old written law, ‘Love your friend,’ and its unwritten companion, ‘Hate your enemy.’ I’m challenging that. I’m telling you to love your enemies. Let them bring out the best in you, not the worst. When someone gives you a hard time, respond with the energies of prayer, for then you are working out of your true selves, your God-created selves. This is what God does. He gives his best—the sun to warm and the rain to nourish—to everyone, regardless: the good and bad, the nice and nasty. If all you do is love the lovable, do you expect a bonus? Anybody can do that. If you simply say hello to those who greet you, do you expect a medal? Any run-of-the-mill sinner does that.

### **For the Human Family (BCP, 815)**

O God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus your Son: Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unite us in bonds of love; and work through our struggle and confusion to accomplish your purposes on earth; that, in your good time, all nations and races may serve you in harmony around your heavenly throne; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

**The General Confession (BCP, 360)**

Most merciful God,  
we confess that we have sinned against you  
in thought, word, and deed,  
by what we have done,  
and by what we have left undone.  
We have not loved you with our whole heart;  
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.  
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.  
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,  
have mercy on us and forgive us;  
that we may delight in your will,  
and walk in your ways,  
to the glory of your Name. *Amen.*

**Letter from a Birmingham Jail - A (excerpt)**

Moreover, I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states. I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. Never again can we afford to live with the narrow, provincial "outside agitator" idea. Anyone who lives inside the United States can never be considered an outsider anywhere within its bounds.

**Letter from a Birmingham Jail - B (excerpt)**

I must make two honest confessions to you, my Christian and Jewish brothers. First, I must confess that over the past few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen's Council or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate, who is more devoted to "order" than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says: "I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I cannot agree with your methods of direct action"; who paternalistically believes he can set the timetable for another man's freedom; who lives by a mythical concept of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait for a "more convenient season." Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection.

**Letter from a Birmingham Jail - C (excerpt)**

Actually, time itself is neutral; it can be used either destructively or constructively. More and more I feel that the people of ill will have used time much more effectively than have the people of good will. We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the hateful words and actions of the bad people but for the appalling silence of the good people. Human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability; it comes through the tireless efforts of men willing to be co-workers with God, and without this hard work, time itself becomes an ally of the forces of social stagnation. We must use time creatively, in the knowledge that the time is always ripe to do right. Now is the time to make real the promise of democracy and transform our pending national elegy into a creative psalm of brotherhood. Now is the time to lift our national policy from the quicksand of racial injustice to the solid rock of human dignity.

**Letter from a Birmingham Jail - D (excerpt)**

But the judgment of God is upon the church as never before. If today's church does not recapture the sacrificial spirit of the early church, it will lose its authenticity, forfeit the loyalty of millions, and be dismissed as an irrelevant social club with no meaning for the twentieth century. Every day I meet young people whose disappointment with the church has turned into outright disgust.

**Brothers and Sisters to Us: U.S. Catholic Bishops Pastoral Letter on Racism (11.14.79 p. 3)**

Racism is a sin: a sin that divides the human family, blots out the image of God among specific members of that family, and violates the fundamental human dignity of those called to be children of the same Father. Racism is the sin that says some human beings are inherently superior and others essentially inferior because of races. It is the sin that makes racial characteristics the determining factor for the exercise of human rights. It mocks the words of Jesus: "Treat others the way you would have them treat you." Indeed, racism is more than a disregard for the words of Jesus; it is a denial of the truth of the dignity of each human being revealed by the mystery of the Incarnation.

**Pope Francis (7.30.2013 Rio de Janeiro, World Youth Day)**

I would like to make an appeal to those in possession of greater resources, to public authorities, and to all people of good will who are working for social justice: Never tire of working for a more just world, marked by greater solidarity! No one can remain insensitive to the inequalities that persist in the world! Everybody, according to his or her particular opportunities and responsibilities, should be able to make a personal contribution to putting an end to so many social injustices. The culture of selfishness and individualism that often prevails in our society is not what builds up and leads to a more habitable world: It is the culture of solidarity that does so, seeing others not as rivals or statistics, but brothers and sisters.

**Ed Rodman quote** from “The Sin of Racism: A Pastoral Letter from the House of Bishops of the Episcopal Church”, March 1994

If racism is to be overcome, and our culture attain true inclusivity based on plurality and diversity, there is a great deal of confessing that must go on on all sides: confession that relates to our complicity in the genocide of native peoples, confession by whites of their continued advantage based on unearned privilege, confession by blacks of our co-dependence and participation in that corrupt value system, confession by both blacks and whites of our collusion in the racist dynamic which excludes Asians, Native Americans and Hispanics, confession by all of us of our dependency upon violence as a means of controlling others and settling disputes.