

Just Act

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A NEWSLETTER AND RESOURCE FOR THE CENTER FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION

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A Hard Friday Night

By Rev. Dr. Rodney Sadler

[It was a hard night in Charlotte, that first night of the Uprising inspired by the death of George Floyd...](#)

Rarely have I been afraid in this world—not even in my past experiences as part of a protest—but this night seemed different. The general feeling of love among the protestors that was present in the late afternoon, when the event began as a march, seemed to dissipate as the hour grew later. The march degenerated into a melee of rage and discord as bottles of urine were hurled at police, protestors roamed the streets with automatic rifles, and officers responded to the violence not with de-escalation tactics, but with tear gas, pepper spray, and rubber bullets.

The voice of God seemed largely absent.

I determined that it was best for me to leave. Not wanting to admit defeat, but having done all I could to talk the most bellicose of protestors off the ledge of their frustrations, I determined there was little more I could do to serve as a witness for God and peace. My lone clergy colleague present that night was leaving and encouraging me to follow suit. We had just spoken with the mayor to urge her to call the chief of police and ask for restraint, but soon afterward, the police came forward in full tactical gear. I began the walk back home thinking that I needed to make it there safely so I could report what I saw to the mayor and city manager the next day.

So began another time of protest here in the Queen City. I was on the streets for the first two weeks of the 2016 Uprising over the death of Keith Lamont Scott. I went out with many of my clergy colleagues to stand with the people, with a yellow band around my upper arm, to serve as a moral witness against violence—and to remind police and protestors alike that God was watching.

There were many clergy out each night then. There were nights when 35 to 50 clergy marched with the people, formed barriers between the protestors and the police, and sought to ensure that everyone got home safely at the end of the night. But this time, it was different.

This time, it was different because of the pandemic. We had already been sequestered for more than two and a half months, and while many people were eager to venture out, few clergy were willing to risk their lives to COVID-19. Clergy turnout during the George Floyd protests was at an all-time low, making it difficult to affect the tenor of the larger group.

But each night, a few of us would show up, convinced that God could use us and that the work of protest was worthwhile work. More important, God's presence was still evident as the people themselves began to pray

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RICHMOND, VA (May 31, 2020)—The following statement was made by Union Presbyterian Seminary President Brian K. Blount following the death of George Floyd, a Black man who died after a white Minneapolis, Minnesota, police officer pressed his knee into Mr. Floyd's neck until he stopped breathing. Mr. Floyd's death led to nationwide protests over police mistreatment of Black Americans.

WE MUST WITNESS

A President's Letter

By Rev. Dr. Brian Blount

“And they conquered [evil] by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their witness.” – the Apocalypse 12:11.

If white Christians were to ask me, a Black Christian, what they should do in response to the spiral of racially sparked violence into which we are rapidly and inevitably descending, I have pondered the response I would give. Strange, since no one has asked, that I nonetheless feel compelled to answer.

I feel compelled because I am afraid. I am afraid because I fear that my voice is too insignificant to matter. I am afraid because I fear that while what I say bears insufficient weight to make a difference, it carries just enough potency to get me in trouble. I am afraid because I fear bringing trouble on myself when my people are writhing in a perpetual abyss of systemic injustice. I am afraid because I fear that one day, long after I have died, my son and daughter will still weep at news about a Black individual murdered while sitting in her home, running in his community, walking home from his corner store, driving in her car, standing in his front yard, exploring in his park, worshipping in her church, lying helpless on an American street, the full weight of a cavalier—almost casual—curiously disinterested, white anger crushing his throat beneath its self-righteous, imperious knee. I am afraid because I fear a reckoning on the streets if we cannot find justice in the courts, redress in our politics, realignment of our institutional policies, and reconsideration of our racial values. I am afraid because I fear that when I am called to my own final reckoning, the record will show that I did not do my part. I did not witness. Not enough.

White Christians are not witnessing. Not enough.

In the Apocalypse, the world is possessed by systemic evil. That evil manifested itself in an imperial reign that demanded a fealty the Apocalypse's author claimed belonged solely to Christ. Rome wanted to be worshiped. Christ believers could respond in one of two ways. They could patriotically idolize Rome or they could witness to the Lordship of Christ. Either. Or.

Rome promised to punish anyone who refused to render the reverence it believed it was due. Writing to seven churches located in the belly of this imperial, bestial declaration of religious and political supremacy, John of Patmos pleaded for a witness to an alternative truth. The only leader who deserved fidelity and worship was this Jesus who died on a Roman cross. It was not Rome's empire but his resurrected Reign that should be revered and realized. He spilled his blood in an effort to inaugurate that Reign. He did his part.

Our Christian part is to witness to that Reign in the way we speak our words and live our lives. That is our formula for reckoning with systemic evil that possesses institutions and drives individuals mad. The Blood of the Lamb. The Witness of the Lamb's Followers. We Black and you white Christians.

What does a Reign under the Lordship of Christ look like? Before we can witness for it, we must know what it is. If we could see into God's future the way John saw through his open door into transcendence, perhaps we would know. We are not that farsighted.

But our hindsight ought to be 20/20. Because it is written in a record for us. If Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ of the Apocalypse, then we have a glimpse of what a Reign under his rule would look like. We have something for which to witness. In the Gospel vision. There, lepers are touched. There are no Eric Garners who cannot breathe. There, the sick are unilaterally healed. There are no Ahmaud Arberys demonically hunted to death. There, codes and laws too legalistically and unjustly applied are broken. There are no Breonna Taylors, shot eight times when their homes were broken into by law enforcement. There, men once incapacitated by paralysis walk. There are no George Floyds, paralyzed beneath the weight of ruthless state agents. There, systems of ethnic segregation are broken open by the vision of a house of prayer for all the nations. There is no aspiration of a rule where one people structure society so that it perpetually privileges them and those like them.

We know from hindsight the promise of Jesus's vision. We know what it intends. Our calling is to witness to it. No matter the cost.

I am afraid because I know I am not witnessing. Not enough.

I am afraid because I know white Christians are not witnessing. Not enough.

Why does our country need white Christians to witness more than they are? More now even than Black Christians and Black people of every faith and of no faith?

Whether it is individual acts of brutality or systemic oppression, it is hard to maneuver successfully for change when your hands are shackled, your legs are taken out from beneath you, and someone is kneeling on your neck. You need the people who wield economic, political, police, and military power to rein in the agents they have authorized to act on their behalf, to rain down change upon the systems their forebears have spent centuries erecting—to privilege themselves.

You need them to witness.

Not just spiritually. Tangibly. Not just with well-intentioned prayer. With concrete action. Not just from the pulpit and in the sanctuary. Out in the world, on the streets of their cities, in the corridors of their power.

No, this evil of enduring American racism is not just a Christian problem. But for a people who claim to follow a Jesus who died on a cross for all people, and whom we claim reigns in heaven interceding with God for all people, it is an evil we must especially engage. We cannot claim to witness to this risen Christ and simultaneously allow our country's descent into this racial abyss.

We Christian people can make a difference. We must help defeat this draconian, systemic evil.

By our witness.

Before it is too late.

WHEN HOME IS THE MOST DANGEROUS PLACE

Breonna Taylor and American Domestic Terrorism

By Rev. Melanie C. Jones

On March 13, 2020, the White House released a proclamation declaring a national emergency in the wake of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, with more than 1,645 people infected in 47 states. For many, March 13 was a day of reckoning that America could no longer evade a national shutdown, as “stay at home” orders loomed from federal, state, and local governments.

For Breonna Taylor, a 26-year-old African American millennial woman, March 13 marked a fatal ending as Louisville police barged into her home under a no-knock warrant and fired several rounds that resulted in her untimely demise. Breonna was shot eight times and killed while sleeping in her home because of a law enforcement hunch of “suspicious activity.”

Social workers and psychologists have long reported home as the most dangerous place for women, when nearly three in 10 women (and one in 10 men) have experienced abuse by an intimate partner in their lifetime. Restricting movement and enforcing lockdowns in the middle of the current global crisis intensifies the threat of increased violence and abuse in the home.

Breonna’s story reveals there are no safeguards against America’s domestically violent terror and compounding assaults facing Black

women—even in the privacy of the home and by the hands of those called to “protect and serve.” The politics of respectability collapsed when unjust laws permitted the life of this young Black woman to be invaded in a botched attempt to seize narcotics that were never found and her right to rest in peace to be eclipsed. The home was the most dangerous place for this sleeping beauty who endured the intimate assaults of stalking in the form of surveillance, forced entry without consent, and injury to the point of death by police.

The central aim of womanist theological ethics is to affirm and redeem Black women as made in the image of God in a world that constantly denies them the human right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The murder of Breonna Taylor unveils American terror as homegrown, with tactics of law and order that continue to devalue and desecrate Black life. At the time of this writing, Breonna Taylor’s killers have yet to be arrested or convicted.

#SayHerName. Breonna Taylor. Her life mattered.

cover story *Continued from page 1*

for each other in moments of distress, to embody Christian-centered modes of nonviolent protest similar to those of Dr. King, and to invoke God on their own in the midst of their struggle for social change.

The people came out holding signs saying “Black Lives Matter,” “No Justice, No Peace,” and “Justice Now!” They were a motley cadre of disparate kinds who came together to affirm that Black lives really *do* matter. What was wonderful was that many exclaiming this truth were white, Latinx, Asian, and Indigenous, as well as Black. In a true affirmation of the value of all human life, this diverse assembly was attesting that we, together, must ensure that Black lives really are valued in our society.

The signs were also different from before. In addition to the familiar ones mentioned above, there were signs calling for racial justice across the board—for systemic change, for far more than simple revisions of police codes of conduct and tactics. This time, the calls were for more comprehensive change, born of the fact that converging crises (COVID-19 and the murder of George Floyd—also deemed “COVID 1619” to mark the arrival of Africans in a racialized America) had illustrated the vast disparities between what it means to live in America in white and black skin.

Yes, this time, it is different. Different from the Uprisings that took place after Trayvon Martin’s murder by a would-be white enforcer of order over Blackness. Different from the protests over Michael Brown Jr.’s murder by a rogue, fully armed officer in a cruiser afraid of a distant child’s black body. The converging crises (COVID-19 and COVID 1619) have made it clear that the disparities are real, and now it seems that a critical mass of people agrees that we need to do something about it.

Now the protests have died down, for the most part. There are still some Uprisings continuing in cities around the nation, still some that garner attention on the national news—even hints of repression by secret police factions authorized by the executive branch of the federal government. And so the struggle in the streets continues.

But more than that, the struggle has shifted “from the streets to the suites.” I am pleased to see that the energy has now largely moved to fostering change at this moment that is pregnant for a new, more just reality. Calls for police reform have been joined by calls for better housing, higher-paying jobs, equal education, environmental justice, and a host of other changes meant to improve the lives of those in the Black community.

I have even seen a larger national effort toward truth and reconciliation work—similar to what took place in South Africa, but tailored to the realities of the United States of America. The movement that began with protests on an unsettled and unsettling Friday night is bearing fruit for true systemic change.

That is what I hope will be the outcome of this recent Uprising—a national truth and reconciliation process that yields true systemic change. We have this time as a nation to reimagine what it is that we can be. The

soil broken by COVID-19 and the George Floyd Uprisings has been tilled by a plethora of protests and is now ready for the seeding of America 2.0.

This New America can finally address the 401 years of racial inequality toward Black and Brown peoples and provide a new way forward—a new nation in which we can finally live into our credo that “all [people] are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights...”

If this New America can come about, perhaps that hard first Friday night might have served a useful purpose. In Jesus’s name, may it be so.

JustAct

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The Monumental Challenge of Our Time

By Rev. Dr. Mary John Dye

My life as a United Methodist pastor has brought me front-row views of the passion surrounding the past, present, and future of Confederate monuments.

Any controversy is (at least potentially) an opportunity to clarify our values, learn from others, discern priorities, and live into our best selves. Sometimes that opportunity is hard to welcome amid the clamor.

I should start by making a full disclosure. As a dedicated Duke fan (both of my daughters attended), I do not have any sentimental connection to UNC Chapel Hill—except for the hundreds of “loud and proud” UNC fans I have loved as members of my congregations through the years. So “Silent Sam” is not part of my personal history, with the kind of emotional attachments that come from memories through the years.

I do, however, have deeply formative pastoral experiences that make the current upheaval about Silent Sam and other Confederate monuments feel personal.

Breaking Ground in Mississippi

My first pastoral appointment as a United Methodist minister was to a Black congregation in the Mississippi Delta. My assignment in Indianola, Mississippi, was the first cross-racial UMC appointment in the state. Indianola was also home to the White Citizens' Council and influential segregationist James Eastland, a former U.S. senator. My congregation was six blocks from the Sunflower County courthouse where civil rights heroine Fannie Lou Hamer went to register to vote, and just one block from hometown hero B.B. King's Club Ebony.

The first funeral I officiated was for a woman who was 104 years old and whose parents were slaves. I served extraordinary people—teachers, principals, the first Black member of the Indianola City Board of Education, the first Black member of a police force anywhere in Mississippi, and the first Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee worker in the Mississippi Delta.

I was in Indianola in 1982, less than a generation away from the height of the civil rights movement. I will never forget the grace the congregants extended to me when they asked for me to be their pastor—not only as a white clergy member in a Black congregation, but also as a female in the days when such a welcome for a woman was a rarity. I have a lifetime of stories.

I knew that Christian faith has always affirmed God's love for everyone. Serving a Black church in the Mississippi Delta was, however, my first up-close-and-personal view of the brutality of racial prejudice.

A story in the *Memphis Commercial Appeal* spotlighting my ministry in a Black congregation led to my first death threat. But the venom directed toward me was nothing compared to what I saw my members go through. Never again would I be able to look at the Southern way of life in a casual or idealized way.

I saw that the heritage of the Confederacy had a very ugly side, with lingering effects. Any decent person would recoil at what I saw happen to the people in my pastoral care. I also saw the spiritually corrosive effect that racism had on the soul of white people in the community. That experience is indelibly seared into my soul and my conscience.

A Fractured Church

I have always been proud that my denomination's founder, John Wesley, was an avid, outspoken opponent of slavery. Although he clearly stated that no Methodist could own a slave and be a part of the denomination, white Southern Methodists were torn but ultimately unable to give up the economic benefits of slavery over the religious principles of the church.

Southern Methodists seceded from the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1844. They reunited in 1939 in a racially segregated arrangement known simply as the Methodist Church. So the way of life the Confederacy stood for dramatically (and sadly) affected my denomination. It was not until the formation of the United Methodist Church in 1968 that the denomination got back to its true Wesleyan roots, where people of all races are welcome

at every level. My front-row seat to the pain caused by the Confederacy is impossible to forget.

When I see Confederate monuments, my heart sees the faces of people I love—Black people who were beaten for starting Freedom Schools to teach Black students to read; Black people who were harassed when they tried to register to vote; Black people who faced impossible literacy tests and who lost their jobs when they registered to vote; Black people who, in order to vote, were required to give an accurate count of a huge jar of jelly beans in the chancery clerk's office.

These are people I knew and loved. They have names and faces and scars. I saw the legacy of what the Confederacy stood for in real time. It did not end when the Civil War ended. What I witnessed took place in my lifetime. What I saw was contrary to everything I cherished about our nation's founding principles of liberty and justice for all.

Monumental Lessons

Thirty years later, I saw the Confederacy in another up-close-and-personal way.

The largest Confederate monument in Mecklenburg County stands in Cornelius, North Carolina, on the front yard of Mt. Zion United Methodist Church, where I served as senior pastor. Mt. Zion was one of the many North Carolina Methodist Churches that seceded from the denomination in sympathy with the Southern cause. When the Mt. Zion Confederate monument was defaced in July 2015 and again in August 2017, the members' pain, anger, and profound anguish were visceral.

I saw the depths of the love white defenders of the Confederacy had for their history; how profoundly they cherished their memories; and how steadfastly, adamantly, and defiantly they disassociated the Confederate monument from racism.

But, as was the case with Silent Sam, the dedicatory speech for the Mt. Zion monument in 1910 clearly stated that it, like others of its time, was to honor and uphold white supremacy. There is no question of its original intent.

However, I also learned—and came to respect—that many people with affectionate memories of the monument knew nothing of its overtly racist origin until July 2015, when the final sentence of the dedicatory speech was spray-painted on the monument. The fear that their heritage was under attack triggered resistance, despair, and anger, and this cocktail of emotions brought out the worst impulses in some.

A number of people came to me offering to bring their guns and sit on the porch of our nearby youth house so they could shoot any “blankety-blanks” who came to mess with “their” monument. These offers were completely sincere, and those who made them were oblivious to the reality that a shooting on the church's front lawn would not be welcomed by the church or community. Their willingness to protect the monument at any cost was as frightening as the offers to serve as armed guards.

When I think of Confederate monuments, I think of these people who were (and are) devoted to the one at Mt. Zion. They are people I loved—people who were torn and angry that the world had changed, people who were genuinely insulted that Confederate symbols were associated with racism (although, to their credit, they reluctantly admitted that white supremacists picked up and publicized symbols of the Confederacy for the cause of racism), people who were quick to insist that you can't erase history.

And they are so right. We can't erase history. We shouldn't even want to erase history. But the gift of history is to teach us to learn from our mistakes—not to memorialize them or to stubbornly insist that they were not mistakes at all.

As a friend said to me, “What if I had an affair—an intense, passionate affair that broke up my marriage? Then I came back to my husband and said, “The affair is over. I am coming back to you and I am devoted to you. The only thing important to me is to put a picture of my lover over our

“We can’t erase history. We shouldn’t even want to erase history. But the gift of history is to teach us to learn from our mistakes—not to memorialize them or to stubbornly insist that they were not mistakes at all.”



bed.’ And if my husband said he didn’t feel comfortable with a picture of my boyfriend in our bedroom, what if I turned and said to him, ‘I have come back to you. And this picture? It’s only history. You can’t change history. It happened.’”

“Would anyone think my idea was a good one, or that my affair was really over as long as I was insisting on displaying a picture of my lover when I was pledging to come back to my marriage? Is there any husband who would accept those terms?”

Her questions made me think. She wouldn’t be pretending that her history of unfaithfulness didn’t happen. But, moving forward, to put up images of that unfaithfulness—and to insist on using images of the unfaithful party—would not be consistent with re-establishing trust.

Memories without Honor

The passions over Confederate monuments give us an opportunity to learn from wrong turns, misguided passions, and hurtful actions and attitudes. History holds a gift to unlock a better present and future. Ancestors are not honored through repeating the same mistakes or defending indefensible positions. And ancestors are certainly not honored by highlighting their shortcomings.

Every person—and every cause—is a combination of strength and weakness, wisdom and foolish mistakes. I have preached hundreds of eulogies. As a pastor, I have been privileged with a full range of information about the people I serve and the people I eulogize. I have never once been asked by a family to highlight the mistakes or misplaced loyalties of their loved one. I have never been asked to lift up their shortcomings or proudly feature decisions they made that created pain and chaos and hurt others. Anyone who has been in my office knows that my heritage is precious to me. My displays, however, do not highlight the shortcomings of the past that I honor.

The Confederacy, most charitably viewed, was a way of life based on the idea that some people are better than other people based on the color of their skin. That is the essential conviction of the Confederate cause and way of life. Symbols of the Confederacy, whether they are flags or granite, cannot be separated from the foundational premise that ordered life in the Confederacy. The conviction that some people are better than other people based on the color of their skin was—and is—antithetical to the founding principles of our nation and Christian faith.

When I look at Confederate monuments, I see the faces of Black congregants I have loved and served. I remember how important it is not to minimize or ignore the devastating effects of racial injustice. Taking seriously what the Confederacy stood for, I do not know how to see the faces of my beloved congregation and, at the same time, bless or deny or cover up the damage and devastation they have suffered.

When I see Confederate monuments (as I have virtually every day over the past six years), I see the faces of white congregants I have loved—people who are profoundly capable of nobility and devotion and goodness, and, at the same time, people who are deeply, defiantly devoted to the preservation of Confederate monuments. I also see the faces of

people of conscience who were deeply conflicted about the monument when their friends insisted on allegiance to “The Cause.”

As a pastor, I see daily how painful it is for people to face the ugly parts of life, whether they are personal, involve their family, or have more to do with broader national history. From the pastor’s perch, I also know that hurt continues to corrode the soul and create divisions until truth—and only truth—can nurture healing and wholeness.

The Burden of Knowledge

In regard to Confederate monuments, the decision that presents itself is not speculation or revisionist history. The truth of their purpose was plainly stated as the monuments were dedicated. And now that the truth of the Confederate monuments is confirmed by the words of those who erected them, what will we do with what we know? Will the truth of history become an altar that draws us to repentance? Or will the history of these monuments only galvanize strident, defiant voices to speak now in support of a way of life that denied equality?

As painful as current controversies are, the swirl of emotions around Confederate monuments opens a door widely to people I love—a chance for people across a wide spectrum of opinions to show that they have learned the heart-rending, tragic lessons of the Confederacy. These moments of decision give people the chance to show that they are no longer enmeshed in trying to portray good in a chapter of our history that was inherently unfaithful to the most basic premise of our democracy.

We have the chance to truly honor the sacrifices of those who fought for the Confederacy by showing that we have grasped the tragedy that occurs when people insist on, defend, and enforce inequality. We have a chance to truly honor the painful lessons of the past and not perpetuate ever-new tragedy, loss of respect, and division.

The furor over Confederate monuments gives us a chance to gain a new heart and a soul that learns from history. The controversy opens the door to a day when people will know of our honor and wisdom because we will not cling to idealized symbols of a way of life that tore our nation to its core.

This new day gives us a chance to acknowledge that the belief that some people are better than others is still a threat to our democracy.

This new day shows that love for our heritage is seared in our souls in a transformative way—a building block to a better future.

This new day offers the healing and redemption that can come when we, without hesitation or reluctance, affirm that denying justice to all undercuts the honor of our nation and our faith.

This new day would not erase history. It would put history to powerful, constructive use for the good of all.

This new day would be a credit to both the past and the future.

I hope I have another front-row seat yet ahead—a chapter written in honorable convictions and practice; a healing, redemptive day that unfolds through the turmoil unfolding around us.

That could be the most indelible imprint of all.

A Plan for Teaching Justice

By Rev. Dr. Becky Davis

Regardless of our news source, there is no escaping the reality of a world falling far short of God’s best intention for it. From streets to steeples, we hear the urgent call for justice.

While our hearts may ache and our personal sense of righteous indignation may spark, many pastors and educators are hesitant to preach and teach on perceived politically volatile issues. Some cite a misunderstood notion of church and state separation, while others fear the ecclesial-political fallout of members who “come to church to get away from the mess of the world” or do not want to hear “politics from the pulpit.”

At the heart is a fear of further dividing a church and a world that are increasingly polarized. The Church must ultimately turn to scripture as its plumb line for understanding that justice was biblical long before it was political and biblical justice was then—and is now—always about personal and political faithfulness to God’s vision for community and the common good. This lesson plan offers a place to begin—an introductory exploration of scripture’s witness for justice.

Teaching Proposition

Justice is personally, relationally, and systemically honoring the Imago Dei in each person by embodying concrete expressions of the steadfast love mandated in scripture so that all God’s people have what is needed to live into the fullness for which they were created.

Supplies

- Adhesive easel paper
- Markers
- NRSV Bibles (hard copies, or electronic copies if participants have phones or tablets)
- Copies of the “Considering Scripture” and “Solemn Blessing” handout

Before Participants Arrive

Write each of the following statements (“Mulling Moments”) on a separate piece of easel paper and post around the room:

- Justice is...
- Charity is...
- I participate in acts of kindness because...
- The reason(s) people are poor is/are...
- What does it mean to you to be created in the Image of God?
- On a scale of 1 to 5, my personal responsibility to help the poor is...
- When I see a person at a stoplight with a sign asking for help,
 - » I feel...
 - » I think...
 - » I do...
- If I love God, I need to...
- If I love my neighbor, I need to...

Place the “Considering Scripture” and “Solemn Blessing” handouts on each seat.

Have markers available for participants to write responses to the Mulling Moments.

Lesson Plan for Teaching Justice

I. Welcome

As participants arrive, invite them to take a marker and move around the room adding their thoughts to each Mulling Moment page. When they are finished, encourage them to find a seat and start looking up scriptures on the handout, working in groups if there are fewer participants than scriptures.

Once scripture exploration is finished, transition into a time of prayer using this one or your own:

Gracious and Sovereign Lord, we thank you for this opportunity to dive more deeply into scripture and explore what it is you would have us understand about justice. Open our minds and our hearts to the leading of your Spirit, even when we may be hesitant. Give us the courage to consider and to ponder the ways in which you would have us live according to your ways. In Christ’s name we pray, Amen.

Incorporate the following Teaching Points into your introductory remarks

- Justice is not always a comfortable subject to discuss, nor is it one on which everyone will agree.
- Note the differences in the Mulling Moments responses posted around the room.
- However, justice is woven into the very fabric of the Judeo-Christian faith.
- From the covenant of Abraham, to the commandments God gave to Moses, to the very heart of Jesus’s ministry—justice is God’s expectation for faith living.

II. Examining Biblical Justice

Transition into a time of exploring what even a few scriptures teach us about justice.

- Draw two lines down a piece of easel paper, dividing it into three columns with “what” at the top of column one, “why” at the top of column two, and “how” at the top of column three.
- If the passage is short, ask participants to read it aloud, or, if it is longer, summarize, then share responses to each of the three guiding questions.
- Write participants’ insights in the corresponding columns.

“The Church must ultimately turn to scripture as its plumb line for understanding that justice was biblical long before it was political.”



CONSIDERING SCRIPTURE

As you read the texts, answer these questions:

What does it say about justice?

Why is justice important?

How are we to act justly?

Incorporate the following Teaching Points into your remarks:

- Justice begins in Genesis, with the foundational belief that all people are created in the image of God (Imago Dei).
- Recognizing and honoring the Imago Dei in others fundamentally changes how we see and treat one another—personally and communally.
- Our actions and interactions tangibly reflect how faithfully we are living into our own Imago Dei.
- Reformed theologian Karl Barth interpreted the Imago Dei in relational terms. He contends that the image of God is manifested when we engage with others in ways consistent with right relationship with God and love of neighbor.
- Justice is a reflection of the Imago Dei, recognized and honored in the other and lived faithfully into our own.
- God’s priority for justice and righteousness is so strong that it is written into the laws and commandments given to God’s people in the Mosaic covenant and embodied in the person and ministry of Jesus Christ.
- Throughout the Gospels, Jesus takes on God’s precedents for justice—in particular, care for the poor, the powerless, and the marginalized—and then incorporates it into the work of his disciples.
- Justice is a fundamental characteristic of our covenantal relationship with God.

III. Engaging Justice and Kindness

Read Micah 6:6–8 aloud.

Engage in dialogue with these questions:

- What are the three requirements mentioned in this passage, and what do you think they mean?
- Why do you think Micah used “do” with justice, “love” with kindness, and “walk humbly” with God?

Incorporate the following Teaching Points into the discussion:

- Micah was a prophet sent by God to admonish the people for their unfaithfulness to the covenantal relationship.
- They broke their part of the covenant by ignoring and benefiting from injustice, and putting their own self-interest first.
- “Doing with justice” means working to change and dismantle all systems that oppress, foster inequity and powerlessness, or hinder any person fashioned in the image of God from living into the fullness for which they were created.
- “Loving with kindness” means embodying tangible acts of love that meet the concrete needs of the poor, the powerless, and the marginalized, thereby reflecting the steadfast love we experience in our covenantal relationship with God.
- Our work in both is sustained by walking humbly with God. Christian practices, such as worship, bible study, prayer, listening, and telling one another our stories, compel and nurture our call to construct a world that more faithfully reflects God’s best intention for it.

IV. Pondering the Implications

Now it’s time to consider the “so what?” of our study. Create space for communal discernment using this question:

- Now that we better understand the biblical witness for justice and why it is important to God, how will we live differently?

V. Sending

Close with the litany on the back of the handout.

Genesis 1:26–27	Jeremiah 9:23–24
◆	◆
Genesis 18:19	Hosea 12:5–7
◆	◆
Exodus 6:2–8	Amos 5:10–14 & 21–24
◆	◆
Leviticus 19:13–18	Micah 6:6–8
◆	◆
Numbers 26:33–27:7	Matthew 25:31–46
◆	◆
Deuteronomy 6:4–15a	Mark 12:28–34
◆	◆
Deuteronomy 10:17–19	Luke 4:14–21
◆	◆
Deuteronomy 15:7–11	Luke 18:1–8
◆	◆
Deuteronomy 16:20	John 10:10
◆	◆
Deuteronomy 24:14–22	John 13:34–35
◆	◆
Psalms 146	1 John 3:16–18
◆	◆
Isaiah 1:12–16	1 John 4:4–12
◆	◆
Isaiah 61:1–3	1 John 4:18–21

A SOLEMN BLESSING

God has called you to live in integrity and justice.
May you love mercy, act justly, and walk
humbly with God.

AMEN

Jesus has shown you how to love your enemies
and neighbors. May you seek to be peacemakers
and to live in God’s light.

AMEN

The Holy Spirit has comforted and disturbed you
with God’s peace. May you be full of joy and courage
all the moments of your nights and days.

AMEN

May Almighty God bless you:
the Maker and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

AMEN

by Ruth Burgess in *Justice and Peace*, Iona Community, Wild Goose Publications

weeping may endure for a night

By Rev. de'Angelo Dia

start with the pain
social isolation
fragmentation
eyes flood with tears captivated by silence

7:55 a.m. - i gently squeeze her shoulder
trying to be present
the crying never stops
empty spaces
the rush of adrenaline
left with fragility

Dec. 7, 1941 countless Americans
official death toll 2,403
Navy personnel, Marines, Army service members, civilians
a nation in peril
recruiting stations
a pivotal moment of solidarity
and yet when 47,000 Americans kill themselves yearly
as a result of depression
and 72,000 more die from addiction
isn't that a silent Pearl Harbor

when basic norms of decency, civility, and truthfulness are under constant
threat
isn't that a silent Pearl Harbor
when Black and Brown youth are
five times as likely to be incarcerated as White youth
isn't that a silent Pearl Harbor

this is not about comparing pain
this is an epidemic

a dedicated nurse navigates 12-hour shifts at a VA Medical Center
providing care to COVID-19 patients
at the sacrifice of self-care

a furloughed hotel chef processes the days to come
questioning God and where his next meal will come from
witnessing the self-indulging nature of others

a concerned neighbor in Greenville
indignant because once again
Black youth continue to face intentional injustice
just as gross as 1955

a college student in the Midwest
convinced that she is the only one haunted by compulsive thoughts
about her own worthlessness
equated by mathematical theories and agents of poverty alleviation

the Trump-supporting small-business man in Louisiana
silently clenches his fist in rage
as presumptuous dinner guests disparage his way of life and theology
trickle-down theory

this pain is a common threat
lack of healthy connection, an inability to see the full dignity in others
the resulting culture...fear, distrust, tribalism, shaming, strife
an obsolete system operating on the basis of one-dimensional perspectives
conceived by the Holy Spirit

start with the pain
social isolation
fragmentation
processing insecurity yet confronted with collective reality
attempting to understand
why there was ever a need for weeping to endure for a night

CSJR SOCIAL JUSTICE FELLOWSHIP

CSJR Partners with Selwyn Avenue Presbyterian Church

By Erin Mills

In an effort to fulfill the second priority of the CSJR, to “engage the Seminary—particularly students—in social justice thought and work within the community,” and the goal of the Seminary to produce bold Christian leaders, the CSJR has been seeking to engage with a local congregation to establish a means of employing and training students at the intersection between faith, vocation, and social change and to diversify the student body through financial support for students of color.

We are grateful to the congregation of Selwyn Avenue Presbyterian Church in Charlotte, North Carolina, for partnering with us in this endeavor. The CSJR Social Justice Fellowship is intended to support students of color attending the Charlotte campus of Union Presbyterian Seminary. If you or someone in your organization has questions or is interested in contributing to this fellowship, please email the CSJR Coordinator, Erin Mills, at emills@upsem.edu.

REPRESENTING OUR MISSION

New Logo for Center

By Erin Mills

CSJR's new logo, designed by Edith Ridderhof of Odd Egg Design, beautifully portrays the work and mission of the Center—a dove carrying an olive branch, symbolizing shalom, a Hebrew concept that involves the wholeness of justice being done in this world; for without justice, there can be no peace.

The image that illustrates holistic peace also conveys the notion of reconciliation. The image of the dove was created using a mosaic of different shapes and colors. One might see the harmonious combining of disparate shapes to create the dove as representing the diversity of the people, ideas, and experiences the Center works to bring together within the walls of the Seminary and in the world.

We hope that you will also note a hidden secret in the mosaic. Jesus, represented by the purple (the color of royalty) fish, is always at the heart of the Center's mission and work.





SHARING IN A DEEPER LIFE OF FAITH

Palestinian Lives Matter

By Rev. Dr. Bob Henderson

For nearly 30 years, I've joined others in a vigorous study of matters related to Israel/Palestine. Our curriculum has included trips, interfaith discussions, panels with subject matter experts, book studies, and, of course, Bible studies. Participants have spanned a surprising range of political and theological perspectives, most coming with a genuine spirit of appreciative inquiry, hoping to gain clarity about issues often veiled in the fog of political polemic. These explorations have been a source of great joy and occasional exhaustion.

I'm often asked why. Why spend energy on a topic that so easily frays relationships and cultivates controversy? Wouldn't it be better to focus on local issues of justice—issues like educational equity, housing policy, and racial reconciliation? What unique opportunity does this enthusiastic study of Israel/Palestine offer that warrants such priority?

Let me offer six substantive responses:

1) Studying matters of justice in Israel/Palestine raises a rare mirror to similar issues at home. Participants from every trip return saying that issues in Israel/Palestine strike a remarkable resemblance to those in their own communities, only intensified. Housing laws in Israel/Palestine are blatantly oppressive and help us see our own discriminatory practices. Disparities in educational funding and other social services in Israel/Palestine illuminate similar, if more subtle, dynamics in our own country. The disproportionate percentage of Palestinians in Israeli jails mirrors racial inequalities in the American prison system. Examining social and justice inequities in Israel/Palestine—inequities heavily supported by U.S. tax dollars and international policy—fosters deeper insight into corresponding issues at home.

2) Studying the current issues of Israel/Palestine makes ancient scripture spring to life. Way back in the fourth century A.D., St. Jerome called this land “the fifth Gospel”—one that gives texture and nuance to the canonical Gospels.

To stand on Mount Carmel and read the story of Elijah challenging the gods of Baal, to walk the Palm Sunday road and envision the crowds shouting “Hosanna,” and to set out in a boat on the Sea of Galilee while a storm brews breathes new life into ancient stories and adds color and texture to enigmatic teachings. For those who have long struggled to read the Bible, this “freshness” often transforms the experience from one of frustration and confusion into a delightful encounter with stories of God's intervention in human history.

3) Understanding the realities of modern-day Israel/Palestine promotes solidarity with an oppressed Christian population. On an early trip to Bethlehem, Palestine, I dropped into Bethlehem Bible College unannounced. I was greeted by President Awad, who patiently explained the Palestinians' struggle as well as their hopes and dreams. When I asked what I, a Christian brother and senior minister of a large congregation in the United States, might do for him, he said, “Tell our story.”

Citizens of Palestine are painfully aware that few in the world understand their day-to-day experiences of occupation and oppression. Even fewer know of their house demolitions, water rations, and restricted movement. Fewer still speak of—or even acknowledge—Israel's military raids on Palestinian homes, schools,

and towns. To live in Palestine is to experience isolation. By studying, learning, and comprehending the reality of occupation, Christians in the United States offer solidarity with God's children in distress and embrace the Apostle Paul's teaching to “bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.” (Galatians 6:2)

4) Being deeply informed on issues in Israel/Palestine leads to more diverse relationships at home. Once we started to delve beneath the surface of matters related to Israel/Palestine, members of the Jewish community invited us into vigorous discussion and debate. This has led to stronger long-term relationships and a better understanding of topics that often divide.

More surprising, however, is how these explorations built a welcome bridge to various Arab communities, both Christian and Muslim. Knowledge of Israel/Palestine served as the key to forging friendships with Muslims from Pakistan, Syria, Palestine, and other locales. It has also fortified relationships with minority Christian populations in our hometown. These friendships have served our city well, especially during unexpected crises related to race and culture.

5) Exploring issues related to modern-day Israel/Palestine deconstructs the western Zionist narrative equating ancient biblical Israel with modern-day political Israel. Any successful discussion about “Israel” (however it is defined) is predicated on intentionally decoupling the ancient biblical and modern political narratives.

Simply put, ancient biblical Israel had many iterations, names, borders, and boundaries. However, it never looked like the Israel of today's Zionist narrative, which suggests that “Israel” is the land between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. Distinguishing the so-called “biblical Israel” from modern day “political Israel” is essential to any substantive understanding of the landscape in today's Israel and Palestine.

6) Understanding the dynamics of military occupation reveals the corrosive effects of power and the inevitable hopelessness it imposes on a people. Those who live in Palestine do so largely under the oppressive practices of Israel's military, court systems, and civic administration. In addition, Israel largely controls Palestine's water, electricity, borders, tax collection, and population movement. This extraordinary power is often exploited and leads to poverty, violence, and despair. Israel's long military occupation of Israel offers a rare modern-day exhibit revealing the dynamics of oppression and the anguish—and subsequent violence—it causes. Insights gained from understanding these dynamics allow us to work wisely for justice rather than joining the chorus of powerful voices that impose fear and shame on victims.

The rewards of walking this sometimes-arduous road *are* rich, but most gratifying is the cumulative effect of sharing in a deeper life of faith with others. Some find issues around justice most compelling. Others love learning the nuances of biblical stories. Still others appreciate moving humanity forward by building bridges across religious and cultural differences. Most importantly, all find portals into a deeper understanding and experience of being Christian—a rare gift in an increasingly secular age and a beautiful reminder of what being the “church,” God's called-out and called-together people, is all about.

DENYING OUR OWN RACIAL IDENTITY

Reckoning with Whiteness

By Rev. Dr. Benjamin Boswell

Whenever there are incidents of obvious racism in American society, the first thing white Christians say is, “We need to have a conversation about race.” During the course of 17 years of ministry in white-dominant congregations, however, I have discovered that conversations about race in white churches are not only ineffective, but often counterproductive.

In white-dominant congregations, the subject of race is often discussed as an abstract external problem and focused on issues facing the Black community. Many white Christians imagine race as something other people (i.e., people racialized as Black and Brown) possess that they do not, and therefore tend to participate in conversations about race as detached subjects, without discussing or addressing our own racial identity. Subsequently, people racialized as white struggle to talk about race without perpetuating racist ideologies.

White people live in state of constant denial about our own racial identity. Whiteness typically goes unmarked and operates under the surface—remaining hidden, invisible, and unseen. White people imagine we are “normal” and do not have race; however, we not only have a racial identity, but we also invented the concept of race and have a deep investment in remaining blind to our own whiteness because it helps maintain unjust racial structures.

For this reason, identifying whiteness is absolutely critical for understanding race. Conversations about race that fail to address whiteness will always remain shallow surface-level discussions, particularly for people racialized as white, who participate in—and benefit directly from—the power and advantage of whiteness.

While it is critical for white religious congregations to engage in conversations about race and racism, these conversations will most likely reinforce color-blind racism if an identification, recognition, and acknowledgement of whiteness is not at the forefront for the white participants. When white people engage in racial dialogue without the ability to see their own racial identity through the lens of whiteness, they simply perpetuate white supremacy and often cause further damage. Therefore, establishing a process for members of white-dominant congregations to improve their ability to see whiteness and identify their participation in whiteness is essential for healthy dialogue about racism.

Based on the work of theologians like James Cone, Kelly Brown Douglas, and Willie James Jennings, I define whiteness as an evil ideology—a principality or power (e.g., the apostle Paul) that is built on an anti-Black epistemology. In other words, whiteness is not an ethnicity; it is an evil system of domination and control, and whiteness has always operated as the cultural hegemony of America.

However, whiteness not only harms Black people; it also harms people racialized as white. As James Baldwin wrote, “[White people] are, in effect, still trapped in a history they do not understand, and until they understand it, they cannot be released from it.” Therefore, as white people, learning to see and understanding the reality of whiteness is where the journey of becoming anti-racist begins.

For a Doctor of Ministry qualitative research project, I developed an intentional small group process of spiritual formation designed to address color-blind racism and white fragility. I set out to determine if utilizing a curriculum of Black authors’ perspectives on whiteness in a circle of trust infused with the spiritual practices of meditation and confession could help people who are racialized as white identify their whiteness and improve their ability for deep dialogue on race.

My hypothesis was that the process of reckoning with whiteness in a spiritual context would illuminate why white-dominant congregations have difficulty talking about race, deepen the self-awareness of whites about their own race, strengthen their capacity for healthy participation in racial dialogue, and offer white-dominant congregations new tools for creating their own unique process for identifying whiteness in their own contexts and talking about the problem of racism.

I created a six-week spiritual formation process titled “What Does it Mean to Be White?” that offers white participants the opportunity to investigate and wrestle with whiteness in a small group environment based on Parker Palmer’s “circle of trust” model. James Weldon Johnson wrote, “Colored people of this country know and understand white people better than they know and understand themselves.” In light of that reality, I curated a curriculum of essays that amplifies the words and creativity of Black



“...white pastors could transform white-dominant congregations into anti-racist training grounds where religious people identify their whiteness through a carefully curated curriculum and work through the racial stress of white fragility through spiritual practice.”

intellectuals and artists and reveals the unique insights they have offered throughout history about the nature of whiteness. Each week, participants in the circle of trust read articles written about whiteness by Black authors for the purpose of increasing their ability to see themselves through the eyes of Black people, to identify the ideology of whiteness, and to understand their participation in that culture.

The findings of my qualitative research project determined that congregants who participated in the circle of trust were not only able to identify color-blind racism, but also demonstrated an exponential improvement in their ability to understand the concept of whiteness, and to identify whiteness in history, society, and their own lives. Additionally, participants increased their ability to identify white fragility in themselves and in others, and developed greater emotional stamina for racial dialogue as well as their ability to engage in healthy racial dialogue.

At the end of the journey, participants used the metaphor of going to the ophthalmologist to receive an eye exam, getting a prescription changed, or putting on new glasses as a way to describe the experience of learning to identify and understand whiteness. Philosophers describe this phenomenon as a radical shift in the participants’ *Weltanschauung*, or worldview.

A worldview shift in the ideology of whiteness has the potential to enable deeper, more effective, and transformative dialogue on racism in our congregations. Moreover, it also has the potential to radically transform the way we live by empowering us, as people of faith and good conscience, to take responsibility for our racial history and identities as we work together to eliminate structural racism, dismantle white supremacy, and create a more just, equitable, and peaceful society.

By adapting this process to their own contexts, white pastors could transform white-dominant congregations into anti-racist training grounds where religious people identify their whiteness through a carefully curated curriculum and work through the racial stress of white fragility through spiritual practice. Furthermore, congregants who participate in this kind of process would have a better understanding of their own white racial identity and therefore would be better prepared for healthy interracial dialogue and action. Most importantly, participants who can identify their whiteness would likely become more adept at engaging in anti-racist efforts in their own communities.

THE STRUGGLE FOR JUSTICE

How White Churches Can Get Involved

By Rev. Greg Jarrell

White churches often want to get involved in movements for justice but they are unsure of the best way to do so. This is an understandable problem. Whiteness is a moral formation away from God's vision of thriving and justice. White theologies have taken our imaginations from us, which can make it hard to see ourselves getting into the stream of the God movement.

There is so much to learn, and there are so many ways to get involved. Many organizations have put together helpful guides. Here are a few ways for your congregation to think about your involvement in the struggle for justice.

1. Read the Bible with Black people. There are several ways you might do this. Go to a regular Bible study at a Black church in your town. Use books by Black authors as your own Bible study guide for devotional reading. Watch sermons by luminaries like Dr. Wil Gafney, Dr. William Barber, or Dr. Kelly Brown Douglas and listen for the ways these preachers make Scripture come alive from perspectives white Christians do not have.
2. Assume you are a novice. One of the key rules in monastic communities is the assumption, when at prayer, that you are a novice. In Zen

Buddhist traditions, a similar idea is called "Beginner's Mind." When you show up in movement spaces, show up to support, to learn, and to follow. You are a beginner. At every point, remember that you are still learning your way into a new moral formation—in the same way that every time you pray, you are learning again how to pray.

3. Use all your resources. There are so many ways to participate, so be sure to consider all the opportunities you have. Can your church kitchen be used for food prep for protesters? Do you have meeting space available? Can you write checks? Can you organize a group to join a march or advocate for policy change? Everything is on the table.
4. Know your history. Your congregation has a story. Learn it—both the good and the bad. As you learn, you may find ways to help your congregation move more fully into the stream of the God movement in the world. Perhaps there is a historic wrong from within your congregation that you can help right. Maybe there is a strong stream of liberation in your church's story that you can connect to. There are many possibilities once you begin to learn your history.

New Contributors to This Issue

Brian Blount is President and Professor of New Testament at Union Presbyterian Seminary, which has campuses in Richmond, Virginia, and Charlotte, North Carolina. He was called to his position in 2007 after serving for 15 years as the Richard J. Dearborn Professor of New Testament Interpretation at Princeton Theological Seminary. He obtained his B.A. from the College of William & Mary. After graduating from Princeton Seminary (M.Div.) in 1981, he went on to become the pastor of Carver Memorial Presbyterian Church in Newport News, Virginia, from 1982 to 1988. Dr. Blount received his Ph.D. in New Testament Studies from Emory University in 1992 and returned to teach at Princeton Theological Seminary the same year. He is the author of six books, the most recent being *Invasion of the Dead: Preaching Resurrection* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2014).

Benjamin Boswell is the Senior Minister of Myers Park Baptist Church, where he works at the intersection of strategic leadership, spiritual formation, and social justice. He is a former infantry officer in the U.S. Army and a graduate of Marion Military Institute (A.A.), Campbell University (B.A.), Duke Divinity School (M.Div.), and Saint Paul School of Theology (D.Min.), where his doctoral thesis was "Identifying Whiteness: Discerning Race through Spiritual Practice in the White-Dominant Church." In addition to his pastoral responsibilities, Rev. Boswell facilitates anti-racism trainings for white-dominant congregations called "What Does It Mean to Be White?"

Rebecca Davis, Associate Professor of Christian Education at Union Presbyterian Seminary in Charlotte, North Carolina, is a Minister of the Word and Sacrament and a Certified Christian Educator in the PC(USA). For more than 30 years, she has served congregations and presbytery staff and currently teaches those preparing for leadership and advocacy in the church and the world. Dr. Davis was named the Association of Presbyterian Church Educators' 2018 Educator of the Year and is currently partnering with the Children's Defense Fund on "Liberating Sunday School," creating a paradigm of possibility through the Freedom Church School Curriculum.

de'Angelo Dia is a poet, comic book scholar, and D.Min. student at Union Presbyterian Seminary. He investigates public opinion and contemporary belief on cultural, social-political, and theological issues through poetry, visual art, and performance. Rev. Dia received a B.S. in Communication and Sociobiology from Appalachian State University, a M.A. in Literature from The University of North Carolina at Charlotte, and an M.Div. from Union Presbyterian Seminary. His artistic influences include ethno-gothic literature, comic books and graphic novels, and neo-Appalachian art. He is a member of the Goodyear Arts Collective, Life Member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., and serves as the minister of social justice at St. Paul Baptist Church in Charlotte.

Mary John Dye is the Senior Pastor at Broad Street United Methodist Church in Statesville, North Carolina. She has served for more than three decades in churches of all settings in the Mississippi and Western North Carolina Annual Conferences of The United Methodist Church. Dr. Dye began her ministry as the first cross-racial appointment in the Mississippi Conference. She is a third-generation United Methodist pastor whose family roots are in Kentucky Methodism. A former columnist for the *North Carolina Christian Advocate*, the *Mitchell News-Journal*, and *The Charlotte Observer*, she currently writes columns for the *Western North Carolina Conference E-News*.

Bob Henderson is the senior minister and head of staff of Covenant Presbyterian Church, a 2,300-member church in Charlotte, North Carolina. He graduated from Furman University and earned his Master of Divinity degree at Princeton Theological Seminary. He continued his education at Columbia Theological Seminary, where he earned his Doctor of Ministry. Dr. Henderson has helped lead Covenant Presbyterian Church toward a strong commitment to mission, urban involvement, and advocacy for the most vulnerable in Charlotte city, most recently completing a \$12.9 million capital campaign called "For a Whole Community." The campaign enables the congregation to invest in a new affordable housing development that will serve residents of diverse income levels.

Greg Jarrell is co-founder and Chief Door Answerer at QC Family Tree, a community of rooted discipleship in the west Charlotte neighborhood of Enderly Park. He works in his neighborhood and beyond as a cultural organizer, using stories and music to build communities around justice, imagination, and mutual care. He can also be found around Charlotte playing saxophone, and he regularly performs in concert and club venues across North and South Carolina in jazz, classical, and commercial settings. Rev. Jarrell shares life there with a host of neighbors who have become family, as well as his wife Helms and sons John Tyson and Zeb. He is the author of *A Riff of Love: Notes on Community and Belonging*, from Cascade Books (2018).

Melanie C. Jones is a Womanist ethicist, millennial preacher, and intellectual activist. She joined the Union Presbyterian Seminary faculty as Instructor of Ethics, Theology, and Culture and Inaugural Director of the Katie Geneva Cannon Center for Womanist Leadership in fall 2019. Her research engages Womanist theological ethics and sacred texts, millennials and faith, and Black aesthetics and popular culture. She is co-curator of #MillennialWomanism Digital Forum and Co-Founder of The Millennial Womanism Project (TMWP)—an enterprise committed to enhancing the well-being of Black millennial women of faith and justice and fostering trans-generational Womanist dialogue. Jones is a third-generation ordained Baptist preacher.

CENTER FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION

The Center for Social Justice and Reconciliation operates from the Seminary's Charlotte campus and is directed by Associate Professor of Bible Dr. Rodney S. Sadler Jr.

Grounded in a ministry that is mandated in scripture, its two main goals are to remind people in the Seminary of the significance of social justice work as part of ministry and to bring the activist community into the Seminary.

The Center's areas of focus include: urban ministry concerns, social justice ministry concerns, contemporary issues, Black church studies, LGBTQ ministry and justice issues, and evangelism from a social justice perspective.



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BREAKING NEWS

New Website!

Please visit the Center's new website at www.upsem.edu/csjr. Find out about past and upcoming events and other news.

Union Forum is Back

Starting Sept. 22 at 7 p.m.! Join us as we discuss justice issues. Please follow us on Facebook to get updates on schedules and topics. www.facebook.com/UPSem

What YOUR GIFT Means To Us

\$100 means one additional person will be able to participate in our two-day RISE anti-racism workshop.

\$200 helps make it possible to hold a Dangerous Dialogue event at the Seminary.

\$250 helps make it possible for a student to travel to participate in a national social justice event.

\$500 helps offset the cost for a student to receive an ambassador annual scholarship to serve as an intern with the Center.

\$1,500 helps make it possible for us to bring an activist-in-residence to the Seminary for a semester.

Whatever the amount, your gift provides the Center with the opportunity to continue our mission to engage in urban and racial discourse, to fight social injustice, to seek equity for the LGBTQ+ community, and to make peace through interfaith dialogue.

Please give today.

Make your donation online at www.upsem.edu/give and select the Center for Social Justice and Reconciliation.

For more information, please contact Tim Moore at (980) 636-1660 or tmoore@upsem.edu.



Center for Social Justice and Reconciliation

