Paying Attention to Black Voices:
In Pursuit of Solidarity

By

Todd Foster

A Project Thesis

submitted to the faculty of

General Theological Seminary

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Ministry

March 1, 2024

The Rev. Carla E. Roland Guzmán, Ph.D.

The Rev. Eric A. Thomas, Ph.D.

The Rev. Kara N. Slade, Ph.D.

Abstract

How does a white priest look past his own limited perspective to show solidarity with the people of color in the congregation he serves? One of the most prominent characteristics which attracted me to my current cure was its multiracial composition. But I am concerned that my race (white) and gender (male) will hamper my efforts to nurture one of the things I love most about the parish, especially since I follow on the heels of a beloved Rector who was black and female. In recent years, news of the murders of black people, by police and by civilian vigilantes, and of anti-black, anti-woman, anti-immigrant, and pro-gun rhetoric being deployed for political gain has saturated the national conversation. This conversation has made more visible my own reluctance to stand for justice in solidarity with those whose perspectives are different from mine by virtue of our differing racial identities. Yet my faith and my sacred and denominational texts all point to care for "the widow, the orphan, and the stranger," those who have been oppressed, overlooked, or mistreated, as the indispensable path forward for those who would draw near to God. In the United States in the 21st century, black people especially stand among these special classes to whom God's people owe particular care, concern, and attention. In this thesis I investigate the topics of seeing others' pain and practicing solidarity from the perspectives of black theologians, black activists, the Church in the United States of America, and the Episcopal Church. Then I follow the practice of Action Research to pay attention to a Council of Advice who plans reparative practices which might invite the whole parish, including me, into attitudes of solidarity across lines of racial difference.

Acknowledgments

Thanks are owed to my family: Becky, Aviva, and Eli for their patience, grace, and gentleness with my endless interests and pursuits. Too to my parents and siblings, especially Tori as she inspires me to take a closer look at what I thought I knew.

I am grateful to the people of the parish I serve as we discover Christian discipleship together. I am grateful to the Council of Advice who participated in this project, gifting me evenings, efforts, and bold vulnerability. One respondent, Barbara Imes Jorden (1938-2023), died while this project was in process. Her courage, perception, and unwavering faith remain an inspiration for we who were privileged to know her. May she rest in peace.

Thank you to my colleagues, Malissa Todd and Becky for thorough, careful and insightful editorial help. Thank you to gracious, insightful, and encouraging readers Kara Slade and Eric Thomas. Flaws and infelicities remaining in the text are mine, despite their best efforts!

I am grateful to the faculty, staff, and students of General Theological Seminary who have been present in my life for two decades now. I offer particular thanks for those striving to preserve General's legacy, to my wise and patient advisor, Carla Roland Guzmán, and to Hillary Raining, Tim Snyder, and April Stace who courageously started a DMin program, despite COVID, as part of the effort to help General find a faithful way forward. We serve a God who makes a way out of no way.

1 Introduction

1.1 Invitation

On 25 May 2020 I was sitting on the couch with my spouse, Becky. That was the night George Floyd was murdered. I did not see the video. I did not take special note of it in the five-minute National Public Radio update I rely on for daily news. Becky read the news on her phone and asked me if I had heard about it. I had. Another black person was killed by police in the United States of America. This is not new or unexpected. These are the stories we have lived with our whole lives. Why is this any different? I did not pay much attention.

The next day I was on a Zoom call with my Bishop and all the clergy of the Diocese. This was our weekly ritual during the early days of COVID and lockdowns. Many of the black clergy on that call were visibly shaken, mourning the news of Floyd's murder. We spent some time on this as a community. As I logged off, I thought of the black people in my parish. I thought of my own coldness, the way I had felt a twinge of sorrow, but then traded it for cynicism and unfeeling. This was not the pastoral response required of me. Cynicism is not my calling.

I have no doubt I could have gotten away without mentioning Floyd's death that Sunday. Silence would be an unsurprising response from a white priest to racial injustice. This would be in line with my responses to tragedies that had gone before. And besides, COVID-19 had relegated us to meeting online only, church campuses closed by order of

the Bishop and the state health department. We were all stressed out by our locked-down world and this was too ticklish a subject to address when our gatherings were mediated by computer screens.

But that was not the response I wanted for the black people in the parish I served. What I wanted for them was a parish and priest that would pay attention and stand with them in solidarity.

1.2 Overview

This is a project that explores questions of leadership and solidarity within a multiracial congregation. In this section I will briefly describe the research setting, lay out the issue I wish to address, and touch on the academic disciplines which intersect with my investigation. Following these, I will describe my own motivations, theology, and expectations for the project, finishing with a brief summary of how it went.

1.3 Setting

St. Timothy's Episcopal Church was established in 1791 in the community of Greenville.[1] Today Greenville resides on the historical land of the Lenni-Lenape, a half-hour's drive from a major East coast city. Greenville is home to a growing state college but is surrounded by farmland. The "new" St. Timothy's church building was erected in

[1]The names of most people, places, and institutions in this document have been changed to guard the privacy of those who participated in this project.

1846 in classic neo-gothic style, though on a scale that is hard-pressed to seat 100 people. Town founders and industrial leaders of German and New England heritage are buried in the parish cemeteries and remembered in the dedications of the stained glass windows.

Human beings were legally enslaved and trafficked in the surrounding state until 1865; documentation of enslaved persons laboring on behalf of the parish is not known to St. Timothy's, but neither would it be surprising. The U.S. Census Bureau reports that in 2022 approximately 59% of Greenville residents identified as white (not Hispanic), 14% as black[2] or African American, 6% as Asian, and 19% as Hispanic.[3]

Though St. Timothy's is historically a majority-white congregation, people of color have been actively involved in the parish at least since the 1970's. In the 2010's, during the tenure of the previous Rector, an African American woman, several new black families began attending St. Timothy's as a result of the dwindling of a nearby black church and the transfer of its Deacon to St. Timothy's. In a 2018 parish photo album with 93 individuals represented, there were 17 people who identify as black (18%), two as having significant Asian ancestry, and two as Latina. The remainder generally identify as white. A majority of the congregation has ties to the nearby city, and many will proudly

[2]Some authors capitalize "Black" as an ethnic group. Others do not. I have chosen not to do so because I would then want to capitalize "White" as well since these two categories are central to this thesis. Though "white" is not so much an ethnicity as an erasure of ethnicities, the failure to recognize "whiteness" as a category (rather than the default) is a significant contributor to the continuing effects of white supremacy and racial injustice. This unfortunate and widespread habit is sometimes called "white transparency."

[3]U.S. Census Bureau, *QuickFacts*, accessed July 20, 2023, https://www.census.gov/quickfacts; used the form to search for the town in which St. Timothy's resides.

claim Italian ancestry. Presently St. Timothy's is served by a white Rector and a black Deacon.

Multiracial or interracial congregations are variously described by academic researchers as worshiping communities where no single race comprises more than 80%[4] or 90%[5] of the congregation. These definitions make St. Timothy's an outlier within the Episcopal Church specifically and within the Church of the United States of America more broadly.

Among Episcopal parishes, St. Timothy's is neither the most progressive nor the most conservative. Five years before this writing there was some question about whether the parish would wish to participate in the solemnization of a same-sex marriage. (That question was resolved in favor of the anticipated needs of a popular, young, gay parish leader.) Views on issues like abortion and immigration vary widely, following the splits in the wider national culture. Most members of St. Timothy's are proud of its multi-cultural composition, and Black History Month has come to be firmly fixed in the parish's liturgical year.

---

[4]Michael O. Emerson and Karen Chai Kim, "Multiracial Congregations: An Analysis of Their Development and a Typology," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 42, no. 2 (June 1, 2003): 217.

[5]Korie L. Edwards, *The Elusive Dream: The Power of Race in Interracial Churches*, updated ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), 15.

1.4 Research Question

How does a white priest look past his own limited perspective to show solidarity with the people of color in the congregation he serves?

Solidarity is "the outward and visible sign of inclusion," a readiness to "stand in witness against the injustices suffered [by others] and get some skin in the game."[6] Solidarity means recognizing there are arbitrary categories of inclusion and exclusion at work in our world, created and enforced by various cultural, political, economic, and other forces disconnected from a theological understanding of human value. Solidarity means, if I find myself included in a system of power, choosing to use my own inclusion to extend a hand to those who are deprived by that system. It means identifying so closely with other people that injustices perpetrated against others are owned as injustices suffered by oneself.[7] Far from an exaggerated sense of victim-hood, solidarity means recognizing the fundamental equality of every human being such that "injustice anywhere [to anyone] is a threat to justice everywhere."[8] This will typically call those who would express solidarity with another party to a discipline of listening and deferring[9] in order to use one's own power and privilege to magnify the other's agency. In this way one uses

---

[6]Carla E. Roland Guzmán, *Unmasking LATINX Ministry for Episcopalians: An Anglican Approach* (New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 2020), 197.

[7]Archdiocese of Indianapolis, "Global Solidarity Definitions," accessed May 30, 2023, https://www.archindy.org/cc/globalsolidarity/definitions.html

[8]Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from Birmingham Jail," April 16, 1963, accessed November 24, 2022, https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/sites/mlk/files/letterfrombirmingham_wwcw_0.pdf, 1.

[9]Andrea Sangiovanni and Juri Viehoff, "Solidarity in Social and Political Philosophy," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman, Summer 2023 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2023), 2, accessed May 30, 2023, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2023/entries/solidarity/

the power and privilege assigned by an unjust society "to dismantle the master's house."[10] For this reason solidarity can be risky, straining relationships with the powerful, disrupting one's own privilege, and even bringing legal consequences.[11]

Also, solidarity is a value that reflects the reality of the Kingdom of God. It is a term that encompasses walking in the path of Jesus and recognizing the value inherent in every image-of-God-bearing neighbor.[12] Solidarity refers to the duty to other human beings enjoined on Christians by the "second" greatest commandment (e.g., Matt. 22:39) and by the Baptismal Covenant in the *Book of Common Prayer*.[13] Solidarity can bring healing to the wounds of those who suffer for lack of power, and also to those having power, who suffer from the alienation power differentials bring.

1.5 Related Disciplines

Many academic disciplines could inform this project. I have chosen a handful as most immediately relevant to my own context and study. These begin with Black Theology and its offshoot, Womanist Theology. Black Theology was intended to fill in the gaps when what passed for the default "mainstream" theology revealed itself to be

---

[10]Stephanie Spellers, *The Church Cracked Open: Disruption, Decline, and New Hope for Beloved Community* (New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 2021), 112.

[11]Ada Tseng, "What Solidarity Is and How You Can Practice It," *L. A. Times*, August 11, 2021, accessed May 30, 2023, https://www.latimes.com/lifestyle/story/2021-08-11/what-is-definition-solidarity-how-can-practice-it

[12]Though the *imago dei* is a commonly used basis for asserting human equality, formal theology offers other useful and illuminating rationales including "equality through redemption" and "equality through adoption." These are helpfully laid out in Amy Laura Hall, "In What Sense Equal?", *The New Atlantis*, Number 7, Fall 2004/Winter 2005, 124–131.

[13]*Book of Common Prayer*, 1979, 305.

"white theology," confining itself to white concerns by not saying anything substantial about anti-black racism in the United States. Likewise Womanist scholars arose to call out the black-male centeredness of Black Theology and the white-female centeredness of Feminist Theology: to demand that the net be cast wider, taking into consideration the particular needs and oppression of black women and others who suffer the intersection of multiple oppressions.

Another field of inquiry that informs this investigation is that of Race Theory, including Black History and an examination of whiteness. Race is essentially an invention by some persons to exercise power over others by minoritizing them with some (inconsistent) reference to skin tone and other physical characteristics. So there is a sad irony in the prevalence of Black Studies, Black History and similar topics. Like Black Theology, Feminist Theology, and Womanist Theology, Black Studies and Black History are generally responses to the segregation and erasure of certain perspectives from what is popularly known as "history" but would be more correctly identified as "white history" (i.e., that which purposefully excludes parts of the story for political reasons). "White transparency," the failure to acknowledge whiteness as a race, is an especially insidious aspect of whiteness "in the sense that it is very difficult to address a problem if the problem is not acknowledged."[14] "White fragility" is a reluctance on the part of white people to acknowledge the reality or continuing effects of race because doing so is experienced as uncomfortable. The irony of white fragility is that often those who benefit

[14]Edwards, *The Elusive Dream*, 11.

from the existence of racial distinctions would feel scandalized at such unmerited privilege and advantages being "unjustly" given to others. While the examination of black perspectives is critical to this study, I suggest that the awareness of and examination of whiteness is even more important than the study of blackness in order to understand what is broken in our society.

Additionally, a historical perspective is important to this study. There are many thoughtful examinations of church and race among churches in the United States of America generally. Additionally, the Episcopal Church is especially relevant to my case, and it has its own mixed history of encountering race or failing to do so. Examining these two broad records lends context to my own understanding of that which I encounter in the parish I serve.

Ultimately, this is a theological investigation. Motivations and points of view are derived from my own formation as a Christian, with foundational roots in the Bible and a deep appreciation for the *Book of Common Prayer*. An additional rubric that will be used is that of "theology in four voices."[15] This means examining thoughts, words, and actions from the points of view of *normative theology* (the texts of the church), *formal theology* (the texts of the academy), *espoused theology* (what we say or claim), and *operant theology* (what we do). In an ideal world these will all cohere. In a human world, the discrepancies and tensions between them will be informative.

[15]Cameron, *Talking about God in Practice*, 53ff.

1.6 Motivation and Theology

This project is of personal importance to me. As illustrated in the opening story, I am brought to this investigation by a sense of my own inadequacy. I feel an urgent calling to serve my whole parish, not just those who look like me or share certain other experiences and perspectives with me. As I noticed anew the week George Floyd was murdered, such awareness does not come naturally to me, no matter that I wish it were otherwise.

All my grandparents are from the Deep South. I bear an inheritance of deep-seated anti-blackness. I grew up watching my parents strive to escape this heritage in their own choices and behaviors. I struggle to follow suit. Mine is a project of resistance. This academic project is concerned with learning how to get out of my own way so that God might do something new and life-giving in me around race.

Part of the work of this project is me doing my own "white work": acknowledging my own racial characteristics and choosing how to live in them with greater intention and integrity. Such work is deeply personal. I cannot do this work for my parish or for my colleagues. Each person must find their own path through the quagmire. But my hope is that my own practices will be invitations and examples (whether positive or negative) that, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, might inform others' journeys in ways that I cannot anticipate.

This project is important for the Church – in particular that branch of the Church which I have claimed and which has claimed me: the Episcopal Church. In some respects,

the Episcopal Church is not out of line with the wider culture in, for example, its failure to value the ministry of women. It is to the shame of the Episcopal Church that it has only recently (in the last 50 years) begun to ordain women to the priesthood and that they are still treated differently. Women are less likely to be hired by parishes looking for priests, and they are likely to receive lower pay than men. The systemic sexism that pervades our wider culture has not stopped at the doors of our church buildings or our deliberative councils. I believe the call of the Gospel is a call to lead, not follow, culture in enacting justice and equality for all persons.

Likewise anti-black racism remains rife within our broader society—and in the Episcopal Church. Minoritized clergy are less likely to be hired and typically receive lower salaries than their white, male counterparts. Throughout the 1950's and '60's, activists like Martin Luther King, Jr., spoke of 11am Sunday being "one of the most segregated hours, if not the most segregated hours, in Christian America."[16] Churches too often represent tribes rather than a broad cross-section of their surrounding neighborhoods – and even those neighborhoods are often highly segregated by the historical practice of "red-lining," the intentional withholding of credit, insurance, and other resources which might allow the development and thriving of neighborhoods that happen to be majority-black.

[16]"Martin Luther King, Jr., Interview," *Meet the Press* (Washington, DC: National Broadcasting Company, Inc., April 17, 1960), accessed September 27, 2023, https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/interview-meet-press

There are other minority communities within St. Timothy's. The treatment of Native American people is likewise deserving of consideration, as is an examination of the atrocities committed against Hispanic Americans and immigrants. I believe that we are called into solidarity with all God's people, despite any human classification that may be applied to them.

But the United States of America also has a special history of black/white antagonism, and we bear significant responsibility for the invention or inculcation of that split. Black and white are terms that carry important implications for life outcomes. They are categories which are particularly fitting to examine in the setting of St. Timothy's. They are also categories whose implications carry lessons for other differences and oppressions that have life-outcome effects similar to those imposed by race. By learning to care for and express solidarity with black people, my hope is that I might grow in awareness and practices that enable me to show solidarity with all God's people of every description.

I feel this project has special relevance for we who function as white or perhaps do not notice our own place in the racial drama at all. When I began reading for this project, one of the first books I picked up was James Cone's *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*. Cone captured my imagination and my conscience on the third page of his introduction, before even the official "page 1" of the text. He said, "Until we can see the cross and the lynching tree together, until we can identify Christ with a 'recrucified' black body hanging from a lynching tree, there can be no genuine understanding of Christian

identity in America, and no deliverance from the brutal legacy of slavery and white supremacy."[17] I believe Cone has an excellent point, and he argues it well in the book which follows. Christian faith is not simply about "pie in the sky when you die"[18] but about how we live here and now. The eternal life promised in John's Gospel is a quality of life that begins immediately. While our faith has eternal implications, those implications are not disconnected from the ways that we live and care for our neighbors even now. Living as subjects of God's kingdom means enacting God's ethics and God's concerns today, beginning with the liberation of the oppressed (as God did in the exodus, the central story of the Hebrew Bible) and the battle for social justice (for which the earliest Christian church was particularly known).

While there are many oppressions and injustices in the world, the invention of black/white racism and the systems used to maintain it are difficult to match for their severity and their lasting impact. As one who benefits from the privileges associated with whiteness, I find that paying attention to racial injustice indeed comes close to the center of Christian practice and identity for me. The core of the Gospel is about a God who comes to us in our brokenness, helps dislodge our blockages, and guides us through the process of repentance and reconciliation. Christians follow the kenotic God who put on flesh and took the form of a slave (Phil. 2:5–11), demonstrating solidarity with every last person. In baptism, all the categories which once separated us one from another are

---

[17]Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, xv.

[18]Author's recollection of a memorable statement made by Patrick Malloy at a weekend retreat at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Seattle, Washington in the early 2010's.

shown false and irrelevant (Gal. 3:27f.). These realities are manifestly unfulfilled in the world in which I was born, but they are characteristic of the Kingdom which Jesus proclaimed and into which I strive to live.

1.7 Expectations and Goals

Paying attention for this project means learning both to perceive and to act in ways that express solidarity with the black people in the parish I serve. This constitutes an important spiritual growth opportunity in my own life of faith. Such growth will be realized if black people, and other minoritized groups in the parish, feel seen, cared for, and valued by the parish I lead. In addition I hope that, as I do my own work around whiteness and racial justice, other white people in the parish I serve will be inspired to take steps down that road as well, seeing the expression of solidarity across racial and other dividing lines as a worthwhile path of spiritual growth.

Ada Tseng describes the practice of solidarity as:[19]

1. Centering the "voices, perspectives and leadership of people who are directly affected by a harm"
2. "Being a co-conspirator" by leveraging one's own privilege, power, and access
3. Focusing on deep relationships that will sustain connections of solidarity
4. Healing the pain of experiences of racism

[19]Tseng, "What Solidarity Is and How You Can Practice It."

I hope to grow in my own capacity to serve faithfully as a priest in a multiracial setting. I also dream that my meager attempts might prove encouraging to readers of this study in their own encounters with race, whether my example is one to be followed or avoided!

1.8 How It Went

The rhythms of school, church and family all ran together to shape the calendar of this project. In the fall of 2022, while awaiting Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval to begin my formal work, I engaged in “trial” conversations with ten different black persons from the parish. These interviews were not recorded, though I took copious notes as we talked. I did not ask my conversation partners to sign consent forms, but I gave the same explanation and disclaimers as I would with later, “official” respondents. Especially I noted how participation was voluntary, could be rescinded at any time, and would not change my care for them in our parish community.

I used those conversations to try out interview questions, hear where the conversations tended to go, and to narrow my focus. These interviews were remarkable for the sense of connection they offered. I heard stories, perspectives, and opinions that I had long desired to hear, but for which I had never before created an appropriate space. These interviews taught me important lessons about being a priest and creating opportunities to listen.

The formal interviews, conducted after I received IRB approval of the project, took place over the course of eight days around the turn of the year and had largely the same flavor. They afforded me opportunity to hear people's stories and values in ways I had not heard them before. The repeated listening I was able to do with the recordings in subsequent weeks and months invited me to discover the implicit themes and central concerns of the respondents.

The six people with whom I did formal interviews served as a "Council of Advice" and together we conceived, planned, and carried out four activities in the life of the parish. The purpose of these activities was to lift up black voices within the parish, inviting everyone to hear and respond. Our further hope was that the increased profile of these black voices and concerns would also encourage other minority groups to see that there is a place for them at St. Timothy's.

My deepest hope for our conversations and the projects we would carry out in our congregational setting is that we would each gain clearer perspectives on who God is and about God's loving concern for each one of us individually and all of us collectively. The reflections of the Council of Advice in our debrief seemed to indicate they found the activities we pursued to be meaningful and well-aligned with their own values. We all finished this academic project carrying hopes for what might come next as we continue this work together.

1.9 Reflection

What a crazy, daunting project to begin. What important word do I have to contribute on the topic of race in the United States of America? Will I not be mortally embarrassed ten years hence (if not before the ink has dried) by the unenlightened words that I dare to record for posterity in a written academic thesis?[20] This is a fraught topic and I feel illiterate in this area of inquiry. But it is my calling in this moment and in this circumstance, with a multiracial parish to care for and wise faculty and peers to care for me along the way. So, with apologies to my reader, I will seek to engage in "the comprehension of the self by the detour of the comprehension of the other."[21]

1.10 Summary

This project is born out of a desire to express genuine solidarity across lines of racial difference. This project is informed by several relevant fields of academic study and centered in personal interviews with persons who have been hurt by anti-black racism. The respondents formulated multiple projects whose goal was to invite people in a majority-white parish to pay attention, to see and value black perspectives, and to reject the practice of (especially race-based) minoritization. In each of these projects, I had

[20]A wise colleague and GTS seminarian, Jordan Wesley, counters with the question: Don't we all hope we will outgrow our current limitations over the next ten years?

[21]Paul Rabinow, *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco*, 30th anniversary ed., (Berkeley, London: University of California Press, 2011), 5, quoting Paul Ricouer.

opportunity to practice paying attention and to use my institutional authority to advocate for the importance of the words and ideas my neighbors sought to express.

2 Methodology

2.1 Invitation

On 15 October 2021 I had a telephone conversation with Dr. Tony Lin, a Sociologist of Religion who was then on staff at Trinity Church, Wall Street. I asked him about my thesis project, concerned with strengthening and growing the multiracial congregation I serve. Dr. Lin had bad news for me. Multiracial churches, he told me, are generally white churches with a minority population who bear the burden of crossing cultural/ethnic lines. Even black churches with just a few white families will usually defer to the sensitivities of the white families. Diversity is a white value that commodotizes black bodies. He encouraged me to consider another question: since I'm a white priest, what does it mean to be faithful in a white church?

This was not the question I wanted to ask.

2.2 Overview

Paying attention to black voices may be a laudable goal, but the question, "How?" is crucial. Paying attention to non-white, non-male, non-wealthy, non-educational-status-bearing people is not conventional practice. If it was, there would be no special need to go out of one's way to do so! Instead, new practices must be explored with intention. In this section I will discuss the context of study, the method of study, the attending ethical issues, analysis, validity, and finish with a brief theological reflection on method.

2.3 Situation

The COVID-19 pandemic caught most of us unawares. Even more shocking for me was a new awareness of the continuing epidemic of violence towards black people to which I had never paid a lot of attention, and about which I had managed mostly to forget the little I knew. But with the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd there was renewed interest in the 2013 slogan: "Black Lives Matter!"[22] This was an expression of espoused theology that stood in contrast to the operant theology of the murders of black people that was reported in the nightly news.

The congregation of St. Timothy's represents a wide range of political views, from the far left to the hard right. When St. Timothy's opened its restrooms for use by a Black Lives Matter march gathering across the street one Sunday in the summer of 2020, one Vestry member sent an outraged email to the rest of the Vestry and resigned from both Vestry and the parish, along with his spouse, a multi-generation member of the parish. Others left more or less quietly in the years that followed upon hearing terms like "white privilege" regularly broached in sermons.

But my attempts to respond to the slow-motion tragedy of anti-blackness were still inadequate. I was anxious and intimidated. How does a white priest address white supremacy in a majority-white congregation? It sounds like the beginning of a bad joke: very carefully!

---

[22]The slogan was originally popularized as a response to the acquittal of the man who murdered Trayvon Martin according to "About," accessed 23 August 2023, https://blacklivesmatter.com/about/

Several soft-spoken persons in the congregation I serve labor under the compounded (intersectional) oppressions of race, gender, and age. These are persons who have lived through challenging times. They remember the 1963 March on Washington. They have found how to live while causing the fewest ripples possible because ripples can be dangerous to their physical well-being. When anti-black racism comes out of the shadows and is championed by national figures, how does the community of the Church communicate to those who feel most vulnerable that we are standing in solidarity with them? What is my role as a designated leader and spokesperson for a particular parish?

This project is personally challenging. I am risk-averse and slow to process emotion. Speaking about anti-black racism brings with it natural demands for justice and accountability. These messages are usually unwelcome among white hearers (we of whom change and action is demanded) and can have unpleasant consequences for those who would dare to carry them. I am not naturally a prophetic or confrontational speaker. I prefer to defer to others, keeping my own ship in smooth waters. I don't like emotional or relational ripples in the pond of my relationships, either! Some around me, though, do not have the choices I have for accommodation and resting in the false harbor of white privilege. Will I follow Jesus in order to stand with these, my neighbors? While talking about race can be *uncomfortable* for whites, as we break "white solidarity" and admit that race, including "whiteness," exists and has an impact on people's lives, talking about race (and making white people uncomfortable) can be *lethal* for black people. The potential

cost to me is largely social; the potential cost to my neighbors can involve the loss of life, limb, or loved-ones.

The approach I have chosen in the context of this project is three-fold. It begins by advancing my own education by reading relevant books and articles, especially those by black authors. I continue by recruiting an advisory board of black persons from the parish, a Council of Advice, to act as consultants and partners in action. Finally, the process takes formal shape as together we follow an approach to congregational change entitled “Action Research.”

2.4 Method

2.4.a Methodological Assumptions

An Action Research methodology approaches its work with an epistemology that might be described as “pragmatic.” The point of the research is not to test or establish a theoretical understanding of the world, but instead to discover how one might go about a particular task: in this case, the task of learning to express solidarity with a particular group in a congregation, empowering that group to invite others also to pay attention and to value their perspective and experiences in the world. The expression of solidarity begins by listening to and deferring to the needs and understandings of others.

Though there are numerous helpful books and other cultural resources for hearing black voices, no one voice can speak for all, and context is important. A fundamental assumption is that I am not an expert or even particularly practiced at hearing well.

Therefore I recruited a board of experts, a Council of Advice, to provide guidance and reflection about what it means to pay attention to black voices in the context of St. Timothy's.

Action research seems tailor-made for a situation like this, where a permanent outsider nonetheless seeks to learn and have a positive impact. "What we don't know that we don't know is the particular fruit of action research."[23]

2.4.b Action Research

Action research is a cyclical tool. Though formal projects have specific beginnings and endings, the work with which this project engages was already going on long before the investigation began, and will continue long after it has ended. This project aims to follow through a single cycle of that project, introducing a little more structure and intention along the way. Action research is participatory research: the people in the project are not the *objects* of investigation but instead are themselves the investigators, recruited as collaborators. Action research is typically a qualitative line of investigation, not collecting lots of numerical data, but asking opinions, trying some activities, then reflecting on what participants encountered. Action research is reflective in nature, inviting all the researchers to look inside and to consider how they are connecting personally to the research in question.

---

[23]David Coghlan and Teresa Brannick, *Doing Action Research in Your Own Organization*, 3rd ed. (London: SAGE, 2009), 141.

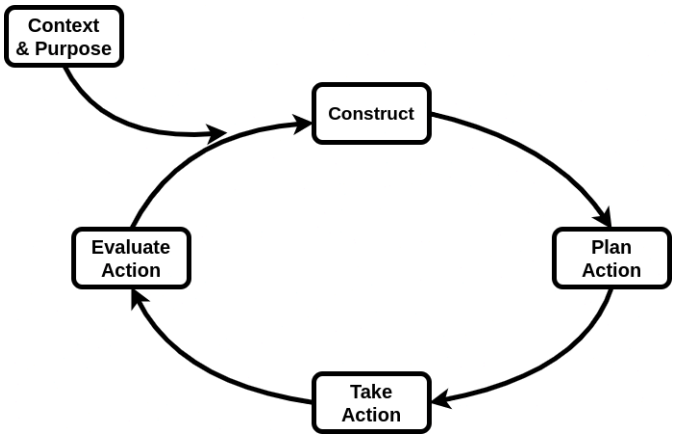

Figure 1: The Action Research Cycle

Action research consists of four basic steps, arranged in a never-ending cycle.[24] These steps are instigated by a particular context and purpose, in this case described above in section 2.3, “Situation.” Context and purpose are assembled to “construct” an understanding of what is happening. A more strictly modern practice might speak of “diagnosis,” implying a search for an objective truth and a single correct outcome.[25] But the meanings and values represented by the community involved will be multiple. So we will be satisfied not to discover “the truth” but rather to arrive at a goal that reflects the values of our particular community.

Once we have constructed an understanding of our present situation, the next step is to plan an action that might lead us in the direction of our desired future. Again, we are not worried about “getting it right” the first time, if ever. Instead we are reaching for incremental improvement, with confidence that multiple iterations of the cycle will

[24]The illustration is my own, modeled on a similar one in Coghlan and Brannick, 8.
[25]Coghlan and Brannick, 9.

enable us to build on what is working and discard what isn't. In Action Research, the planning will be done by the community rather than by an executive.

With a plan in place, we can take action, implementing our ideas, once again acting as a community.

Finally, we evaluate our actions and their effects, comparing them against our construction of the situation: what we thought was happening and what we desired to change. This is the time to consider how well we achieved our goals, what we might do differently next time and what we might do the same.

From evaluation, the cycle will begin again. Because time has passed, the world has changed, and, we hope, our actions have had an effect on our situation. We begin again by constructing where we are and where we want to go.

In each of these steps, an important part of the context was ourselves and our own experiences. The purposes with which we began were not entirely the same purposes with which we finished. As participants in Action Research, we ourselves are changed by our work.

2.4.c Resources

Because the researcher is not the expert in this field, the primary resource for this project was a Council of Advice: a group of participants with whom to walk through the four steps of Action Research. Six black persons who were active participants in the congregation were invited to participate in the project. Several were chosen based on their leadership or influence with large parts of the congregation, black and white. One

was chosen, despite her inability to participate in much of the process due to health and ability challenges, because she is known to have special interest in questions of racial justice and she has been a historical force for conversations about race at St. Timothy's. One was chosen who is relatively newer to the parish community than the others.

The actions that this group would take together were not pre-determined. The point of the project was to listen to, among others, *their* voices. But a collection of possible activities for the group was collated, evaluated, and passed along to each of them to seed our planning conversations.

2.4.d Sampling Frame

This research was not intended to yield statistical results, relying on a "random" sample. Instead this project used "purposive sampling,"[26] having chosen participants because of the roles and interests they already expressed in the congregation. Recruitment happened face-to-face during encounters in the course of parish life. Those selected included the Senior Warden, a Vestry-person, the Deacon, the leader of St. Timothy's primary outreach ministry (who happens to be married to the Deacon), a working mother, and a retiree who is mostly homebound but is known for advancing an agenda of paying attention to black history and black concerns.

[26]John Swinton and Harriet Mowatt, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 2nd ed. (London: SCM Press, 2016), 219.

2.4.e Data Collection

I collected data over a period of several months. Data collection began with a series of “casual” interviews with ten different people. These interviews were not recorded, but were used to gather a broader understanding of where this project might helpfully go and to improve a draft interview schedule. These interviews took place mostly in people’s homes, usually took two or more hours, and often included more than one family member. Some of these interviews ended up being more pastoral visits than interviews, because those being interviewed were eager to share their histories. Though we were straying from the questions I had prepared, I was grateful for the invitation to pay attention to several black voices in my congregation. There was some overlap between participants in the trial interviews and the more formal ones, but that overlap was not complete.

After approval for this project was received, formal interviews were conducted, with recordings made. I conducted six individual interviews and two focus groups.

2.4.f Interview Process

I conducted six formal, individual interviews all within about a week between 30 December 2022 and 7 January 2023. This being the end of Christmas-tide and beginning of Epiphany, most people had more space in their schedules than usual, making it easier to arrange meetings. Three interviews took place on church grounds, two in respondents’ homes, and one via Zoom. Interviews took place at times convenient to the respondents,

anywhere from mid-day to early evening, with the formal (recorded) interview lasting no more than an hour. Interviews were scheduled far enough in advance to convey to each respondent (in person or via USPS mail) a consent form and an appointment reminder. I followed up each interview with a handwritten note of thanks to the respondent.

Each interview began with some informal conversation, checking in on how each person was. We signed and exchanged consent forms, one for each of us, and I gave some explanation for what our procedure would be. I brought two devices with which to record, a phone and a tablet, in case one of the recordings should prove defective. As it happened, all the recordings came out well.

For the Zoom interview, the respondent already had the consent form and a stamped envelope for returning it to me, so she filled it out and mailed it to me, after which I mailed her back a countersigned copy. The Zoom interview had an extra challenge in that the account we expected to use was already occupied by a parish Bible study that evening. I asked the respondent to use her Zoom account to host the meeting instead, which meant we were limited to meet for 45 minutes at a time. It also means I had to ask her to record our meeting, while I set up a secondary recording with my phone placed near my computer’s speakers. The respondent brought the Zoom recording to share with me on a USB flash drive the following Sunday.

The formal part of each interview began with an acknowledgment of the recording process and the signing of the consent forms. Then I introduced the conversation, with a brief background of the project and its purposes, followed by an

explanation of my hopes for the conversation. For the interview itself, I followed a schedule I had brought with me, sometimes improvising in an attempt to draw out stories or observations at which I had I heard them hint.

At the end of each interview, I reminded the respondents that I wished to gather them for a planning meeting. Early in the process we developed consensus on a time to meet and decided that meeting via Zoom made the most sense. One participant is homebound and does not use Zoom. I felt it critical to include her in the interviews, but did not make extra efforts to involve her in the planning meeting.

The focus group met in January 2023 for our planning meeting. This meeting was recorded. I had a formal agenda prepared for this meeting. I also used the screen sharing feature of Zoom to take notes for the group in a word processor while they brainstormed ideas for our intervention. After brainstorming, we spent some time grouping the ideas that had strong overlap. Then I invited each participant to vote for their three favorite ideas. We chose the items with the most votes to flesh out into a plan for intervention. All of these plans were oriented around February, Black History Month, so we also set a debrief or evaluation focus group date in early March.

In March we met again to debrief.

2.5 Ethical Issues

This project demands consideration of important questions of ethics and power. As I am both the principal investigator and also the Rector of the parish, most

respondents will feel at least some obligation to cooperate. On the other hand, I am choosing to do research on my own parish in a desire to grow in service to that parish. There is risk and there is value: these need to be balanced sensitively. I sought to explain, both out loud and in writing, the respondents' freedom to participate or to choose not to do so.

2.5.a Relationships

The work in which this project engages, namely conversations with individuals and in groups, as well as an activity chosen, designed, and carried out by the group, is consonant with my normal duties as Rector of this parish. Even taking notes and writing about interactions is not unusual. There are no questions about the ethics of the actions taking place in this research activity: they are my normal daily duties. The ethical question arises when one reports out these words and activities for academic credit or publishing. To that end, the primary ethical question here is one of consent.

In my work with the parish, I am given a role with attendant duties, responsibilities, authorities, and deference. As a researcher, my desire is not to lean on my privileges as Rector for the sake of personal (academic) gain. Additionally, because this is an academic project, I took more care than usual to separate myself from the decision-making process, acting as a facilitator rather than a participant in group deliberations related to the research. However, even that separation is a skill I was taught in the "College for Congregational Development" of the Episcopal Diocese of Olympia, a

workshop for church leaders. Facilitation brings value to the process for its own sake, not just for academic reasons.

In choosing participants, I was careful to choose those whom I believed would care about the parish and about the topic of their own accord, whose participation I believed would be motivated as much by their own interests as by their feeling of obligation to their Rector. Most were already leaders in the parish.

2.5.b Consent

After I received permission to proceed from the Institutional Review Board, I:

- sent a letter informing the denominational Ecclesiastical Authority (Bishop) for our Diocese and inviting communication in case of questions or concerns;
- provided a request on a Vestry agenda, receiving a formal motion of Vestry approval to engage in academic research within the parish community;
- sent a letter to the congregation explaining the academic project and inviting anyone with concerns to speak to me; and
- requested and received signatures on standard consent forms from all those who agreed to be interviewed and potentially quoted in the project.

2.5.c Confidentiality

When inviting individuals to participate in this project, I made clear that while I will observe the standard practices of confidentiality (namely, changing names of places,

parishes, and people), my name as the researcher is publicly associated with the parish and will remain so on records made public by our denomination. Thus the veil of anonymity will be very thin indeed and will be easy to pierce. Additionally, St. Timothy's is a small parish, so even with the use of pseudonyms, people familiar with the congregation will likely be able to identify some or all participants.

2.5.d Objectivity

The cynic will insist that there is no such thing as objectivity from a human being. Certainly I am not objective about the parish I serve. On the one hand, the protocols and processes of an academic investigation provide some structural support for objectivity. On the other hand, the particular practice of Action Research, especially in a post-modern era, does not hold up objectivity as its overriding concern. Our knowledge is constructed and polyvalent. What is important are the interpretations and perspectives offered by the Council of Advice as the project seeks to pay attention to black voices.

2.6 Analysis

Besides research in the literature, the other primary data source for this project consists of interviews. These interviews were preserved as audio or audio-video recordings. Transcripts were produced using "Whisper,"[27] a "neural net" from a company called OpenAI. The texts it produced, with time markers, were remarkably accurate. After

[27]"Research: Introducing Whisper", accessed July 20, 2023, https://openai.com/research/whisper

each transcript was produced, I listened to the original audio while following the machine-generated text, making corrections and noting who each speaker was.

Coding the data required several readings and listenings, with multiple attempts to draw categories and through-lines that might help the data hang together. While the data naturally clumped around the original questions from my interview schedule, there were other, broader conversations going on. Listening to all the interviews, week after week, while walking or driving or pursuing other activities that kept my body active and left me space to think and write, helped the respondents' themes and concerns emerge for me. What were the stories they were telling?

Also I used repeated readings of notes from the surrounding literature to inform the conversation. I wished to hear how black (and black-adjacent) writers and black parishioners immersed in a multiracial web of relationships interacted.

Once again, "objectivity" is a desirable ideal but there really is no such thing. Hans Georg Gadamer writes of the hermeneutical cycle involved in interpreting texts. Bracketing one's own opinions, ignoring one's own prior experience or checking one's prejudices at the door are not really possible. Instead, "the task of the researcher is to enter into a constructive, critical dialogue with the text within which a fusion of the two horizons is brought about."[28] I bring my own reflexive presence to the words spoken by the respondents in order to engage with those words in content analysis and thematic analysis.

---

[28]Swinton and Mowatt, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 109.

2.7 Validity

As a project in the vein of qualitative research, the present case falls outside the simplest ideas of "scientific" study. The data gathered is not from a wide enough sample to ensure it is widely applicable and can be reproduced and used in various contexts. Research in the physical sciences often try to remove, isolate, or account for experimental inputs that are outside their particular interest. One common way to do this is by running one's study over a very large sample group, assuming that natural variations will disappear in the act of averaging. Eileen Campbell-Reed, following social scientist Bent Flyvbjerg, argues that "the highest learning for practitioners who deal with human lives and social worlds is not decontextualized knowledge that is universally applicable… but context-dependent knowledge."[29] This is analogous to the difference between a physicist who can talk about how things "should work" (in an ideal world without too many inconvenient details) versus the engineer's work to make systems practical in the midst of the messiness of the "real world."

In fact, the point of this project is not to "solve racism" or to lay out a program that churches and their leaders ought to follow in pursuit of racial justice. It is rather to ask what might be helpful activities to do in a particular context, among particular people. An Action Research methodology isn't focused on discovering "the truth" or even divining "a truth" from a particular perspective. Instead it is concerned with knowledge

[29]Eileen R. Campbell-Reed, "The Power and Danger of a Single Case Study in Practical Theological Research," in *Conundrums in Practical Theology*, ed. Joyce Ann Mercer and Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, Theology in Practice, volume 2 (Leiden Boston: Brill, 2016), 44.

"that is negotiated between participants and researchers for the purposes of bringing about change."[30] A "pragmatic epistemology" such as this will sometimes stray away from the norms of faith found in sacred texts or popular expression. This is the messiness of "real life," the compromises that make up every individual and community.

Validity in this case is not concerned with establishing experimental data. A valid practice of Action Research is one which takes risks, asks open-ended questions, and makes itself vulnerable to learning something. While the data I collected did line up quite naturally under the questions I asked, repeated listening began to reveal not only the intersections between my interests and those of the respondents, but those interests and agendas which were important to the respondents regardless of my efforts to guide the conversation. Likewise none of the interventions chosen were the ones I had suggested, but were activities and presentations which arose organically from the respondents' own interests, experiences, and confidence.

2.8 Theological Reflection

"Paying attention" means more than just hearing a noise or listening to words. There is a more active posture involved, a posture which has very frequently been denied black people in the United States. One pervasive aspect of racism is that "children are treated like adults" (that is, tried and punished as adults) and "adults are treated like

[30]Helen Cameron and Catherine Duce, *Researching Practice in Ministry and Mission: A Companion* (London: SCM Press, 2013), 33.

children"[31] (that is, ignored, not taken seriously, presumed ignorant or lacking authority). In both cases, the strategy is to take away a person's voice and volition, to remove their person-hood. But the Bible speaks of paying attention in the *Sh'ma* spoken daily by Jews around the world. "Hear, O Israel…": pay attention (Deut. 4:6–9)! The writer goes on to assert the one-ness, the ultimate individuality and essential holiness of God, a one-ness that invites a single-hearted, single-souled, single-bodied attention. An attention that follows each believer through their day and flavors all of their interactions and relationships. It shapes what they do (bound on their hands), what they think (bound on their foreheads) and even where they live (on doorposts and gates of their houses).

As Christians who believe that every person, with every skin tone, bears the image of God and carries within their lungs the very breath (רוּחַ, spirit) of God, we are called to pay that same kind of attention to our neighbors. Solidarity can be described as choosing both to listen and defer to the group or individual that has been injured.[32]

In the United States in the 21st century, some neighbors have been accorded so little attention that we can notice them, define them as a groups. We call one such group "black." This project seeks to pay attention to those voices in one small way, to hear what they have to say and thereby to hear the voice of God speaking through them.

[31]Cathy Park Hong, *Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning* (New York: One World, 2020), 77.
[32]Sangiovanni and Viehoff, "Solidarity in Social and Political Philosophy."

2.9 Reflection

I began this project with some reluctance. The methods and perspectives of the academy felt artificial, formulaic, and set apart from the engagement with people's hearts that I label "ministry." But as I engaged the process, there were two things I particularly noticed.

First, while I have difficulty processing and expressing my own experiences and emotions, the formal processes and models of the academy offered fundamental patterns and types against which to compare what I was feeling. The work of theological reflection and conversation was the work of taking my inchoate experiences and making sense of them. While every journey is unique, there are also wide expanses of overlap in our experiences and our interpretations of them. Encountering others' attempts to struggle with topics related to my own experiences helped bring to light the things I felt but could not grasp. Often they gave me names by which to isolate, consider, and engage with the things that challenged me. For example, the intersections and divergences between espoused and operant theology help reveal the tensions and growing points in a person's theological commitments. Or words like "white transparency" and "white solidarity" reveal gaps and unwanted inconsistencies in my own ways of being: exactly the opportunities for repentance and transformation that I seek.

Second, initiating intimate conversations that invite people to reflect on their world and on God's activity in it is a practice I value. Likewise, witnessing the Council of Advice as they clarified their values, selected activities that would advance those values,

and afterwards reflected on those experiences, is a great privilege and opportunity to encounter the Christ who has given gifts to his saints in order to empower them for the work of ministry (Eph. 4:12).

2.10 Summary

This project was spurred on by the disruption of COVID-19 and the way anti-black racism was returned to the spotlight during the pandemic lockdowns. Action Research is a methodology suited to one who is determined to "do something" in cooperation with a congregation. Related disciplines of theology, sociology, and history will inform the work we do. But the core work of this project lies in the experiences, concerns, and preferences of a Council of Advice, inviting them to lead actions and conversations that enrich the whole congregation by broadening our perspectives and helping us to notice different points of view.

3 Literature Review

3.1 Invitation

When I was finishing up my degree from the conservative Christian seminary I attended in Texas, my final classes were transfer credits from General Theological Seminary in New York City. General's library had some additional books besides the ones I'd found in the seminary library back in Texas. I remember one day stumbling across Phyllis Trible's *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*[33]. What I found inside that book was a feminist reading of several narratives from the Bible. These were interpretations that turned upside down everything I'd ever heard about these passages, while remaining faithful to the biblical texts. The meaning of God's word did not change, but a new perspective revealed new facets that challenged what I knew and changed the world I lived in. This book was, for me, exhilarating.

Nearly two decades later, I had the same experience first reading articles by Ta-Nehisi Coates, a journalist, and later books and essays by James Cone, sometimes called the father of Black Theology. Both these authors share black perspectives on the world and God, offering themselves and their worldviews to the public eye. Coates, for example, tells of doing a television interview one day. He says, "the host wished to know why I felt that white America's progress, or rather the progress of those Americans who believe that they are white, was built on looting and violence.... The answer to this

[33]Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, Overtures to Biblical Theology 2 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978).

question is the record of the believers themselves. The answer is American history."[34] He then went on to explain his response in haunting ways. History, it is said, is written by the victors: Coates offers an alternative point of view from the standard histories.

3.2 Overview

Solidarity is the receipt of my neighbor's perspective, honoring it as legitimate and important. Solidarity finds in my neighbor's perspective not a threat, but an opportunity to grow into a more whole person. Solidarity with black persons involves encountering black perspectives on the world.

In my limited experience with organized groups of white anti-racist activists, they talk a lot about doing white work and not presuming that people already laboring under the oppression of white supremacy also want to be given the job of teaching me what I don't know – and dealing with the emotions this will likely engender in me. Cathy Hong explains it this way: "Patiently educating a clueless white person about race is draining. It takes all your powers of persuasion. Because it's more than a chat about race. It's ontological. It's like explaining to a person why you exist, or why you feel pain, or why your reality is distinct from their reality. Except it's even trickier than that. Because the person has all of Western history, politics, literature, and mass culture on their side, proving that you don't exist."[35] Fortunately, Hong and other authors have patiently set down their perspectives in writing, inviting one and all to partake.

---

[34]Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2015), 5f.
[35]Hong, *Minor Feelings*, 18.

Literature from black perspectives has become prominent only in recent years. But with roots in thinkers like W. E. B. Du Bois (1868-1963), Zora Neale Hurston (1891-1960), and James Baldwin (1924-1987), literature by, for, and about black voices and issues of race has seen rapid growth. Paying attention to black voices today and for this investigation includes encountering:

- Black Theology
- Womanist Theology
- Race Theory

For my purposes as a priest in the Episcopal Church, I am also interested in:

- Race and the Church of the United States of America
- Race and the Episcopal Church
- Resources for praxis in the context of the Church

3.3 Black Theology

Black Theology is a theological movement born in the United States of America. The black church was born as the fraternal twin of the white church upon the death of the truly catholic (universal) church due to a terminal case of white supremacy.[36] Likewise, as Christian theology manifested its captivity to white supremacist thought, it revealed

[36]A classic example of this death can be seen in the 1792 exodus of Absalom Jones, Richard Allen, and most of the black community from St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church, Philadelphia, when the formerly interracial community began to enforce segregated seating. From the ashes of the more catholic St. George's arose three new entities: a white St. George's, St. Thomas' African Episcopal Church, and the African Methodist Episcopal denomination.

itself as White Theology. Black Theology is a response to White Theology which seeks to restore a more complete (catholic) theology. Though Black Theology has a deep history in the experience, preaching, and spirituals of black persons in the United States, Professor James Cone brought Black Theology into the academy. Cone also had a penchant for provocative theses.

3.3.a Theology of Power

In *Risks of Faith*, a retrospective collection of Cone's writings, the 1968 essay, "Christianity and Black Power," argues that Black Power ("full emancipation of black people from white oppression by whatever means black people deem necessary"[37]), far from being contrary to Christianity, is "rather Christ's central message to twentieth-century America."[38] Likewise, in his 2013 work, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, he asserts that "Until we can see the cross and the lynching tree together… there can be no genuine understanding of Christian identity in America, and no deliverance from the brutal legacy of slavery and white supremacy."[39] White theologians with a vested interest in the maintenance of a racial hierarchy – or at least an unconscious reluctance to violate the taboos of white solidarity – have often been unwilling to address the demands of the Gospel relative to race in the United States.[40] M. Shawn Copeland sees Roman Catholic

---

[37]James H. Cone, *Risks of Faith: The Emergence of a Black Theology of Liberation, 1968 - 1998* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999), 4.
[38]Cone, 3.
[39]Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, xv.
[40]Cone, xvii and Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993), 93.

Christianity, for example, expressing contempt toward the image of the Divine in black people, which she points to as the beginning of the "path of idolatry."[41]

Black theologians, on the other hand, "preached about Jesus' death more than any other theme"[42] because they found a close identification between their own experiences of oppression and persecution motivated by racial enmity and the experiences of Christ in the Gospels. Kelly Brown Douglas reports that as the "white Christ" had a long history of complicity with racial oppression and resistance to black freedom and equality,[43] black theologians began to posit a black Christ instead. Though historically likely to be closer to the truth than a blond-haired, blue-eyed white Christ, "[t]he Blackness of the slaves' Christ had to do with Christ's actions, not Christ's skin color."[44]

3.3.b Theology of Seeing

Seeing white supremacy is a fundamental prerequisite for paying attention to black voices, and it is also a critical skill for encountering God in the modern United States of America. Every experience of God is unique, and culturally distinct groups consistently bring perceptions of God and the Gospel that enrich others by helping all to see God more fully. Black Theology generally centers on the Exodus as the paradigmatic story of the Bible: "Yahweh is the God of the oppressed and downtrodden and his

---

[41]M. Shawn Copeland, "Anti-Blackness and White Supremacy in the Making of American Catholicism," *American Catholic Studies* 127, no. 3 (2016): 8.
[42]Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, 75.
[43]Kelly Brown Douglas, *The Black Christ*, The Bishop Henry McNeal Turner Studies in North American Black Religion, vol. 9 (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis, 1994), 83.
[44]Douglas, 30.

revelation is made known *only* through the liberation of the oppressed."[45] Cone argues that important, central insights into the reality of God can only be received by a "consciousness… formed in a community of victims."[46]

Willie James Jennings reminds us that [especially white] Christians often seem to forget that "we were Gentiles"[47]: even Jewish Christians who followed Jesus moved to the margins, because that was where Jesus was to be found. The idolatry of whiteness is to center whiteness and its power as the default, "normal." The Christian corrective to this idolatry is to acknowledge my own need and brokenness, to find common cause with those who suffer. The cross of Jesus speaks of radical brokenness and the extreme measures God takes to heal us all. A perspective of whiteness or power actually hinders one from receiving the healing grace of God. It is upon the cross that sin (including the idolatry of whiteness) is dealt with and a new kind of life finds its birth.

A central idea of womanist theology (see below) is that an authentic encounter with the power of a redeeming God is promised to all Christians, but it is those who are most marginalized who often have the greatest experience of and connection to that power. James Cone concludes that "[t]he real scandal of the gospel is this: humanity's salvation is revealed in the cross of the condemned criminal Jesus, and humanity's salvation is available *only* through our solidarity with the crucified people in our midst."[48]

---

[45]Cone, *Risks of Faith*, 32.
[46]Cone, 114.
[47]Willie James Jennings, "Overcoming Racial Faith," *Divinity* 14, no. 2 (Spring 2015): 6.
[48]Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, 160.

3.3.c Theology of Discomfort

"Most whites do not like to talk about white supremacy because it makes them feel guilty, a truly uncomfortable feeling. They would rather forget about the past and think only about the present and future."[49] This sense of discomfort is often called "white fragility." But failing to engage with the black struggle for justice leaves a big hole in the fabric of theology in the United States of America, a kind of bankruptcy.[50] The crucifixion of Christ was a first-century lynching, nearly exactly that which was a feature of United States history within living memory. This makes the absence of any significant discussion of lynchings from contemporary theological discourse in the United States of America striking.[51]

Silence also means complicity with the continuation of white supremacy because "[s]ilence is racism's best friend."[52] Speaking up may not be easy, but "obedience to Christ is always costly."[53]

Black Theology argues that God identifies with the oppressed, from the Hebrew slaves in Egypt[54] to the identification of Jesus with oppressed and marginalized people.[55] "[I]n a White racist society, Black people were the oppressed ones,"[56] which suggests that it is among the black community that Christ would be most likely to be encountered.

---

[49]Cone, *Risks of Faith*, 136.
[50]Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, xvi.
[51]Cone, 30.
[52]Cone, *Risks of Faith*, 136.
[53]Cone, 3.
[54]Cone, 32.
[55]Douglas, *The Black Christ*, 59.
[56]Douglas, 59.

Historically, says Cone, Christian authorities have identified more with structures of power and less with the victims of power.[57] For those in power, discomfort is an unavoidable aspect of encountering the God of the oppressed. “The cross, as a locus of divine revelation, is not good news for the powerful, for those who are comfortable with the way things are, or for anyone whose understanding of religion is aligned with power.”[58]

Altagracia Pérez-Bullard writes that those who engage with God and allow themselves to be shaped by that engagement “are willing to be made uncomfortable, to live with discomfort and acknowledge the cost of discipleship, knowing all the while that it will encourage and strengthen us.”[59] The search for the abundant life promised by God takes place in the company of others. “Being willing to be vulnerable with one another so we can share our passions and our pain will deepen those connections we long for and need. Then when hard times come, we will have saints we can turn to for help.”[60]

3.3.d Theology of Praxis

Modern black theologian, pastor, and United States Senator Rafael Warnock draws this focus on the cross another step forward by asserting that the cross has always had significant political implications, arguing that “[p]re-Constantinian Christians construed the cross as an instrument of imperial evil *and* as God’s judgment against the

---

[57]Cone, *Risks of Faith,* 31.
[58]Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, 156.
[59]Altagracia Pérez-Bullard, “In Times Like These: Comfort and Courage for Change,” in *Fearful Times; Living Faith*, ed. Robert Boak Slocum and Martyn Percy (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2021), 78.
[60]Pérez-Bullard, 79.

Roman Empire."[61] Though most white preachers to enslaved persons sought to proclaim a message of alignment between power and Gospel, a message of submission for those enslaved, many of those enslaved persons saw through the inherent contradictions in this message. The Gospel, in fact, "radicalized the slaves to fight for their freedom."[62] Pre-eminent icons of the black Christ included such heroes for freedom as Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, and Fannie Lou Hamer who "struggled to help the entire Black community survive and become whole."[63]

Cone proclaims that "[i]f the Church is to remain faithful to its Lord, it must make a decisive break with the structure of this society by launching a vehement attack on the evils of racism in all forms. It must become *prophetic*, demanding a radical change in the interlocking structures of this society."[64] Willie James Jennings points to the error of seeing "racial animus and the violence it fosters" as a cause rather than a symptom. Instead he posits that "racial animus is a *constituting reality* of our social body."[65] Healing finds its foundation in dialogue, "ending the white silence on racism."[66]

3.4 Womanist Theology

Just as Black Theology is a response to the inadequacies of White Theology, Womanist Theology responds to problems in Black (male-centered) Theology and

---

[61]Gary Dorrien, "The Making of Raphael Warnock," *Commonweal* 149, no. 9 (October 2022): 26.
[62]Douglas, *The Black Christ*, 20.
[63]Douglas, 108.
[64]Cone, *Risks of Faith*, 3.
[65]Jennings, "Overcoming Racial Faith," 5.
[66]Cone, *Risks of Faith*, 136.

Feminist (white-centered) Theology. “Black people live in a society that is also sexist, classist, and heterosexist.”[67] All theology is written from a particular perspective: each of these movements have sought to expand the boundaries of theological thought with a goal of maximum inclusiveness. Otherwise theology is concerned with a tribal god rather than a transcendent and universal Creator who is one (Deut. 6:4).

Delores Williams was a student, and later colleague, of James Cone. Her book *Sisters in the Wilderness* is a classic in the field of Womanist Theology analogous to Cone’s own contributions to Black Theology. In *Sisters*, Williams holds up Hagar (the enslaved Egyptian held by Sarai and Abram) as the arch-type of the womanist. Hagar labors under multiple oppressions and is pressed into surrogacy, a life “in service of other people’s needs and goals.”[68] But Hagar encounters God in the wilderness and becomes “the first female in the Bible to liberate herself from oppressive power structures.”[69] The wilderness becomes, for Hagar as for those escaping enslavement in the United States South, a place of shelter and provision in her liberation. “For many black Christian women today, ‘wilderness’ or ‘wilderness-experience’ is a symbolic term used to represent a near-destruction situation in which God gives personal direction to the believer and thereby helps her make a way out of what she thought was no way.”[70]

Kelly Brown Douglas also studied with James Cone after having been ordained in the Episcopal Church. She describes the focus of Black Theology as being so exclusively

---

[67]Douglas, *The Black Christ*, 86.
[68]Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*, 81.
[69]Williams, 19.
[70]Williams, 108.

focused on “the 1960s Black freedom struggles” that it was “impotent in dealing with concerns beyond racism.”[71] While black men were fighting for recognition equal to white men (for whom patriarchy, heterosexism, etc., were still the norm), black women were concerned to find a politics of “wholeness” that would be multidimensional, seeking “to understand how race, gender, class, and sexual oppression interact in the oppression of Black people, especially Black women.”[72] This additional, broader emphasis was represented by noting Christ carrying on the work not only of Moses the liberator, but the work of Amos, the prophet, “challenging the Black community to rid itself of anything that divides it against itself and to renounce any way in which it oppresses others.”[73]

M. Shawn Copeland makes these same arguments from a Catholic vantage point (noted above). Rose Wu writes of the ways certain images of God are “anti-body, anti-earth, and [have] an otherworldly focus” which is characteristic of the dualism that accompanies sexism and patriarchy.[74]

On the other hand, as Delores Williams maintains, “[t]o be a Christian is to affirm the life of black Americans and other threatened groups by joining their survival struggle against genocide in practical ways with provision of skills and resources.[75] In words and actions, acknowledging wrongs and needs, all Christians, and especially those carrying privilege due to whiteness or other classifications, are invited to learn about and express

---

[71]Douglas, *The Black Christ*, 86.
[72]Douglas, 98.
[73]Douglas, 107.
[74]Rose Wu, “Little White Fox,” in *Theologies of the Multitude for the Multitudes*, ed. Rita Nakashima Brock and Tat-siong Benny Liew, The Legacy of Kwok Pui-Lan (Claremont Press, 2021), 83.
[75]Williams, Sisters in the Wilderness, 201.

solidarity with our neighbors from whom we have stood apart due to various ideas of difference.[76]

3.5 Race Theory

Distinctions between peoples based on skin color did not begin in the United States of America, but in the United States they were gradually encoded into laws that were increasingly severe and discriminatory. One of the earliest codes in the English colonies was "The Body of Liberties of 1641" which provided colonial Massachusetts with an early "bill of rights" with concern for individual liberty. Section 91 of the "Liberties" forbade slavery except of "lawful captives taken in just wars" and of "strangers" (i.e., non-Europeans) who "willingly sell themselves or are sold to us."[77] In the Virginia colonies, early codes[78] chiefly regulated the status of "indentured servants." In the 1660's, Virginia legislators began to define a permanent condition of slavery (to which people with African origins were subject) as opposed to indenture (with a promise of eventual freedom enjoyed by European servants).[79] Some historians see Bacon's Rebellion of 1676 as the moment when Virginia legislators became determined to separate the sympathies of white and black persons, using a series of legislative acts to

---

[76]Cone, *Risks of Faith*, 144.

[77]*The Body of Liberties, 1641; in fac-simile from the Hutchinson Manuscript, with a line-for-line printed version* (Boston: Rockwell and Churchhill, City Printers: 1890), Paragraph 91, accessed August 24, 2023, https://www.mass.gov/doc/1641-massachusetts-body-of-liberties/download

[78]General Assembly. "Laws Concerning Indentured Servants" (1619). In *Encyclopedia Virginia*, accessed August 24, 2023, https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/laws-concerning-indentured-servants-1619

[79]Ibram X. Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America*, History / African American Studies (New York: Bold Type Books, 2017), 41.

divide the underclass and its power.[80] Ever since then, “black” and “white” in the United States have thought about, talked about, and written about one another as “other.”

3.5.a Isabel Wilkerson: *Caste* (2020)

Isabel Wilkerson is a Pulitzer Prize winning journalist who often writes about race. In *Caste: The Origins of our Discontents*, she compares the culture of the United States of America to an old house. Despite its many attractions, it also has issues, and not looking at those issues does not make them go away. It is better, she insists, to examine the challenges and to choose how to deal with them instead of just waiting for catastrophe to happen.[81] The most challenging issue facing the United States of America, says Wilkerson, is the historic practice of chattel slavery and its aftermath. Slavery was not just an incident in United States’ past, “but the basis of its economic and social order. For a quarter millennium, slavery *was* the country.”[82] Just like a family system that must grapple with violence or addiction before those forces can be overcome and left behind, citizens of the United States of America must encounter slavery and anti-black racism.

Wilkerson invites readers to a fresh look at racism in the United States by drawing on two other systems about which most U.S. citizens would proudly say, “that is not us:” the ancient system of caste in India and the recent practice of caste in Nazi Germany. Wilkerson draws extensive, striking parallels to use the self-righteous horror U.S. citizens

---

[80]Facing History & Ourselves, "Inventing Black and White," last updated August 11, 2017, accessed August 24, 2023, https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/inventing-black-white

[81]Isabel Wilkerson, *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*, First edition (New York: Random House, 2020), 15–16.

[82]Wilkerson, 43.

might feel about these other systems we have defined as “evil” to help us to notice that evil in our own midst. Brian Stevenson adopts this same strategy when he remarks, “You know, lynching was terrorism,” suggesting that the same opprobrium with which we refer to the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001 should be attached to the practice of lynching, past and present.[83]

Caste is a broad term that includes the modern practices of anti-black racism. Caste is a systematic basis on which to treat people differently, normalized so that it does not require individual, personal malice so much as a group acquiescence to “the natural order of things.”[84] These norms are universally imbibed by those inside the system, unseen like the air we breathe: there is no “opting out” of caste.[85] Its invisibility is what allows it to continue in power, unrestrained, just as the “good Christians” of Germany allowed the Third Reich to rise up.

For those in the dominant group, the system of caste is generally untroubling and unnoticed. At times it will be defended even at personal cost because this invisible status can be worth more than material gain.[86] But for those at the bottom, it has profound social, material, and bodily consequences.

Caste offers a helpful, insightful way to assess race in the United States today, to overcome its banal presence and to recognize its continuing evil. Isabel reframes the

---

[83]James McWilliams, “Bryan Stevenson On What Well-Meaning White People Need To Know About Race,” *Pacific Standard*, February 6, 2018, accessed February 20, 2022, https://psmag.com/magazine/bryan-stevenson-ps-interview
[84]Wilkerson, *Caste*, 70.
[85]Wilkerson, 289.
[86]Wilkerson, 325.

conversation about race with a larger, historical perspective. She also offers hope. While India has outlawed caste, its realities persist. But Germany is a country that has considered deeply and now memorializes its terrible history in all manner of artifacts from museums to "stumbling stones"[87] in order to incarnate a definite and determined turning away from the evil of the past.[88]

3.5.b Alison Mariella Désir: *Running While Black* (2022)

Alison Mariella Désir is an endurance athlete and mental health practitioner who writes a personal account of her experience of white supremacy through 2022, and her efforts to create more inclusive spaces in the traditionally white world of long-distance running. Hailing from the New York City metro area, she now resides in the Seattle, Washington, region. Her book, *Running While Black*, begins with a timeline with two columns: "U.S. Running History" and "Black People's Reality." These intertwine dramatically with the killing of Ahmaud Arbery in 2020, out for a run when he was chased down, confronted, and shot by white men in pickup trucks.

After that murder, Désir found herself drawn into activism with the various corporate interests surrounding running. She was shocked at the ignorance of these mostly white executives, however well-meaning they might be:

> White people didn't realize they knew nothing about race and might need to educate themselves. Instead they were convinced they should be 'listening to us,' which sounds nice, but it's impossible to have a meaningful conversation

[87]"Stolperstein.", accessed July 20, 2023, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stolperstein
[88]Wilkerson, *Caste*, 346.

> on race if the time is spent educating white people on race. It's impossible to feel safe sharing experiences of racial harm when the people you're talking to do not have a historical understanding or awareness to hold space for your experiences.[89]

White supremacy, Désir insists, relies on that ignorance to remain active and powerful. If white people recognized and acknowledged white supremacy, they would not consent to allow it to stand. "When I hear white runners say 'keep politics out of running' or that running publications and brands should 'stick to running,' and that 'race' and 'social issues' don't belong in running, I hear someone denying structural racism, bias, and white supremacy—denying my reality and the reality of millions of others. These comments demonstrate a lack of racial understanding and a narrow view of our nation's history."[90]

3.5.c Kimberlé Crenshaw and Intersectionality

Kimberlé Crenshaw is a professor at both UCLA School of Law and Columbia Law School. She is known, among other things, for introducing the idea of Intersectionality. This is related to the idea proposed by Womanist theologians arguing that "Black Theology" does not adequately address their concerns and priorities. The premise is that one faces disadvantage for being a woman. One also faces disadvantage for being black. But these two disadvantages do not operate separately nor are they even additive: they are mutually compounding. "Every identity—race, class, sexual

---

[89]Alison Mariella Désir, *Running While Black: Finding Freedom in a Sport That Wasn't Built for Us* (New York: Portfolio / Penguin, 2022), 207.
[90]Désir, 234f.

orientation, body size, ability—either adds privilege or disadvantage to a person's experience."[91] "For women, minimizing one form of oppression will still leave them subjugated in equally dehumanizing ways. For example, finding stable housing and a living wage job might mitigate their class oppression, but it would still leave women vulnerable to the violence of patriarchy and racism."[92] Crenshaw argues, "[b]ecause the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which black women are subordinated."[93]

Seeing disadvantages one-by-one makes them easier to minimize or set aside. This is of a piece with the strategy of distorting or ignoring racial history. Then one might acknowledge "'difference' between racial groups while ignoring the power relations between them."[94] Instead, the solution Crenshaw offers is that if we "began with addressing the needs and problems of those who are most disadvantaged and with restructuring and remaking the world where necessary, then others who are singularly disadvantaged would also benefit."[95] It is this thread that Désir picked up in wanting

---

[91]Désir, 99.
[92]Anne R. Roschelle, "Our Lives Matter: The Racialized Violence of Poverty among Homeless Mothers of Color," *Sociological Forum* 32, no. S1 (2017): 1012.
[93]Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989, no. 1 (n.d.): 140.
[94]Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Race to the Bottom How the Post-Racial Revolution Became a Whitewash," *The Baffler*, no. 35 (June 2017), accessed May 10, 2023, https://thebaffler.com/salvos/race-to-bottom-crenshaw.
[95]Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 167.

every space to be a space of belonging. As Crenshaw puts it, speaking of the most marginalized among us, “When they enter, we all enter.”[96]

3.5.d Ta-Nehisi Coates

Ta-Nehisi Coates is a black writer, past senior editor of *The Atlantic*, 2015 winner of a “Genius Grant” from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and presently writer-in-residence at Howard University. Much of his writing concerns blackness and whiteness in the United States today. Coates shares publicly a black perspective with historical awareness. His writing can often come across as angry, or at least deeply wounded, as he exposes the scars that result from the continuing legacy of white supremacy. For example, in the collection of essays *We Were Eight Years in Power*, Coates offers a view of the Civil War different from the traditional soft-pedaling of white perspectives. Coates writes:

> For African Americans, war commenced not in 1861, but in 1661, when the Virginia Colony began passing America’s first black codes, the charter documents of a slave society that rendered blacks a permanent servile class and whites a mass aristocracy. They were also a declaration of war.
>
> Over the next two centuries, the vast majority of the country’s blacks were robbed of their labor and subjected to constant and capricious violence. They were raped and whipped at the pleasure of their owners. Their families lived under the threat of existential violence—in just the four decades before the Civil War, more than two million African American slaves were bought and sold. Slavery did not mean merely coerced labor, sexual assault, and torture,

[96]Crenshaw, 167.

> but the constant threat of having a portion, or the whole, of your family consigned to oblivion. In all regards, slavery was war on the black family.[97]

I, on the other hand, have a relative who lives in the South and finds it amusing to refer to the Civil War as the "War of Northern Aggression." Coates invites me to make a radical break with white solidarity, and to see things from the perspective of my neighbors instead.

3.5.e Robin DiAngelo: *White Fragility* (2018)

White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism is written from a white perspective to a white perspective. DiAngelo discusses the realities of race and the reasons why many of us avoid talking about it. Though many white people will claim that race "doesn't matter," that ignores the reality that it does. Just as gender expression, wealth, age, [dis-]ability, and sexual preference *shouldn't* matter in one's public life but do, so it is with race.[98] *White fragility* is a reluctance to acknowledge or talk about race because the very idea of race makes us white people uncomfortable. But DiAngelo urges readers to use that discomfort as an invitation to ask the question, "Why does this unsettle me?"[99]

DiAngelo discusses the history of race as a construct of the United States. Different from prejudice and discrimination (which are unavoidable, universal practices),

---

[97]Ta-Nehisi Coates, *We Were Eight Years in Power: An American Tragedy* (New York: One World, 2017), 78f.
[98]Robin J. DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's so Hard for White People to Talk about Racism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018), 10.
[99]DiAngelo, 14.

"authority and control transforms individual prejudices into a far-reaching system that no longer depends on the good intentions of individual actors; it becomes the default of the society and is reproduced automatically. Racism is a system."[100] All residents of the United States are socialized into the system of racism without being offered a choice. Toni Morrison centers this theme in her novel, *The Bluest Eye*, about "the damaging internalization of assumptions of immutable inferiority originating in an outside gaze."[101]

White privilege refers to "basic rights and benefits of the doubt, purportedly granted to all people but which are actually only consistently afforded to white people."[102] Race was invented in order to justify exploitation that was already occurring.[103] Thus race has economic and social benefits that can be difficult for people to let go of, and about which they would rather forget instead of confronting the reality that racial disparities continue to exist and grow.[104] Again, these benefits tend to be invisible to white people, and defensive reactions about them are so widespread and consistent that DiAngelo devotes most of chapter 5 to offering responses to the standard protestations.

White supremacy is "the all-encompassing centrality and assumed superiority of people defined and perceived as white and the practices based on this assumption."[105] White supremacy allows white people to fail to perceive their own racial identity,

---

[100]DiAngelo, 21.
[101]Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye: With a New Afterword by the Author* (New York: Plume, 1994), 210.
[102]DiAngelo, *White Fragility*, 28.
[103]DiAngelo, 16.
[104]DiAngelo, 22f.
[105]DiAngelo, 28.

assuming that race enters a room only when someone non-white appears. White supremacy could never withstand the light of proper examination, but it rarely has to due to *white solidarity*: "the unspoken agreement among whites to protect white advantage and not cause another white person to feel racial discomfort by confronting them when they say or do something racially problematic."[106] Violating white solidarity and "[n]aming white supremacy changes the conversation in two key ways: It makes the system visible and shifts the locus of change onto white people, where it belongs."[107]

3.5.f Amanda Lewis, "What Group?" (2004)

Like Wilkerson and DiAngelo, Amanda Lewis in "'What Group?' Studying Whites and Whiteness in the Era of 'Color-Blindness'" refers to the "material (economic, social, and political resources) and ideological elements"[108] that accrue to the dominant group thus making any acknowledgment of racism threatening to privilege. She observes that no one escapes the racializing work of society; that benefits accrue whether wanted or not; and that perfectly avoiding these benefits is "all but impossible."[109] This creates discomfort for tender consciences when one notices that "vast racial gaps in wealth, life expectancy, unemployment rates, poverty levels, cancer survival rates, and levels of infant mortality demonstrate the power of race to shape life outcomes and

---

[106]DiAngelo, 57.
[107]DiAngelo, 33.
[108]Amanda E. Lewis, "'What Group?' Studying Whites and Whiteness in the Era of 'Color-Blindness,'" *Sociological Theory* 22, no. 4 (2004): 625.
[109]Lewis, 628.

opportunities."[110] The purpose of racial ideologies is to deflect that discomfort and to argue that "the gaps in resources... appear to be the natural if not inevitable outcomes—the way things are supposed to be."[111] The claim of color-blindness is a way for white people to "self-exonerate from any blame for current racial inequalities," implicitly blaming the victims instead.[112]

3.5.g Ibram X. Kendi, Stamped From the Beginning and How to Be an Antiracist

Ibram X. Kendi's *Stamped From the Beginning* bills itself as "The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America." Beginning with the history of theories of hierarchy among humans and pre-U.S. trade in slaves, Kendi follows up with an account of United States history from a different perspective than I have seen before. In the end, Kendi makes the case that "antiracism" is naturally in accord with the self-interest of the vast majority of U.S. citizens. Just as most white Southerners were poor before the Civil War, not benefiting economically from the institution of slavery, so most people today do not actually benefit from the continuing inequality, trauma, and suffering that results from racism. Racism toward black people is the archetype for racism against other ethnicities and other common categories of discrimination including gender, sexual preference, class, etc. The solution to systems saturated with racism, says Kendi, is a clear-eyed focus on power. "Any effective solution to eradicating American racism must involve

---

[110]Lewis, 631.
[111]Lewis, 634.
[112]Lewis, 636.

Americans committed to antiracist policies seizing and maintaining power over institutions, neighborhoods, counties, states, nations—the world."[113]

Kendi followed *Stamped* with the shorter, action-oriented *How to Be an Antiracist.* This is a title written for white people which seems to concede that not everyone is willing to hear the history recounted in *Stamped* (whether because they find the content troubling or whether it is simply too long), but that there is a market for short-cuts to action. In *How to Be an Antiracist,* Kendi insists that there is no such thing as a race-neutral policy: every policy at every level of society either promotes equity or inequity between racial groups.[114] Race must be a part of formulating policy. "Only racists shy away from the R-word—racism is steeped in denial."[115] Kendi quotes U.S. Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun in 1978: "In order to get beyond racism, we must first take account of race. There is no other way. And in order to treat some persons equally, we must treat them differently."[116] Racism is battled in policy because "[t]he problem of race has always been at its core the problem of power, not the problem of immorality or ignorance."[117]

"Race is a mirage, but one that humanity has organized itself around in very real ways."[118] Life outcomes vary dramatically among residents of the United States of America with different shades of skin.[119] Some people will try to blame difference on the

---

[113]Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning,* 510.
[114]Ibram X. Kendi, *How to Be an Antiracist* (New York: One World, 2019), 18.
[115]Kendi, 47.
[116]Kendi, 19.
[117]Kendi, 208.
[118]Kendi, 54.
[119]Kendi, 111.

behaviors of certain groups of people. But "[r]acial-group behavior is a figment of the racist's imagination"[120] used to excuse, obscure, and deny racist policies that have real and profound effects in the world. Kendi contends that "Individual behaviors can shape the success of individuals. But policies determine the success of groups."[121]

3.5.h More Voices on Race Theory

Cathy Park Hong, a professor at UC Berkeley, writes in *Minor Feelings: an Asian American Reckoning*[122] about the fatigue of talking to well-meaning but clueless white people about race (quoted above). She goes on to characterize "white innocence" as "both a privilege and a cognitive handicap, a sheltered unknowingness that, once protracted into adulthood, hardens into entitlement."[123] Finally, she observes that when white people hear the cry "Black Lives Matter" and respond that "All Lives Matter," she interprets them not as being inclusive but trying once again to avoid the topic of race "so that the invisible hegemony of whiteness can continue unchallenged."[124]

James Baldwin (1924-1987) lived most of his life in New York City and in France. *The Fire Next Time* considers the nature of race and racial reconciliation. He observes that "Color is not a human or a personal reality; it is a political reality."[125] "Negroes" only exist, says Baldwin, in the United States, "strictly or legally speaking."[126]

---

[120]Kendi, 94.
[121]Kendi, 94.
[122]Hong, *Minor Feelings*.
[123]Hong, 74.
[124]Hong, 84.
[125]James Baldwin, *The Fire next Time* (New York: Vintage International, 1993), 104.
[126]Baldwin, 25.

When a black person accomplishes a great deal, they may even be thought to become an equal to a white person, which is just another way to center whiteness as the highest value.[127] From the black perspective, says Baldwin, "[t]he tendency has really been, insofar as this was possible, to dismiss white people as the slightly mad victims of their own brainwashing."[128] In terms of reconciliation, Baldwin will only concede "[t]here appears to be a vast amount of confusion on this point, but I do not know many Negroes who are eager to be 'accepted' by white people, still less to be loved by them; they, the blacks, simply don't wish to be beaten over the head by the whites every instant of our brief passage on this planet."[129]

Matthew Hughey, now professor of sociology at the University of Connecticut, wrote *White Bound: Nationalists, Antiracists, and the Shared Meanings of Race* following a year of embedded research with both a white nationalist organization and a white anti-racist organization. In his research, Hughey shows that the two particular groups he examined share many underlying attitudes, commitments, and responses to race and racism despite their avowedly conflicting agendas. Racism goes deeper than an individual's intentions, being embedded in the "cultural system" which forms the basis for that individual's understandings and choices.[130]

---

[127]Baldwin, 94.
[128]Baldwin, 102.
[129]Baldwin, 21f.
[130]Matthew W. Hughey, *White Bound: Nationalists, Antiracists, and the Shared Meanings of Race* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 12.

Hughey offers insightful reflections on *race* ("not a static event but a process of patterned events"[131]), *color-blindness* (the understanding of whiteness as "neutral characteristics and behaviors to which *individual citizens* should aspire and adopt, rather than markers of a distinctive and privileged *racial group* at the center of the nation's founding"[132]), and *white supremacy* (a racial hierarchy that, upon the reform of the legal system that supported it, "should crumble or at least flatten out"[133] but did not).

David Reynolds is a Distinguished Professor at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights* is Reynolds's lengthy biography of John Brown that centers around his motivations and actions at Harper's Ferry. Reynolds portrays John Brown and his father, Owen Brown, as stern Puritans who believed the Scriptures when they declared that "God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34) and so they should not be either. John Brown was a terrible businessman, being unwilling to compromise his beliefs about fairness for the sake of making a profit (or avoiding bankruptcy). Appalled as an adolescent at the differing treatment applied to him and to a young black friend, Brown was a life-long enemy of racial discrimination, a dedicated participant in the underground railroad, and one who appreciated the diversity and power of black culture.[134] Though terrorist is not an inaccurate label for him, propelled as he was by zeal

---

[131]Hughey, 12.
[132]Hughey, 151f.
[133]Hughey, 191.
[134]David S. Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights*, 1st ed (New York: Alfred A. Knopf : Distributed by Random House, 2005), 103.

for his faith, Brown was radicalized by the extreme cruelty practiced toward enslaved persons and pursued a path which he hoped would minimize bloodshed while leading to liberation for his neighbors of African descent. In doing so, he took special inspiration from the strategies and successes of oppressed people in recent history: Nat Turner's rebellion, the Seminoles in Florida and Maroons in the Americas and West Indies, especially Toussaint Louverture in Haiti.[135] What is an authentically faith-filled response to today's racial quagmire for those who today belong to the dominant racial grouping?

3.6 The Church of the United States of America

Perhaps the most ground-breaking and widely referenced early work on churches and race is Michael Emerson (professor of sociology at the University of Illinois, Chicago) and Christian Smith's (professor of sociology at the University of Notre Dame) 2001 book, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America.* Emerson and Smith laid the groundwork for how to approach studies of race and church and inspired a host of other important researchers including Korie Little Edwards (distinguished professor of sociology at The Ohio State University) who wrote *The Elusive Dream: The Power of Race in Interracial Churches*. Emerson and Smith begin by making the case for recognizing the United States as a *racialized society:* "wherein race matters profoundly for differences in life experiences, life opportunities, and social

[135]Reynolds, 107.

relationships."[136] However artificial (socially constructed) the idea of race is, race is a powerful force that has real, meaningful, inescapable impact on U.S. citizens' lives. Though racism does not manifest itself as overtly today as it did in 1865 (when the Ku Klux Klan was created as an insurgency following the end of the U.S. Civil War), its hidden nature serves to make it even more powerful. In the mid-to-late 20th century, John Perkins, Tom Skinner, and Samuel Hines were three black evangelicals for whom racial reconciliation was "God's one-item agenda."[137] The path to reconciliation was to "admit, submit, and commit"[138] to which John Perkins added two more steps: *relocation* and *redistribution.* White evangelicals responded to a point, embracing the first three items on the agenda. But the white evangelical church was determined to turn a blind eye to the systemic and structural aspects of racism, and to understand racism (and salvation generally) as a "spiritual and individual" problem, not one that was "temporal and social."[139] By ignoring the structural or systemic nature of racism, and talking only about it as a problem of individual sin, evangelicals avoid having to take actions that might endanger their own cultural, social, or economic privilege.[140] In her insightful *Places of Redemption,* Mary McClintock Fulkerson (Professor Emerita of Theology at Duke

[136]Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2001), 7.
[137]Emerson and Smith, 54, quoting Samuel Hines.
[138]Emerson and Smith, 54.
[139]Emerson and Smith, 58.
[140]Emerson and Smith, 130.

Divinity School) refers to this semi-willful ignorance as "obliviousness," a "power-related willing-not-to-see."[141]

3.6.a Colorblindness

This obliviousness often goes by the name of "colorblindness" as white Christians assert, "I don't see color: I just see a child of God." Fulkerson points out that "Colorblindness denies the wounds of race," thus exacerbating the injury to black people.[142] Fulkerson ultimately argues that a refusal to admit to seeing race "distorts a culturally derived value by making it an infinite value—a God-derived value."[143]

Michelle Oyakawa (assistant professor of sociology at Muskingum University in Ohio) writes incisively about how racial reconciliation is for churches what "colorblindness" is for individuals: an effort to evade doing the hard work of loving one's neighbor. She avers that "racial reconciliation can function as a *suppressive frame* within multiracial evangelical churches because it precludes a consideration of or discussion about racial justice."[144] Racial reconciliation "emerged as a 'third way' outside of the polarized discussion that positioned the Civil Rights Movement (racial justice perspective) versus segregationists (openly racist perspective)."[145] Racial reconciliation,

---

[141]Mary McClintock Fulkerson, *Places of Redemption: Theology for a Worldly Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 17.
[142]Mary McClintock Fulkerson and Marcia W. Mount Shoop, *A Body Broken, a Body Betrayed: Race, Memory, and Eucharist in White-Dominant Churches* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2015), 72.
[143]Fulkerson and Mount Shoop, 34.
[144]Michelle Oyakawa, "Racial Reconciliation as a Suppressive Frame in Evangelical Multiracial Churches," *Sociology of Religion* 80, no. 4 (2019): 497.
[145]Oyakawa, 498.

as described by Oyakawa (and drawing on Emerson & Smith, above), is actually a form of cultural virtue-signaling that the white church uses to claim enlightenment while preserving white dominance.[146] In this way, multiracial congregations can actually be worse than segregated ones when "dominant white racial frames are [not] challenged, but in fact, such contexts may actually affirm the dominant white cultural perspectives."[147]

So what are multiracial churches to do in response? Authors like Edwards[148], Munn[149], Fulkerson[150], and Martinez[151] all speak of the importance of an intimacy born of telling our stories. Black people's stories of oppression, inequality, and hurt must be received, acknowledged, and validated by white persons instead of ignoring "the complicated and disturbing realities associated with race."[152] This requires of white persons a tolerance for difference[153] and discomfort.

White persons must learn to tell our own stories of race, which begins by acknowledging and recognizing our own role in the construction of racial hierarchy. Part of the very nature of whiteness is its invisibility to those who wear it: "white transparency

---

[146]Oyakawa, 497.
[147]Ryon J. Cobb Perry, Samuel L., Dougherty, Kevin D., "United by Faith? Race/Ethnicity, Congregational Diversity, and Explanations of Racial Inequality," *Sociology of Religion* 76, no. 2 (2015): 193.
[148]Kersten Bayt Priest Edwards, Korie L, "Doing Identity: Power and the Reproduction of Collective Identity in Racially Diverse Congregations," *Sociology of Religion* 80, no. 4 (2019): 525.
[149]Christopher Walter Munn, "The One Friend Rule and Social Deficits: Understanding the Impact of Race on Social Capital in an Interracial Congregation" (Master's Thesis, The Ohio State University, 2013), 37, accessed April 8, 2022, http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc_num=osu1372330327.
[150]Fulkerson, *Places of Redemption*, 133.
[151]Brandon C. Martinez, "The Integration of Racial and Ethnic Minorities into White Congregations," *Sociological Inquiry* 88, no. 3 (August 2018): 489, accessed November 1, 2022, https://doi.org/10.1111/soin.12215.
[152]David Winston Swanson, *Rediscipling the White Church: From Cheap Diversity to True Solidarity* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP, 2020), 105.
[153]Gerardo Marti, *A Mosaic of Believers: Diversity and Innovation in a Multiethnic Church* (Bloomington.: Indiana Univ. Press, 2009), 153.

can help to sabotage anything that could potentially produce racially egalitarian communities."[154] White transparency—the inability or refusal to acknowledge one's own racial identity as white—is a natural, psychological self-defense mechanism of white people, because recognizing the power of systemic racism "means being open to perceiving the pain and anguish, the anger and the despair, upon which these systems have been built."[155]

Instead, by telling stories and hearing the realities of our neighbors' worlds, all people might learn to "resist white normativity and structural dominance and fully embrace the cultures, ideas, and perspectives of all racial groups."[156] Stories are how we humanize one another, learn the deeper contexts we have not noticed before, and learn how to live more ethically and effectively as we seek to love our neighbors.

Churches can likewise be shaped in ways that promote racial equality. Most obviously, churches can choose to embrace "ethnic-specific worship practices" that "matter tremendously for the religious community and collective identity."[157] Preachers can speak frankly and explicitly about race in order to guide a congregation into recognizing realities that many of us would prefer not to see. Churches that are serious

---

[154]Edwards, *The Elusive Dream*, 136.
[155]Mary E. Hess, "White Religious Educators Resisting White Fragility: Lessons From Mystics," *Religious Education* 112, no. 1 (January 2017): 53, accessed August 31, 2022, https://doi.org/10.1080/00344087.2016.1253124.
[156]Edwards, *The Elusive Dream*, 140.
[157]Priest, "Doing Identity: Power and the Reproduction of Collective Identity in Racially Diverse Congregations," 525.

about practicing racial justice rather than just decorating their spaces with black bodies will discover that "being multiracial has to become a part of a congregation's identity."[158]

3.6.b Jamar Tisby and The Color of Compromise

Jamar Tisby is a writer and professor of history at Simmons College in Louisville, Kentucky. His book *The Color of Compromise* resembles *Stamped from the Beginning* but is primarily concerned with the Church of the United States of America. Tisby documents the history of race in churches in the United States from its very beginning in the colonial legislature in Williamsburg, Virginia, through the Revolutionary War, the Great Awakening, slavery, Civil War, Jim Crow, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Religious Right. Race and racism has always been a primary issue in the United States. Those with power have always been reluctant, usually violently so, to cede that power. As the centuries pass, the power of white supremacy has become embedded in policies and systems and conventions that require less individual acknowledgment or conscious participation on the part of the privileged, while continuing to confer those privileges. In the end, Tisby argues, Christian complicity in racism has changed very little in substance; it has simply adapted in form according to the changing of the times. Tisby provides numerous suggestions in his final chapter of how individuals and churches might respond to this history and bring change.

---

[158]Kevin D Dougherty and Kimberly R Huyser, "Racially Diverse Congregations: Organizational Identity and the Accommodation of Differences," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 47, no. 1 (March 2008): 25.

3.6.c David Swanson and Rediscipling the White Church

David Swanson is a white church planter in a largely African-American community in Chicago. In *Rediscipling the White Church: From Cheap Diversity to True Solidarity* he notes the work to which he believes white Christians are called. He begins by noting a sharp contrast between "a vision of the kingdom of God" and "the narrative of racial difference that shapes our imaginations toward segregation and injustice."[159] Racism is a habit into which the people of the United States are socialized at nearly every moment of their lives from nearly every quarter. It's the way the world works and the way things are. Racist systems train us (*disciple* us) to accept the inequality all around us as normal and invisible. As an example, Swanson holds up the black church which "only exists because of the racist exclusion of white Christianity. The Reverend Richard Allen, for example, established the African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1816 not because the black citizens of Philadelphia wanted a racially homogeneous church but because their full participation was unwelcome and opposed in the white churches."[160]

In response, Swanson proposes that the white work of anti-racism, for Christians, is the work of discipleship. "The goal of our reimagined discipleship practices is *solidarity* with the body of Christ."[161] Just as we teach ourselves and our children to avoid certain behaviors and choose others, so Christians should be intentional about learning to "identify racial segregation and injustice as forces opposed to the kingdom of

---

[159]Swanson, *Rediscipling the White Church*, 22.
[160]Swanson, 54.
[161]Swanson, 60.

God."[162] We might do this, in part, by "[n]aming current events with words like *privilege*, *racism*, and *white supremacy*" so that our children learn "to recognize, confess, and move toward racial solidarity in response to the culture's deforming racial discipleship."[163] Doing so will lead to conflict. But "[w]ith Jesus as our model, our goal can never be to avoid pain. Comfort and safety must never be the highest goods for those who follow the crucified Savior whose life was marked by poverty, violence, and persecution."[164] Shrinking from pain, white Christians often have failed to stand alongside our black neighbors in the battles they face, thereby contributing to their oppression.[165]

Swanson concludes that "[t]here is no redemptive future in the tendency among many white Christians to ignore the complicated and disturbing realities associated with race. But there is hope once these are acknowledged and we discover that the grace of Jesus is more than enough to call us together in worship."[166]

3.7 The Episcopal Church

The place to begin with an effort to lift up black voices in an Episcopal Church is in history: how did we get to where we are today? What efforts have been made in the past, and what has gone wrong? The Episcopal Church, being highly organized, has produced both documentation and reflection about its own history with anti-black racism.

---

[162]Swanson, 104.
[163]Swanson, 124.
[164]Swanson, 127.
[165]Swanson, 155.
[166]Swanson, 105.

The Episcopal Church traces its roots to the Church of England: the state church of a colonial power where there was no separation between church and state. In the North American colonies, "Church wardens and vestries acted as agents of the state."[167] Church leaders conceived and instituted the laws which created the evil institution of chattel slavery in the United States of America. The Episcopal Church prevaricated shamefully during the Civil War, the northern faction being more concerned about the wholeness of the institutional church than the conflict over slavery and white supremacy.[168] "It must be stressed that while other church bodies condemned slavery, and indeed, as in the case of the Presbyterians and Methodists, actually split between North and South, the Episcopal Church fell short of such an action, out of deference to the large number of slaveholders."[169] Recent memoirs and historical analyses like those of the Rev. Harold Lewis,[170] the Rev. Gayle Fisher-Stewart,[171] the Rev. Stephanie Spellers,[172] the Rev. Carla E. Roland Guzmán,[173] the Rev. Gardiner Shattuck,[174] and the Rev. John Kater,[175] draw out this history with a clearer eye than many of the histories that were written before.

---

[167]Gayle Fisher-Stewart, *Black and Episcopalian: The Struggle for Inclusion* (New York: Church Publishing, 2022), 18.
[168]Spellers, *The Church Cracked Open*, 64f.
[169]Harold T. Lewis, *Yet with a Steady Beat: The African American Struggle for Recognition in the Episcopal Church* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1996), 43.
[170]Lewis, *Yet with a Steady Beat*; Harold T. Lewis, "Racial Concerns in the Episcopal Church Since 1973," *Anglican and Episcopal History* 67, no. 4 (1998): 467–79.
[171]Fisher-Stewart, *Black and Episcopalian*.
[172]Spellers, *The Church Cracked Open*.
[173]Roland Guzmán, *Unmasking LATINX Ministry for Episcopalians*.
[174]Gardiner H. Shattuck, *Episcopalians and Race*, 1st ed. (University Press of Kentucky, 2000).
[175]John L. Kater, "Experiment In Freedom: The Episcopal Church And the Black Power Movement," *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 48, no. 1 (1979): 67–81.

There were bright points among the people of the Episcopal Church who helped ensure that God's call to the church did not go completely unheard. Following the example of Absalom Jones in Philadelphia, parishes especially for black congregations were opened across the country, many of which are still in operation today. "The Church Awakens," a series of web-pages available from the Episcopal Archives, tells of the ministry of the Rev. George Bragg (1863-1940) who brought significant change to the racist norms built into the Episcopal Church, evangelizing, encouraging black vocations, and demanding inclusion of black Episcopalians in the mission and ministry of the Episcopal Church.[176] Schools and seminaries especially for black people did their work, laboring under the same "separate but equal" theory as the rest of the country.

Beginning in 1874, black people were consecrated Bishop to serve overseas (James Theodore Holly in Haiti, followed by Samuel David Ferguson in Liberia in 1885), but the first black Bishops to serve in the continental United States of America were consecrated in 1918: the Right Rev. Edward Thomas Demby (Arkansas and the Province of the Southwest), and the Right Rev. Henry Beard Delany (North Carolina), both serving as "Bishop Suffragan for Colored Work."[177] A decade earlier, General Convention had "made provision" for these Bishops by stipulating that they would not be given votes in the House of Bishops and would not succeed their Diocesan Bishops. Subsequent

[176]"Keeping the Story" in The Archives of the Episcopal Church, "The Church Awakens: African Americans and the Struggle for Justice," accessed July 20, 2023, https://www.episcopalarchives.org/church-awakens/exhibits/show/legacy/keeping-the-story

[177]African Descent Ministries, "Biographies of Black Bishops," March 16, 2022, accessed September 29, 2023, https://www.episcopalchurch.org/blackministries/biographies-of-black-bishops/

consecrations of black people to serve as Bishop in the United States proceeded slowly. Not until 1962 was John Melville Burgess consecrated Bishop Diocesan of the Diocese of Massachusetts. Burgess was followed by numerous Suffragans: Richard Beamon Martin (1967, Diocese of Long Island), John Thomas Walker (1971, Diocese of Washington), and Quintin Ebenezer Primo, Jr. (1971, Diocese of Chicago). The next Bishop Diocesan would be Clarence Nicholas Coleridge in 1981 in the Diocese of Connecticut. The first woman consecrated Bishop anywhere in the Anglican Communion was Barbara Clementine Harris, a black woman who in 1989 was made Bishop Suffragan of Massachusetts.

It wasn't until 1952 that the General Convention, the governing body of the Episcopal Church, took up questions of race and racism. That year the Church passed a resolution condemning racial discrimination "both within the Church and without, in this country and internationally"[178] while simultaneously creating space for the Church's seminaries to avoid compliance.[179] Resolutions continued to trickle out as the Church's "role in the Civil Rights movement remained essentially passive and its own churches largely segregated."[180] While most Episcopalians in the 1950's were opposed to the

[178]"Journal of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America Otherwise Known as The Episcopal Church 1952" (The Archives of the Episcopal Church, DFMS, 1952), 277, accessed October 22, 2022, https://www.episcopalarchives.org/sites/default/files/anti-racism/anti-racism-training/GC1952_277.pdf

[179]"Journal of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America Otherwise Known as The Episcopal Church 1952," 278f.

[180]Bruce G. Merritt, "Faith and Fair Housing," *Southern California Quarterly* 95, no. 3 (August 1, 2013): 288, accessed June 28, 2023, https://doi.org/10.1525/scq.2013.95.3.284

segregation of churches, 39% claimed they saw no significant disparity in how races were treated.[181]

In 1959, "an organization committed to removing all vestiges of segregation from the life of the Church"[182] was formed: the "Episcopal Society for Cultural and Racial Unity" (ESCRU). "In its actions during its eleven years of existence, ESCRU commended and supported clergy in their struggle for civil rights at the local level; protested policies that discriminated in the area of employment and housing; decried school segregation and antimiscegenation laws in the South; condemned the practice of discrimination and segregation at the University of the South and other church-related schools; and organized sit-ins and kneel-ins, the latter being a conscious effort to end segregation in parishes."[183] Like many other movements of the time, the ESCRU "relied heavily on the visibility of white leaders at the expense of lifting up black voices."[184] An organization which eventually became the "Union of Black Episcopalians" (UBE) came into being in 1968, initially for the purpose of "protesting the discrimination in hiring, placement, and deployment of black Episcopal clergy."[185] By 1970, the ESCRU had disbanded. The black-led UBE continues its work today.

---

[181]Merritt, 294.

[182]"The Episcopal Society for Cultural and Racial Unity (ESCRU)" in The Archives of the Episcopal Church, "The Church Awakens: African Americans and the Struggle for Justice," accessed July 20, 2023, https://www.episcopalarchives.org/church-awakens/exhibits/show/escru/escru/escru-3

[183]Lewis, *Yet with a Steady Beat*, 151.

[184]"The Episcopal Society for Cultural and Racial Unity (ESCRU)" in The Archives of the Episcopal Church, "The Church Awakens: African Americans and the Struggle for Justice," accessed July 20, 2023, https://www.episcopalarchives.org/church-awakens/exhibits/show/escru/escru/escru-5

[185]"UBCL and UBE" in The Archives of the Episcopal Church, "The Church Awakens: African Americans and the Struggle for Justice," accessed July 20, 2023, https://www.episcopalarchives.org/church-awakens/exhibits/show/transitions/ubcl-ube

Another example of the Episcopal Church's halting steps toward reckoning with racism and showing solidarity with its own members was Presiding Bishop Arthur Lichtenberger who, responding to Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail," of 16 April 1963, issued a "Whitsunday Statement" on 2 June 1963 that was headlined "Time to Act! A Statement by the Presiding Bishop." In this statement he concedes several of King's complaints about the pleas of white leaders for moderation and patience, the church's habit of responding in words rather than actions, and the danger of silence. In his call to action, Lichtenberger called for solidarity: "Such actions must move beyond expressions of corporate penitence for our failures, to an unmistakable identification of the Church, at all levels of its life, with those who are victims of oppression."[186] Because solidarity means embracing another's perspective, Lichtenberger spoke to the protests being led by the black community: "We must support and strengthen their protest in every way possible, rather than give support to the forces of resistance by our silence."[187]

Perhaps most notable among continuing legislation around racial justice was the action around the General Convention Special Program (GCSP) passed in 1967. The newly elected Presiding Bishop, John Hines, was a consistent preacher of "the social gospel" and also a builder of programs and buildings. Following the riots of 1967, Hines called for a special convention to create the Special Program. Intended to benefit "Ghetto

[186]Arthur Lichtenberger, "Time to Act! A Statment by the Presiding Bishop," *The Living Church*, June 2, 1963, 7.
[187]Lichtenberger, 7.

Organizations, Businesses,"[188] the fund dispersed $7.5 million to 300 community groups from 1967 through 1973.[189] Even this effort at solidarity was flawed: the GCSP operated by "bypassing the loyal and dedicated black leadership of the church."[190] In the end, though the GCSP did exactly what it had been commissioned to do,[191] the challenge of entrusting white churches' resources into groups and efforts managed by black persons was too much: "[t]he GCSP was crippled in 1970 and was gone by 1973."[192] Presiding Bishop Hines resigned in 1974, before the end of his term. As preacher and Civil Rights activist Jeremiah Wright has reflected, "Not everyone can handle it when you actually start doing what you've said you want to do on paper."[193]

Efforts around racial justice in the Episcopal Church were given greater focus once again in 2015 with the election of the Episcopal Church's first black Presiding Bishop, Michael Curry. The Convention charged Presiding Bishop Curry and the executive leadership with breaking through the impasse about race in the Episcopal church; they were given a budget of $1.2m for the work. The result has been numerous statements, papers, and programs, centering around a spiritual practice (not a

---

[188]"Episcopal Church Approves Funds for Ghetto Organizations, Businesses," Diocesan Press Service, June 5, 1968, accessed September 22, 2022, https://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/ENS/ENSpress_release.pl?pr_number=66-1

[189]"Modeste to Produce Permanent Report on GCSP," Diocesan Press Service, December 13, 1973, accessed September 26, 2022, https://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/ENS/ENSpress_release.pl?pr_number=73266

[190]Lewis, "Racial Concerns in the Episcopal Church Since 1973," 470.

[191]John F. Marshall, "Continuation of GCSP Recommended by Bishop's Advisory Committee," Diocesan Press Service, September 2, 1970, accessed September 26, 2022, https://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/ENS/ENSpress_release.pl?pr_number=91-1

[192]Roland Guzmán, *Unmasking LATINX Ministry for Episcopalians*, 43.

[193]Jeremiah A. Wright, "Doing Black Theology in the Black Church," in *Living Stones in the Household of God*, ed. Linda E. Thomas, The Legacy and Future of Black Theology (1517 Media, 2004), 17.

program![194]) called “Becoming Beloved Community” (BBC). Based loosely on the Baptismal Covenant,[195] the four stages of BBC invite individuals, congregations, and other bodies to attend to a four-fold work of reconciliation and doing justice.

To support the work of BBC the House of Bishops published papers on Reparations, the Doctrine of Discovery, and White Supremacy. The Episcopal Archives, responding to General Convention, yielded special websites “The Church Awakens: African Americans and the Struggle for Justice”[196] and an “Executive Council Committee on Anti-Racism Digital Archive”[197] which collects links to relevant resolutions and reports related to anti-racism activities of General Convention.

3.8 Resources for Praxis

There is a significant variety of materials available about racial healing, about hearing the voices of black people, and about doing the white work of acknowledging and joining in solidarity to combat racism. While comprehensive, the Episcopal Church’s “Seeing the Face of God in Each Other”[198] demands more contiguous time than the other

---

[194]“Becoming Beloved Community: The Episcopal Church’s Long-Term Commitment to Racial Healing, Reconciliation and Justice” (The Episcopal Church, 2017), 4, accessed August 27, 2022, https://www.episcopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/11/bbc_eng_vision.pdf

[195]*Book of Common Prayer,* 1979, 304f.

[196]The Archives of the Episcopal Church, “The Church Awakens: African Americans and the Struggle for Justice,” accessed July 20, 2023, https://www.episcopalarchives.org/church-awakens/

[197]The Archives of the Episcopal Church, “The Executive Council Committee on Anti-Racism Digital Archive,” accessed July 20, 2023, https://www.episcopalarchives.org/anti-racism

[198]Diversity, Social, and Environmental Ministries Team, Mission Department of the Episcopal Church Center, “Seeing the Face of God in Each Other: The Antiracism Training Manual of the Episcopal Church” (The Episcopal Church, 2011), accessed October 18, 2022, https://www.episcopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/02/antiracism_book-revise3.pdf

options, being designed for a Diocesan team to present on a weekend retreat. The Diocese in which St. Timothy's resides has an Anti-Racism Commission which offers this course regularly. However, the document "Becoming Beloved Community Where You Are"[199] provides a wide variety of suggestions for each of the four quadrants outlined in "Becoming Beloved Community."[200]

There are books about lifting up the voices of black people and other people of color. For example, Michelle MiJung Kim, in *The Wake Up: Closing the Gap between Good Intentions and Real Change*, insists that she is writing to people of color, not to white people,[201] but the primary change she is looking for is from white people. Kim helpfully distinguishes between *safety* and *comfort* (race carries real safety issues for people of color; on the other hand white people feeling uncomfortable about sin is not necessarily a bad thing) and makes a point of approaching change with an intention to center the "most marginalized" voices.[202]

DeWolf and Geddes, *The Little Book of Racial Healing*, is mostly about telling stories as a path toward restorative (rather than retributive) justice. They detail "four

---

[199]Stephanie Spellers et al., "Becoming Beloved Community Where You Are" (The Episcopal Church, 2022), accessed August 27, 2022, https://www.episcopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/05/Becoming-Beloved-Community-Where-You-Are_2022.pdf

[200]"Becoming Beloved Community: The Episcopal Church's Long-Term Commitment to Racial Healing, Reconciliation and Justice," 5.

[201]Michelle MiJung Kim, *The Wake up: Closing the Gap between Good Intentions and Real Change* (New York: Hachette Go, 2021), 6.

[202]Kim, 102.

pillars" of trauma awareness and Restorative Justice[203] which map neatly onto the four quadrants of Becoming Beloved Community.

The Rev. Hershey Mallette Stephens produced a very practical "StorySharing Guidebook"[204] especially for the Episcopal Church, offering simple practices to help groups sit together and hear one another.

"Welcome, Inclusion, Solidarity"[205] is a six-week study designed to reconnect families who are having trouble embracing LGBTQ+ family members. Though not specifically about race, this approach could be extrapolated to introduce anti-racism to those who were highly resistant.

The use of video can be compelling and also create a sense of safety and authority. Professionally produced videos imply they represent the opinions of more than just people in the room. The *Sacred Ground*[206] curriculum runs for eleven sessions with up to 90 minutes of video and up to 35 pages of reading incorporated into each session. This series has participants across at least 77% of Episcopal Dioceses.[207] Though

---

[203]Thomas Norman DeWolf and Jodie Geddes, *The Little Book of Racial Healing: Coming to the Table for Truth-Telling, Liberation, and Transformation,* The Little Books of Justice and Peacebuilding (New York: Good Books, 2019), 31.

[204]H. Mallette Stephens, "Beloved Community StorySharing Guidebook" (The Episcopal Church, February 2018), accessed September 22, 2022, https://www.episcopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/11/bbc_storysharing_guidebook.pdf

[205]"Welcome, Inclusion, Solidarity: Facilitator's Guide" (Center for LGBTQ and Gender Studies in Religion (CLGS), 2018), accessed August 27, 2022, https://fefamiliaigualdad.org/resources/latinx-curriculum/

[206]"SACRED GROUND; A FILM-BASED DIALOGUE SERIES ON RACE AND FAITH; INVITATION AND INTRODUCTION," accessed October 3, 2022, https://www.episcopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/04/Invitation-and-Introduction-.pdf.

[207]Christina M. Pacheco, "Sacred Ground Evaluation Report 2022" (Indígena Consulting, LLC., April 25, 2022), 19, accessed September 22, 2022, https://www.episcopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/04/Sacred-Ground-Evaluation-Report-4.25.22.pdf

originally aimed primarily at "engaging European-American Episcopalians in 'White work,'"[208] surveys have indicated that black people find the series helpful as well.[209]

Another video series that might be more accessible for those with a lower degree of commitment is the ChurchNext program, "Becoming Beloved Community: Understanding Systemic Racism for Groups"[210] which was funded by the Episcopal Church's Presiding Officers' Advisory Council on Becoming Beloved Community and the Diocese of Michigan. Led by a "secular" academic and an Episcopal seminary professor, it provides six 30-minute videos ideal for spurring conversation in a congregational formation hour.

A third approach to lifting up black voices could entail an examination of history. This was done in Maryland, resulting in the "Trail of Souls"[211] pilgrimage between locations representing different congregations who have worked to discover their own communities' legacies of involvement in slavery. One might choose to participate in this pilgrimage, in person or online, or one might undertake a similar journey of research in one's own parish or Diocese. The Episcopal Archives provides a document entitled "Consulting the Past Through the Archival Record; A Guide for Researching the Impact

---

[208]Valerie Mayo and Katrina Browne, "Sacred Ground's Next Chapter" (The Episcopal Church), 2, accessed August 26, 2022, https://www.episcopalchurch.org/racialreconciliation/sacred-grounds-next-chapter/

[209]Pacheco, "Sacred Ground Evaluation Report 2022," 10.

[210]Thomas Ferguson and Ivy Forsythe-Brown, "Becoming Beloved Community: Understanding Systemic Racism For Groups", ChurchNext, accessed September 19, 2023 (free login required), https://www.churchnext.tv/library/becoming-beloved-community-understanding-systemic-racism-for-groups-174527/about/

[211]Episcopal Diocese of Maryland, "ON THE TRAIL OF SOULS: A PILGRIMAGE TOWARDS TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION.," accessed October 13, 2022, https://trailofsouls.org/

of Slavery on Church Life and African Americans"[212] that is intended to help one begin that journey.

3.9 Reflection

The more I read Black Theology, Womanist Theology, Race Theory, and Church History, the more I find I do not know. There is always another book that promises to be helpful. Indeed, all of the texts mentioned here, and many more besides, offer insights and understandings that I would be unlikely to find on my own.

In doing this reading, I am particularly struck by the activist tones of many of these works. They argue forcefully for different strategies to combat anti-black racism in my own life and community. As the Rector of a parish community, I feel compelled to bring that which I learn to my parish. Yet I hesitate. I hesitate in part due to *white solidarity:* my own reluctance to "stir the pot" and risk upsetting [white] people. I also hesitate to act on my own judgment and interpretation. Are the things I might choose to do going to be encouraging to black people around me? Solidarity does not mean blind action; it means centering the voices and the concerns of those who have been hurt and deferring to their needs. Action intending solidarity must be rooted in conversations and consultation with those who have suffered harm.

---

[212]The Archives of the Episcopal Church, "Consulting the Past Through the Archival Record; A Guide for Researching the Impact of Slavery on Church Life and African Americans" (The Episcopal Church), accessed September 22, 2022, https://www.episcopalarchives.org/church-awakens/files/original/2253337c254b62e28a5d3b44307faa75.pdf

I am drawn to respond to the principalities of anti-black racism with the strong words and actions advocated in books. In an all-white congregation that might be called for, as we do battle with principalities veiled from our sight. In a congregation where the victims of white hegemony are our present neighbors, the battle looks different, and necessarily involves collaboration with those who are most likely to be impacted by the backlash of white fragility in response to advocacy for change.

3.10 Summary

I have left many books unread and many disciplines unexplored. But I have tried to read broadly from several disciplines closely related to the topic of paying attention to black voices. I have read from Black Theology, Womanist Theology, Race Theory, activisim, the Church of the United States of America and race, the Episcopal Church and race, and *praxis.* I have examined some history, a lot of the present, and my own struggles with guilt and complicity. Next I will take what I have read and have it as the background for listening to the voices of black people in the parish community which I serve.

4 Report Data

4.1 Invitation

On 30 December 2022, Edison and I sat in the Parish Hall. We wore masks, following the CDC guidelines for COVID precautions in our county. Edison is always eager to contribute to the life of the parish, to help out. When I noticed I had some quiet days in the calm that is Christmas-tide, he readily agreed to an interview appointment. Thus began a series of six interviews with six people, completed within approximately one single week.

4.2 Overview

Coghlan and Brannick suggest that organizations are "socially co-constructed."[213] That is to say that no single perspective on an organization and its needs is ever truly complete. A corporation or a military organization may choose to enact a strict hierarchy of authority and discipline, but that hierarchy is always a compromise. Where hierarchy is a structure, solidarity is a supportive relationship. In a project of Action Research, it is more important than ever to consult with other members of the community to discern together what the issues are in our community and which ones we are prepared to address. So I began this phase of the project with individual conversations with each member of the Council of Advice. These interviews were followed shortly by a gathering

[213]Coghlan and Brannick, *Doing Action Research in Your Own Organization*, 8.

of the entire Council to consider where we were, where we'd like to get to, and how we thought we might get there.

I have been socialized to assume that my voice matters and that I have both authority and autonomy. Much of this socialization results from my gender and race. My vocation as a priest, in this context, only adds to perceptions of authority. In this project, conducted within the parish entrusted to my care, I could use these social assumptions to invite people into conversation. Sometimes I had to push back against respondents' expectation that I would convey information to them, rather than vice versa, or that there were "right answers" I had in mind and which it was their job to discover. This project called for a different kind of leadership, letting go of my own expectations and preferences, and listening to my respondents'. This was precisely the point: while I have done a certain amount of "book-learning" (reading academic and popular texts, listening to lectures and sermons) about the topic at hand, this project is intended to help me move past my own limited understanding and instead to be informed and enlightened by a group of people whose life-experiences differ from mine in important ways.

4.3 Constructing Understanding of the Present Reality

A fundamental barrier to solidarity is an inability to see from another's point of view. With each of the respondents I sought to pay attention to their perception of the world the way it is today. They themselves signaled to me their differing perspectives, the youngest saying "you have different perspectives based on age sometimes: maybe older

African-American members have a different take than younger ones do."[214] The respondents seemed to group into three generational categories. The three oldest were aware of the deep hurts anti-black racism had inflicted upon them and were willing to talk about those hurts. They knew rejection from a racialized society. The next two were reluctant to talk about race; they had found relatively comfortable, prosperous places of accommodation within a racialized society. The sixth and youngest respondent was more ready to talk about race even as she reflected with enthusiasm and optimism about the positive changes in the world about her.

4.3.a Race's Impact: Deep Hurt

> But we went to school in our area, in our neighborhoods, and we were chased by the dogs if we had to go through a white neighborhood. And the young ones would come out and call us names and throw things at us. If we went to the movies, not like a block or so away from where we lived, and we would have to go and go up in the balcony. I remember those things. [215]

Three respondents remembered the era of the Civil Rights Movement (often demarcated as that time between the Brown v. Board of Education decision in 1954 and the signing of the Fair Housing Act in 1968) and spoke of what life was like beforehand. While all three had achieved a reasonable level of socio-economic stability, they were each ready to acknowledge that they had done so in the face of significant racial discrimination and disadvantage.

---

[214] "Miriam," from an interview on January 3, 2023. Quotations in this section were taken from transcripts of interviews and focus groups I conducted with the six respondents. All personal, church, and place names have been changed to protect the privacy of respondents.

[215] "Bobbie," from an interview on January 7, 2023.

Bobbie, an 85-year-old divorced woman, laments the widespread lack of understanding about race. To me as a white person she says, “You don’t realize what’s going on… [M]ost families are duplicates of their ancestors in what they were taught. They were duplicates of not knowing or questioning what happens with black people.” She has the same issue in her own family! “My parents didn’t talk about slavery. And I don’t know whether there were people in my family that were slaves. I’m sure there were. But I don’t know anything about it. So if I don’t know about black history, there’s no way in the world they’re going to teach it in school.” She feels hopeless about black history being taught properly either in families or in schools so that people can understand one another. Bobbie draws a sharp contrast with the Jewish community: “But you hear the Holocaust with the Jewish people. They let it go from one generation to the other and it goes down and don’t forget it. Keep this in your mind so it won’t happen again. But blacks don’t do that.”

Bobbie responds to that lack of knowledge by collecting “memorabilia”: signs, placards, and other artifacts that reflect the history of enslavement, Jim Crow, and discrimination. She uses these artifacts to talk about history with her children and grandchildren–and her white priest.

Similarly, at church, Bobbie and her sister collaborated with Violet to begin observing Black History Month at St. Timothy’s with an international multi-ethnic potluck and with the inclusion of photos and biographical vignettes about historical black figures from every field of human endeavor in the weekly worship bulletin. Their

intention was “to try to see if we could get the congregation to accept the influences we could give them and let them know we are here.” Thus they aimed to nurture awareness and appreciation among the whole congregation for the contributions and cultures of black people.

My interview with Bobbie was the longest; of all the respondents, she spoke most passionately and directly about her experiences of race. I was struck, though, during our interview, by the irony of the very idea of “Black History.” It is related to the irony of there being a “black church.” The label “black” is a socio-political construct, invented and sustained by those who know themselves as white (or, more often, who deny having any racial identity at all because they perceive their own racial identity as “the default”). “Black History” is what we call the effort to resist the erasure intended by the invention of blackness. It is an attempt to remember the realities, the victories, contributions, and traumas of black lives that would otherwise be ignored in a world characterized by white hegemony. White people invented “blackness” and black people are thereafter compelled to preserve Black History in order to grasp what it is that has been done by them and to them.

Violet is a 73-year-old woman, happily and busily married. Like Bobbie, Violet believes that addressing questions of race requires one to start with the history of enslavement. She speaks of spending most of her life in segregated contexts and having difficulty adjusting to a mixed congregation. With tears she speaks of the black church, saying “that was our community and our mainstay over the years, the church. That’s

where we got many things done: in the church. And for reconciliation, it's just difficult for a lot of us old heads, I guess, like me, to really give it all, to give our all. Because we're still a little leery." Deep racial traumas make it difficult for her to trust the white church.

Violet thinks the answer, though, is communication. "[I]f we communicate, even if we start and it's rough, but if we have a plan for the end, it's worth it." She makes reference to a showing of the movie "13th" at St. Timothy's a few years ago: "You remember that night? That movie? I thought that was the beginning of something very significant for me. Because it started us talking." Even more specifically, she remembers a white parishioner, not known for his interest in progressive politics, who viewed the movie and engaged in conversation about topics that were deeply pertinent to Violet's life and experiences. His interest in the movie's message was opened up by an interracial marriage that had occurred in his family.

In my interview with Violet, I was struck by her frank, even wistful recounting of living in segregation. Life was better for her when she could limit her exposure to white people and institutions. That corresponds to the conversation I had with Bobbie about the fact that I have lived a segregated life. It is nearly unavoidable for many middle- and upper-class white children to live in neighborhoods, schools, churches, and jobs with only token representation of people of other ethnicities and social backgrounds. Likewise, in conversation with Corinne, she made reference to the years I lived in the Bronx as meaningful for her: "You've dealt with probably a lot of issues up there in the Bronx with

diversity and all as compared to probably other white priests who have not." This continuing segregation is an excellent illustration of the ways racism is embedded into the systems of United States culture and nearly unavoidable for those living within that culture, whatever they think (or don't think) about it.

Deacon is a 76-year-old married man, an immigrant from Liberia, who is likewise willing to talk about the injustices and continuing legacy of racism. But his approach to encountering that legacy is primarily through action. He is involved in many groups and ministries. Deacon preaches regularly and in an era when politics and race collide frequently, he strives to find a balance in his homilies. He prefers to avoid talking about partisanship but feels obliged to talk about injustice. "Because we live in a society that still has some remnants of racism, we should be able to speak up, all right, when there's injustice. We cannot just shut our eyes and be afraid to call out people, call out in love."

Deacon remembers working as a hospital chaplain when white families would refuse his ministrations. "And when I offered, even I offered to pray or offer communion, they didn't accept me." Deacon was taught that was part of the price he would have to pay to serve as "clergy of color." So he speaks with joy of a changing world, represented by his leadership in a "so-called white church" and the presence of LEVAS II[216] in the pews and on the hymn rotation in that and many parishes.

Deacon, like others in the parish I serve, has first-hand experience of moving to the United States and thereby "becoming black." Isabel Wilkerson tells of giving a talk in

[216]Horace Clarence Boyer, ed., *Lift Every Voice and Sing II: An African American Hymnal* (New York: Church Publishing, 1993).

London where a Nigerian-born playwright told her: "You know that there are no black people in Africa."[217] After decades in the United States, Deacon has met discrimination from hotel desk clerks, unfair traffic stops and searches by the police, and the continuing lack of willingness by some to hear him through his accent. Meeting all these obstacles with courage and grace, Deacon has embraced "blackness" and all its indignities and injustices as the cost of being a citizen of the United States of America.

4.3.b Race's Impact: Cautious Accommodation

> Growing up, I was like, hey, I know I'm black. And I've got these things that are against me. But then I've also got, you know, these opportunities or these assets that are given to me through grace, like just, whether it's the hand of God acting through others or, like I said, the people who came before me doing the work. So even though I may have benefited from those blessings, I don't want it to stain the accomplishments that I do achieve. And I guess, yeah, I don't want to be labeled. I think ultimately it just comes down to, yeah, I don't want to be labeled in any way.[218]

Two respondents, younger and in the middle and latter part of their careers, enjoyed higher levels of education and standards of living than the generations before them. They were less enthusiastic in talking about race. My hunch is that because of their age they remember little of the era before the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and instead have enjoyed the improved rights, educational opportunities, and earning power that was afforded to many U.S. citizens in subsequent decades.

---

[217]Wilkerson, *Caste*, 52.
[218]Edison, in an interview on December 30, 2022.

Corinne is a 67-year-old married woman with a medical degree and a government job. She came from an “all black West Indian Episcopalian church” in her childhood home of Brooklyn. “And then coming here [to St. Timothy’s] I didn’t feel a difference as far as being friendly and welcoming and open. I felt the same thing from my church to this church.” Asked about having conversations about race in the church she suggested we should “start off broad by talking about diversity and how people feel about diversity.” When I asked her more specifically what she wished people at St. Timothy’s understood about her experience of race, Corinne’s response began with nervous laughter. This was not a topic she wanted to discuss.

Corinne denied ever having experienced racial tension at St. Timothy’s – until I turned off the recorder. I understood her to be portraying the view of St. Timothy’s she believes and appreciates. But when allowed to relax and think more casually, she did indeed remember impressions of racial tension at St. Timothy’s which she characterized as standoffish, “just standing there smiling.” This experience was not unique to St. Timothy’s, but a part of her experience whenever the races mixed. “[Be]cause when we go into somewhere new, we always feel like they’re like, oh no, some more black people coming in. You have to think about that.”

Corinne’s love and appreciation, care and service, for her parish is obvious. She did not want to report any sense of racial tension or other discrimination in the parish community. But after the recorder was turned off, she naturally went there in the ensuing conversation. Corinne’s anxious laughter and her sometimes over-quick answers initially

led me to wonder if Corinne was denying or downplaying the presence and effects of racism in her life and in her church. But I think that would be dismissive of her authentic experiences. I often wonder whether black people avoid talking about racism and discrimination around white people because white people often behave so badly in response. White people's anxiety and discomfort are perilous to the health and physical safety of black people to this very day. Hard-learned lessons will not be discarded casually.

Edison is a 49-year-old married man, in the midst of a professional career. He has one young daughter at home. Like Corinne, when asked about having conversations about race, his instant reaction was "I work a lot to avoid the race questions actually." The more specifically we spoke about race, the more nervous laughter he exhibited.

Along with Deacon (and, as Edison reported, Neil deGrasse Tyson), one of his most significant concerns was that he not have his accomplishments marginalized as somehow having been less worthy either because of unfair advantages or less discriminating judgments, because he is black.

Unlike Corinne, Edison is explicit about his strategy of avoiding conversation about race. My impression was that he was not comfortable with most of our conversation, but participated out of deference to my institutional position of authority. He is clearly aware of the impact of race on his and his family's life. He speaks of the parish having a black priest when they first visited, and how that was a strongly attractive feature for his spouse. But his emphasis is on not being labeled: I was honestly

surprised to hear him refer to himself as black in the quote that begins this section. More typical was Edison's story about Neil deGrasse Tyson, who refuses to answer inquiries to speak as a "black scientist" but instead wants to be understood only as a "scientist" without any racial qualifiers.

4.3.c Race's Impact: Hopeful and Embracing Change

> I have very open discussions with... my husband, and also [my daughter] now that she's getting older just about how the world has changed so much and opened up so many opportunities to people of color. I mean we reference Kamala Harris all the time in our household and just the tremendous accomplishment and what she represents to myself as a black woman, my daughter as a young black girl coming up in the world and seeing these images, having that type of position to strive for: I think times have changed so much for the better.[219]

Miriam is a 43-year-old married woman with a young child at home. She is a newer member of the congregation and just recently bought her first house. Miriam, on the one hand, has perhaps the sunniest outlook on relations between races. On the other hand, she is the least reluctant of these six respondents to call out recent examples of racial bias and conflict. She remembers the church building where she was raised was once a white church with no black people allowed. The building was reassigned to her parents' black congregation when the white one was no longer sustainable. She recounts an experience of "racial undertone" from the director of her daughter's church-run daycare, and her inner conflict, after they had placed their daughter elsewhere, about

[219]Miriam, in a recorded interview on January 3, 2023.

whether to notify the ecclesial authorities at the first day care or whether their complaint would be perceived as a retaliatory effort by unhappy parents.

Miriam is more comfortable referring to herself as black than the other respondents. The adjective has less stigma and more possibilities of "class and dignity" for Miriam. It is as if she is acknowledging that the power of racial categories will not be eliminated within our own lifetime, but racial difference can be viewed positively as something to be embraced and appreciated.

4.4 Constructing Understanding of a Desired Future

As respondents shared with me their perceptions of the world today, they each moved irresistibly toward their hopes for the world tomorrow. Respondents' Christian commitments served both to inform their hopes and to shape how they might come to practical expression.

Bobbie believes the key to solidarity is to be interested in one another. As an example she tells of getting to know one of her closest friends at church:

> The first time she really met up with us she said something derogatory that I was offended by. And she realized it because I don't think she had been around blacks much socially. And she called me, she apologized. She even started crying. And I told her I understood, I accepted her apology and we've been friends ever since. Ever since. So that was a good seven or eight years ago.

Bobbie's white friend had spoken out of ignorance; but she had taken a chance and spoken. To reach a place of relationship and solidarity is always going to require risk.

> *I asked Bobbie whether many cross-racial friendships might begin this way: an infelicitous word combined with an openness to grow creates the opportunity for genuine relationship. Bobbie agreed. Bobbie responded to her unwitting antagonist with exceptional grace. This is not to suggest that the onus of reconciliation lies upon black people to endure outrageous insults; there is white work to be done to be better neighbors. But even clumsy and ill-informed attempts to be in relationship are often preferable to being "standoffish." This is why Bobbie was pessimistic about the work of reconciliation without physical presence: the COVID-19 restrictions of recent years, while important for saving lives, did not encourage greater intimacy among people at church!*

For Violet, "the goal is to be as one: to see *you* as an individual that have differences and to see *you* as an individual that have differences, but we can bring them together and hopefully get some kind of plan and some kind of goal which makes us all happy." This will often require having challenging conversations that "start back with slavery." The challenge often arises from a sense of guilt, but in fact dealing with separation and guilt "is the work of the Church."

> *The guilt associated with racism and the history of discrimination can be overwhelming. But it is the message of the Christian Church that our God has overcome every evil; no mistake is beyond forgiveness. So if there is any institution in our world equipped to help us through the guilt and shame of slavery, Jim Crow, and anti-black discrimination, it should be the Church. Indeed, the Church is one of the few "third*

spaces" where one may pierce the veil of segregation and find community with people with different backgrounds from one's own.

Deacon did not speak much of the future: his eyes are on taking action in the present.

Corinne, like all of the respondents, was quick to make the connection between black voices and other minoritized groups. Speaking of other nationalities and sexual orientations she suggested "maybe one month, let's look at different diversities to discuss."

Edison hopes that the church will be a place where "everybody is welcome and… no one is perfect." Although Edison freely admitted his habit of dodging conversations about race, his hope is that the church will be a safe place where important conversations about race can be had. "I don't want to force it, but just for the awareness to be there and when the opportunity comes, as uncomfortable as it may be, to be open to those conversations."

Miriam was quick to assert that "I wouldn't want to make anyone feel uncomfortable or bad, but I know that sometimes uncomfortable discussions are needed." Miriam suggested that a wider inclusiveness might be realized by taking the things that the church already does together and looking carefully for "an African-American interest or something along those lines;" to recognize wider perspectives on the activities and ideas that already have a place in the life of the parish.

The Church seems ideally suited as a container for the Beloved Community (both the idea popularly connected to Martin Luther King, Jr., and the initiative of the Episcopal Church by that name). One of its potential strengths is the capacity to speak clearly about evil as well as good. It is in Church that we talk about death as well as life, sin as well as healing, conflict as well as reconciliation. I see the Church as an institution whose skilled practitioners use it to invite God to work in the deep places of their hearts. I believe the programs and purposes of the Church are well-suited to the work of racial reconciliation.

4.5 Planning Process

At the initial interviews, I invited respondents to participate in a further group meeting where we could plan some practical activities to address questions of racial difference at church. I also gave each respondent a sheet of paper with some examples of intervention possibilities that I had explored ahead of time (see appendix). Bobbie was not able to attend the planning meeting. At that meeting, we discussed participants' own motivations for sharing about the black experience and the tension we all felt between showing hospitality and having important, often uncomfortable conversations. We considered the hope we all shared that our work of giving expression to black voices would also encourage other minoritized groups in our midst to share their perspectives and experiences.

After these conversations, we began brainstorming interventions we might like to make at St. Timothy's to give expression to black voices. The group quickly, though not exclusively, centered in on the approach of February, when St. Timothy's traditionally observes Black History Month with a special meal, speaker, and other activities. As we were meeting via Zoom, I listed suggestions on a shared screen (see below for the result).

When the flow of ideas began to slow down, I invited everyone to take a moment to read through the list and to consider what activities they would like to lead or participate in. Then I asked each person to choose the three activities which most interested them. I placed asterisks next to each choice, yielding a document which showed the Council's choices. (I did not vote, but respondents often had difficulty limiting themselves to only three!)

Three activities were tagged with resounding interest by the council: an ethnic/international dinner, a movie night with discussion, and sharing background notes about some of the hymns we would be singing from LEVAS. COVID restrictions meant that we could not plan on having a dinner at that time, but the other items found ready volunteers to lead them. Additionally, the idea of a monthly newsletter feature about a historical black figure caught Miriam's imagination, and she offered to carry that out on her own.

The activities that were chosen seemed to speak to primary values shared by all of the respondents. Some of them (newsletter articles, LEVAS song introductions) told stories and communicated perspectives that otherwise would be unlikely to be noticed by

the broader community of St. Timothy's. The movie and, hypothetically, the meal, would create opportunities for personal interaction and conversation. None of these actions would be an unprecedented stretch for St. Timothy's. But they were all activities that could be engaged with purpose and with the expectation of wide participation.

BRAINSTORMING
***use LEVAS more**
BHM programs
quilt of life experiences/stories
BHM bulletin inserts / religious figure
Quarterly activity around blackness
***Highlight other races: Hispanic**
BLM March (other marches!)
Coffee hour discussion
***Sunday School video/discussion**
Trivia
******Ethnic/International dinner**

***Calendar – monthly events**
****Email newsletter feature – cultural/historical/religious**
NN
Monthly feature
religious/spiritual + African American
Feb: Absalom Jones
BHM
******Movie night w/ discussion (e.g., Lovings)**
NN
26 February - after svc
Loving
Discussion guide?
BHM
******Mention background notes from LEVAS hymns**
NN NN
calendar of hymns: 2/3 per Sunday
TEF send calendar

Focus Group Brainstorming (identifying initials obfuscated)

All respondents identified involvement with activities as an important sign of inclusion and connection. In prior ministry experiences, I too have come to conceive of activities as the scaffolding upon which relationships can be built and faith exercised into existence. As a project of Action Research, our conversations were intended from the beginning to lead towards a project, an intervention, that would make a positive change in our parish community.

I was concerned that my presence as their priest would inhibit the group's creativity or initiative: that they might just dutifully select an option from the sheet of suggestions I had given them. It turned out I need not have worried! I was careful to act as a facilitator, soliciting their input and refraining from offering judgments. I did provide feedback about certain elements (e.g., bulletin inserts and a Black History Month speaker) which were already planned.

I was surprised that there seemed to be only minimal interest in a video series such as the Episcopal Church's "Sacred Ground"[220] or the Seattle Times' "Under Our Skin."[221] For our first cycle of Action Research, smaller commitments may have been the wise choice. Single-event activities do seem to be more successful at drawing in participants than activities which require an extended commitment.

[220]The Episcopal Church, "Sacred Ground," accessed July 20, 2023, https://www.episcopalchurch.org/sacred-ground/

[221]Seattle Times, "Under Our Skin," accessed July 20, 2023, https://projects.seattletimes.com/2016/under-our-skin/

4.6 What We Did

I provided Miriam with a document from the Diocese of West Virginia entitled “A Year of Prayers to End Racism.”[222] Among other things, it lists Saints’ Days for saints of color from *Lesser Feasts and Fasts*. She chose to write a February article about Absalom Jones. The article was published on 10 February 2023 (and reproduced below).

Corinne and Edison organized the background notes for the hymns we sang in February. I sent them a schedule of hymns, and they chose two or three for each week. For each hymn chosen, one of them would approach the lectern immediately before the hymn was sung and read a brief note about the background of the hymn and its meaning.

Deacon screened the 2016 film “Loving,” a biographical drama about inter-racial marriage in Virginia in the 1960’s, after our primary liturgy one day. I made popcorn. About a third of the congregation in attendance that day stayed for the movie and discussion afterward.

Violet organized a multi-ethnic/international potluck dinner. At that time the CDC was providing county-by-county guidance on recommended COVID-19 precautions, and St. Timothy’s was following those recommendations. Guidelines were updated each Thursday. The multi-ethnic potluck is normally scheduled to coincide with a special speaker St. Timothy’s hosts each year for Black History Month. The Thursday before the special speaker was to come, the CDC softened the COVID threat level for the county in

[222]“A Year of Prayer to End Racism”, accessed July 20, 2023, https://www.episcopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/08/AYearofPrayertoEndRacism.pdf linked from https://www.episcopalchurch.org/responding-to-racist-violence/pray/

which St. Timothy's resides. Violet jumped into action and organized the dinner in about two days. The special speaker offered a thoughtful and provocative sermon about reparations. The meal afterward provided the perfect time for members of the congregation to discuss what they had heard and to ask more questions of the speaker.

Paying Attention to Black Voices
February Feature: Absalom Jones
and the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas

The story of Absalom Jones is one many of us can relate to: a tale of struggle, perseverance, hard work, faith and accomplishment. Absalom, born a slave in 1746 in Delaware, would have been confined to a lifetime of servitude under normal expectations for blacks in the 1700s. But, as fate would have it, his slave owner recognized his intelligence at an early age and reassigned him to be trained for house duties, which afforded him the opportunity to learn to read. As a teen, Absalom would move to Philadelphia with his owner, allowing him to attend night school and earn an education. In 1784, Absalom was released from slavery.

Absalom was one of the first African American men able to obtain a Methodist license to preach and would begin his life in ministry at St. George's Methodist Church in Philadelphia. Although slavery had been legally abolished in Pennsylvania in 1780, racial prejudice was still prevalent and affected the black members of the congregation. After a seating dispute during Sunday worship, black members officially left St. George's Church and began holding services at the newly established Free African Society, an organization founded by Absalom Jones and Richard Allen designed to assist newly freed slaves. Finally, in 1794, the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas, the first African American church in Philadelphia, officially opened. A few years later, Absalom Jones was ordained as the first African American priest of the Episcopal Church in 1802.

The life and work of Absalom Jones is still honored to this day. Annually, Episcopal churches around our nation recognize Absalom's significant contributions with sermons, tributes, and celebrations. Our Episcopal church calendar designates February 13 as the Feast of Absalom Jones. May we all take a moment of reflection and read this small passage from "*A Thanksgiving Sermon*" delivered by Absalom to his followers so many years ago:

"*Let the history of the sufferings of our brethren, and of their deliverance, descend by this means to our children, to the remotest generations; and when they shall ask, in time to come, saying, What mean the lessons, the psalms, the prayers and the praises in the worship of this day? Let us answer them, by saying, the Lord, on the day of which this is the anniversary, abolished the trade which dragged your fathers from their native country, and sold them as bondmen in the United States of America."*

Feature Newsletter Article at St. Timothy's for 10 February 2023.

4.7 Results / Findings

4.7.a Reflections about What We Did

In early March, after completing the interventions they had chosen, the Council gathered with me once more to debrief our efforts and talk about what would come next. Corinne missed this meeting due to business travel, and Bobbie was unable to attend as she had been hospitalized. We discussed each of the four activities we had accomplished.

The feature Miriam wrote was well received by the Council. Edison said that "As part of Black History Month, I would expect to see like, in the bulletin. So having that acknowledgment, it's also impactful in that way, saying, hey, it's another way that the church is recognizing black voices and recognizing history in that way." Violet appreciated the distribution of written materials: "I think when we have something hard core, something in writing, something we can see and go back and revisit when we need to, it helps us spiritually." Miriam's feature provided some substance to ground our observance of Black History Month.

The background notes for hymns from LEVAS were widely appreciated. Miriam reported, "I really enjoyed the excerpts that were communicated during the service. It gave the background on the songs, especially "Lift Every Voice and Sing" because it's one of those songs where, you know, you hear the struggle, but also, you know, the triumph in a way. So I really appreciated the background on that one in particular… And I kind of surveyed the room a bit and I could tell people were interested. The congregation was interested and really did give their full attention when the backgrounds

were being communicated." For Violet, the background notes helped reconnect the songs to her own history: "It made me think about my roots and where I came from because we really sang those kinds of songs in the Baptist church. And that's what I was looking for. And you all delivered. I just felt it was very eye opening to see the reactions of people when they sang those songs."

Screening the movie "Loving" and having a discussion afterward had drawn a fair crowd: nearly a third of the people at church that Sunday, including some from an earlier service who came back. Violet summarized it to the Council members who had missed out, "And we had, I felt, very good discussion with the number of people we had there. They brought out some things that I had not even thought about in the movie. I don't know if either one of you have seen it, but we talked about it, and there are things that are still happening today that's so prevalent, that was so prevalent then that is prevalent now." Violet was making reference to the presence of several members of the LGBTQ+ community who helped connect the movie's themes of marriage equality and different treatment in different legal jurisdictions to the conversations about marriage equality for same-sex couples today. Violet concluded, "it made me see things in a different light."

Though he had not been able to attend the movie, Edison added "I think just the fact that it happened, again, is another example of an opportunity to hear black voices and to have conversations about the things that are affecting black people. And issues that can, you know, cross race and, like, going to gender can be applicable. You're not going to tell me who to love or who not to love."

After three years of coping with COVID-related restrictions for parish gatherings, many in the parish were excited about the possibility of a potluck. Restrictions lifted just in time to allow the meal to coincide with the Black History Month speaker, which is the traditional practice at St. Timothy's. The speaker offered a thoughtful defense of the idea of monetary reparations for black people. Miriam reported that the combination of exciting food and a provocative address "really sparked our conversation." Edison was delighted by the meal, stating "I think the impact, as always when we break bread together, getting together and giving us that time to have conversations and different opportunities to interact and engage one another is always good." The organizer, Violet, reflected, "Well, I think the dinner went well since it was truly a last minute. But it also reminded me again of my background. A lot of things happened in the kitchen. We had good food and good conversation. And it really reminded me a lot of a small village coming together to eat and praise God."

4.7.b Room for Improvement

When asked about improvements we might keep in mind for the future, the council offered three ways to expand the reach of their efforts. Miriam said, "The only thing I could probably think of is maybe one excerpt or one focus for the kids." Violet suggested that the LEVAS readings, even if not read aloud, should be written down and "given to the 8 o'clock service. And even on Saturday. I mean, we need to put it out there for all of those different times." Violet also insisted, "I think we need to continue this. And I don't want us to see it just for Black History Month." Likewise, Corinne felt our

efforts need to extend further into the life of the parish. “[A]t the church, we don't really go beyond Black History Month. It’s just like: Black History Month, we have the speaker, we have a big luncheon, and then that’s it. But I feel it should be discussed more in the church.”

I was particularly intrigued by Violet’s suggestion that in the future “we do a movie like that maybe every other month. We should bring out something of that nature for us to talk about. Because many of these issues are still happening today. And to me, they’re getting a little bit worse. So again, we need to be aware of what's going on in our communities.” I heard in this suggestion a request for both the format and the content of the “Sacred Ground” series from the Episcopal Church.

4.8 Three Questions

At both Council meetings, planning and debrief, I asked three questions that I thought were core to my concerns in pursuing this project, and reflective of the concerns and interests I heard expressed by the Council in our individual conversations.

4.8.a How would it be life-giving for you to communicate about the black experience? What do you hope would change?

These questions concern the balance between a desire for understanding, transparency, and knowing each other and a desire not to be labeled or seen as different.

Deacon said, “I’m hoping that at least people in the church, having viewed the film or having come to the program and heard the speaker, at least understand some struggles that black people have gone through, and at least they will be able to recognize why people say Black Lives Matter or why people press and make demands for certain types of inclusion or for justice.” Corinne afterward reflected that there is value in sharing black history, figures, and culture because “the parishioners have become a little bit more enlightened throughout the years of the black experience.” At a minimum, Deacon hoped that people might grow to “understand that there are achievers in the black community who have made contributions, not only to the society, but even to the church.”

Violet spoke of how our interventions affected her personally. “It made me feel like I have more of a voice of what went on within that church, within our church, and being, feeling sometimes like I'm on the outside. By doing these exercises and by having the black history, it really made me feel like we are making steps forward to be more of an inclusive community in all areas.”

4.8.b How do we balance hospitality with being able to hold our discomfort in order to have important conversations?

Corinne immediately laughed and said “Very delicately.” Pressed for further explanation, she spoke of the need to understand our conversation partner and to shape the conversation in a way that is accessible to that person. Miriam agreed, saying “This is probably one of my weakest suits is kind of challenging comfort because I always want

to make everyone feel comfortable and happy. But I know there's a lot of value in communicating your honesty and doing it in a way that's relatable and…" delicate. Violet said, "I think we're always going to have a discomfort zone; I don't care where we are." Those discomforts, she suggested, drive us back to God in search of comfort and strength to have those necessary encounters.

During the planning meeting, Edison said "I immediately, when I hear hospitality, I'm thinking, okay, regarding conversation: don't go there." But later he reflected on the recent election of a new Bishop in our Diocese. "You know, one of the things that I remembered hearing from one of the candidates about going back to the hospitality and the uncomfortable question, like she was talking about, oh, you know, in a sense, inconvenience as part of your – I guess as your walk through your faith. And it makes me think about working with the poor, helping the prisoners, helping the sick. You're going to go to uncomfortable places. It's like being... inconveniencing yourself in a sense. So invite inconvenience in a sense. I think that's one of the things I also thought about with that question." Discomfort can be a sure and necessary sign that challenging and important spiritual work is taking place.

4.8.c How does the work we do to pay attention to black voices benefit other communities in our parish?

Miriam responded, "I think that if we kind of shed light on some of our experiences with our black voices and things that we'd like to bring to the forefront, certain discussions or things we'd like to share, I think it will encourage others from

different backgrounds to want to share as well." Similarly, Edison expanded "I think that hearing any stories, any voice will make people talk more. Like they'll share their opinions, and having those conversations will then help other groups." When we create a safe space for black voices, model how they might speak and allow the parish to witness how they are received, we plant seeds for other groups. Edison, Deacon, and Violet all explicitly mentioned the LGBTQ+ community whose own issues were surfaced in the discussion after screening the movie "Loving." Likewise Miriam and Corinne made mention of Hispanic, Native American, and other ethnic groups represented in our parish.

4.9 Reflection

In preparation for this project, I did a series of unrecorded "pre-interviews" with ten different people in the parish. In part I was trying out questions and practicing interview techniques. In part, though, I deeply enjoyed the conversations: they felt like what I imagined ministry as a priest should be. It is a great privilege to be invited into people's lives, to create a safe space where they can share their tender moments, both joys and pains. I grow sad when I notice how my own hesitation to embrace emotions gets picked up by my conversation partners and shuts down avenues of exploration that might have been fruitful for them. But mostly I feel joy as I hear how God is moving and has moved in the lives around me, as they invited me to see not what I should do, but what God was already doing.

I engaged this project because of my own sense of inadequacy around encountering race in the parish. I share my respondents' discomfort in speaking about race as I find myself wavering between a sense of white solidarity, not wanting to say anything, and a desire for a kind of works-righteousness that has been defined by political fashions. Just like religious fundamentalism, there is an intolerant political fundamentalism that applies strict purity tests and judges one's "anti-racism" credentials in isolation from one's context. In between I find my neighbors, black people who do not want to be identified primarily by the color of their skin, but whose lives are inevitably shaped in profound ways by the anti-black racism systematically and for generations embedded in the entire context in which they live.

The anger and demands for radical change set forth by black activists are not wrong or out of place. For too long I have been and continue to be too comfortable, too complacent, with the systematic wronging and harm of my neighbor. In the church, however, at least in our small Council of six, I find persons committed to community, embedded in relationships, just like people in a family who regularly deal with the excesses of a troubled family member.

What I am hearing is that it is good and necessary to recognize evil and call it what it is. This is what we do at Church. It is also important to do so in ways that call people into authentic relationship, full of failure and learning, repentance and forgiveness.

4.10 Summary

Edison summed up the great value of our efforts for the entire parish: “All the activities gave us a launch pad to jump off of a starting point to have a conversation. We can say, oh, hey, what did you think about formation with [the Black History Month speaker]? Or what did you think about the food that we had? Or what did you think about the movie? And those issues, I think it gives – all the activities give us a starting point to engage.” The Council knew themselves to be doing ministry, fomenting change and challenging comfortable ignorance.

In the act of paying attention to black voices, they created space in our parish consciousness for other voices, too. Deacon observed, “when you consider what we offered in terms of the issues and the struggles, I think the LBGT community also were able to lift them, to kind of help them, you know, in their struggles. You know? So they’re looking at, say, oppression or injustices, and if it’s the same problem, the way we were able to approach or overcome that would be helpful to them as well, to those in the community.” Miriam hoped that “our work would inspire some of the Hispanic members of our congregation as well to present some of their history and maybe incorporate some of those topics into the service.”

In their individual interviews, all six respondents reported involvement in activities and leadership as a primary source of their sense of belonging at St. Timothy’s. This exercise in Action Research was designed to help them feel exactly those things! Miriam described the duration of this project as “a very productive month for the group.”

Edison summarized their work in these interventions by pointing out that “somebody coming and seeing all that's going on, especially when they came on the day of the feast, you know, or on the movie day, they might, I think they would definitely feel welcome and it’s like, oh, this is great. This is interesting to do it. This is a church that’s doing something and seeing that, that we’re, like I said, willing to do activities that can open up discussion into uncomfortable places.”

5 Analysis

5.1 Invitation

"Do you know what that is?" Bobbie placed a metal object into my hands. This was in the first year of my service to St. Timothy's. Bobbie and her sister attended liturgy sporadically. Both disabled, to get out they depended on their handicap-accessible van, which seemed to be in the shop more than it was on the road. As I examined the object in my hand, I began to suspect what it was: a shackle once used to bind human beings. My heart shrank and I recoiled, but I was stuck holding the thing. I wanted no part of it, this reminder of the depths of relationships between human beings with skin that looked like mine and those with skin that looked like that of my hosts. My hosts were watching me intently, with looks of amusement on their faces. I think they enjoyed seeing their new priest squirm. They were educating me in the art of remembering.

5.2 Overview

This investigation into solidarity and multiracial congregations is a conversation in three parts. I have looked to written and spoken resources in the academy and in the church for historical and formal voices. These provide perspective about where the conversation stands in the academy, in the larger Church, and in society more broadly. Written materials typically point to the more provocative or controversial edges of a conversation: the ideas that publishers think might sell. Books that make it into the

popular press typically have an agenda to sell or some specific response they intend to evoke.

A second voice in this conversation is that of the Council of Advice from my specific parish. These six persons have offered their own perspectives, their own values, and their own feelings on the matters at hand. These are not calculated to provoke, but are frequently a tender revelation of the concerns and understandings of these hearts near my own in space and time.

A third voice is my own. This conversation is important to me, for reasons outlined above. I am naturally deferential to those who have thoughtfully put down their thoughts in writing. I am also grateful for and honored by the words this Council of Advice has chosen to share with me. In the end, however, it is down to me to evaluate both these sources, to observe how they interact with one another, and to hear how I might be called to respond out of our common humanity and my ecclesial vocation.

5.3 Bobbie

5.3.a Black History

The walls and cabinets of Bobbie's house are filled with "memorabilia": signs and other physical evidence from the days when slavery was practiced in the United States and from its successor, Jim Crow. Bobbie's church life also featured this historical sensibility. At St. Timothy's she inspired and helped organize several activities, especially around the observance of Black History Month. She began the practice of including in

February's weekly worship bulletins brief biographical sketches of important historical figures who were black. Her stated goal was "to try to see if we could get the congregation to accept the influences that we could give them and let them know that we are here."

While the "history" portrayed in the pages of the worship bulletin were of lighter fare than the history hanging on the walls of Bobbie's home, all Black History represents a fundamental splinter. History was divided into "black" and "white" only after the invention of those terms, and the subsequent white-ening of historical perspectives and records by those who would erase or discount the contributions and the unfair treatment of those who get labeled as "black."

For example: were all the earliest major-league baseball players white? Or was baseball segregated? Was "the first black man to play major league baseball" an amazing player? This narrative of the exceptional black man serves to reinforce the assumption of white supremacy behind it. Without diminishing either Jackie Robinson's athletic skill or his political acumen, Robin DiAngelo suggests the more accurate headline would have been "Jackie Robinson, the first black man whites allow to play major-league baseball."[223]

Black history is not just about the "first black astronaut" but about the lynching era which James Cone defines as 1880-1940. There are people living still today who remember that period in U.S. history when nearly five thousand citizens of the United

[223]DiAngelo, *White Fragility*, 26.

States of America were murdered, often in very public ways and sometimes with commemorative postcards, because of the color of their skin. Black history includes the exclusion of most black people from the benefits of the New Deal such as the Social Security Act of 1935, the Wagner Act (labor protections), and highlights the redlining practices of the Federal Housing Administration.[224] Black history attempts to answer Stephanie Spellers's question, "Why, in a nation so rich, are the life chances of Indigenous, Black, Latinx, and Asian people so diminished?"[225] Korie Little Edwards answers Spellers's question by recognizing that "[w]hile the explicitly racist laws and policies that had been in place for centuries were eliminated, the racialized structures they had constructed were not addressed, leaving the existing racial order intact."[226]

Mary Fulkerson offers that "historical acknowledgment of complicity in injustice by dominant groups is a fundamental step toward progress."[227] Bobbie was a student and teacher of Black History for the benefit of her family after her, and for her larger church family. Solidarity with Bobbie may be to participate in the project of Black History.

5.3.b White Work

Bobbie lamented, "And it's always down with the blacks. I don't think there's any race under the blacks. I don't really think so. And I just do not understand what the color

[224]Wilkerson, *Caste*, 184f.
[225]Spellers, *The Church Cracked Open*, 48.
[226]Edwards, *The Elusive Dream*, 123.
[227]Fulkerson and Mount Shoop, *A Body Broken, a Body Betrayed*, 8.

of our skin has to do with anything." Her comments reflect a variety of themes picked up by the literature of Black Theology, race theory, and church history.

> "White America" is a syndicate arrayed to protect its exclusive power to dominate and control our bodies. Sometimes this power is direct (lynching), and sometimes it is insidious (redlining). But however it appears, the power of domination and exclusion is central to the belief in being white, and without it "white people" would cease to exist for want of reasons. There will surely always be people with straight hair and blue eyes, as there have been for all history. But some of these straight-haired people with blue eyes have been "black," and this points to the great difference between their world and ours. We did not choose our fences. They were imposed on us by Virginia planters obsessed with enslaving as many Americans as possible.[228]

The distinction between "black" and "white" has always been a thin conceit whose object was power. The mixing of the "races" such that the children of white slavers and the black persons they abused, or of more mutual relationships, quickly diluted arguments that sought a scientific or genetic basis for racism. Jessica Wong writes[229] of the acclaim with which were met numerous pseudo-scientific "explanations" of race that promised a "reasoned" explanation for that which was entirely irrational. With "white" at the top and "black" at the bottom, other racial categories could be invented to fill the spaces in between, and that which otherwise might be thought of as cruel and unfair would simply become "normal, respectable, good, and *just the way things are*. These hidden norms are what make up white dominating culture."[230]

---

[228]Coates, *Between the World and Me*, 42.
[229]Wong, *Disordered*, 74ff.
[230]"Racial Justice Audit of Episcopal Leadership From 2018 to 2020" (A Joint Venture of the Mission Institute and the Episcopal Church, January 2021), 31, accessed August 27, 2022, https://www.episcopalchurch.org/racial-justice-audit.

Whiteness has been difficult to pin down because it is "not a particular people, not a particular gender, not a particular nation, but an invitation, a becoming, a transformation, an accomplishment."[231]

This white dominating culture has ruled for centuries not because it is a satisfying explanation of the world, but because it is profitable. Delores Williams writes of the slave trade as a "primary source of wealth during the colonial period:"[232] possibly the main driver behind the pre- and early-United States economy.

Besides economic power, there was political power to be gained by the creation of black and white. "Bacon's rebellion" in 1670's Virginia showed those with power the importance of breaking up sympathies between poor people of European descent and poor people of African descent. By judicious application of legal privilege to Europeans and punishment to Africans, Virginia planters were able to turn those groups against each other and thus forestall any further united rebellion against their rulers.[233]

Bill Wylie-Kellermann, a Detroit activist and retired Methodist pastor, argues that "White supremacy, though it has ancient and even biblical analogues, is a 'modern' principality."[234] While he argues that much of Christianity was "spiritualized" in its earliest times so as not to offend political powers such as Constantine,[235] the Gospel is a political message with a social ethic, and whiteness is an idol.[236] Nevertheless, the

---

[231]Jennings, "Overcoming Racial Faith," 7.
[232]Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*, 93.
[233]Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning*, 53.
[234]Bill Wylie-Kellermann, "White Supremacy, Among the Giant Triplet," in *Fearful Times; Living Faith*, ed. Robert Boak Slocum and Martyn Percy (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2021), 19.
[235]Wylie-Kellermann, 18.
[236]Wylie-Kellermann, 19.

spiritual power that is white supremacy allows it to transcend specific political forms or legal regimes and continue to exercise power among humankind.

White work is the task of recognizing white supremacy. It is learning to see, call out, and oppose white supremacy at work in my own life and in the world around me. White work means acknowledging that racial difference was invented by white people for the benefit of white people.

Today, "[t]he racial ideology that circulates in the United States rationalizes racial hierarchies as the outcome of a natural order resulting from either genetics or individual effort or talent."[237] It is an ideology designed to evade careful consideration so that it can remain fixed in place.[238] When I first heard the term "color-blind" with reference to race, I thought it sounded like the ideal condition, a "strategy for interrupting racism." Instead, "in practice it has served to deny the reality of racism and thus hold it in place."[239] As Alison Désir points out, "If we don't acknowledge [anti-black racism] exists, then there's nothing to address. White supremacy is the system that allows racism to flourish, and prevents racial diversity from being welcomed and celebrated."[240]

Or, as Bobbie declared, "I don't really personally think racism is ever going to leave. Ever."

---

[237]DiAngelo, *White Fragility*, 21.
[238]DiAngelo, 30.
[239]DiAngelo, 42.
[240]Désir, *Running While Black*, 209.

5.4 Miriam

5.4.a Anti-black Discrimination

Miriam said, “We all have our different paths and sometimes African-American paths can be a bit more challenging.” Sean Collins and Izzie Ramirez report the same thing, detailing how decades of studies consistently show that “[a]nti-Black discrimination practiced by Americans, white and otherwise, routinely robs Black people of opportunity, money, health, safety, and dignity.” This robbery includes massive amounts of time, when all sorts of interactions can take longer to successfully complete if one is identified as black rather than white. Cathy Hong describes differing encounters with law enforcement and other authorities by saying that “[w]hite boys will always be boys but black boys are ten times more likely to be tried as adults and sentenced to life without parole.”[241] Failure to see these discrepancies, often on-purpose in the name of color-blindness or imagining a “post-racial” world, prevents one from understanding or facing the challenges besetting our neighbors.[242] “We cannot solve for inclusion and equity if we don't first agree there is *exclusion* and *inequity* for certain groups of people. We cannot achieve justice unless we acknowledge there is oppression first. Creating change begins with a shared understanding that change is, in fact, necessary.”[243]

---

[241]Hong, *Minor Feelings*, 74.
[242]Crenshaw, “Race to the Bottom How the Post-Racial Revolution Became a Whitewash.”
[243]Kim, *The Wake Up*, 80.

On the other hand, Jesus promised that the truth would set us free (John 8:32). Learning to notice our neighbor's pain is critical to solidarity and to living with simple integrity.[244] Stephanie Spellers suggests that "[c]uriosity is the secret superpower of resilient and flexible people"[245] who are able to perceive, navigate, and change the world for the better.

5.4.b White Fragility

Miriam voiced a concern shared by nearly all the Council of Advice: "The only reservation I would have is I wouldn't want to make anyone feel uncomfortable or bad, but I know that sometimes uncomfortable discussions are needed. I've connected so much with everyone in the congregation, I wouldn't want anyone to feel like, 'oh, well, because I'm white I'm bad.'" Because there is much to be seen that is wrong and evil, and because some of us have been slow to notice what is before our eyes, guilt quickly rises and makes it psychologically dangerous for us to really see. Choosing to see, to hold our discomfort, is a personal, spiritual, and community battle. White fragility is a fear and refusal to experience the discomfort that comes from recognizing the brokenness of the world in which we live, and the ways that anti-black racism hurts our neighbors.

Seeing what is wrong precedes any kind of change.[246] If we don't like the realities we see, how much less should we like continued, blind complicity in them? Taking that

---

[244]Peter Jarrett-Schell, *Seeing My Skin: A Story of Wrestling with Whiteness* (New York: Church Publishing, 2019), 271.
[245]Spellers, *The Church Cracked Open*, 102.
[246]DiAngelo, *White Fragility*, 42.

step to seeing, stepping into the discomfort, can be heartbreaking. The choice is not over whether to feel bad, but whether our hearts will be "broken open" or "broken into shards."[247]

Sometimes white people might be tempted to confess that acknowledging what's wrong can feel unsafe. Michelle Kim warns of the importance of distinguishing between *safety* and *comfort*. White people may experience *discomfort* as we learn to notice the realities of our neighbors and have difficult conversations about them. But those conversations are important for our neighbors' sake precisely because "what we're talking about is safety from being discriminated against, harassed, assaulted, fired, or killed by the system and supremacist culture, which has historically criminalized, subjugated, exploited, and violated them and continues to do so."[248]

White fragility is a spiritual battle. Learning to have "eyes to see" is essential to spiritual healing (e.g., Isa. 6:10, Luke 8:10). Michael Battle speaks of the common modern default as "solipsism," being stuck in "our own realities."[249] But there is theological value in tolerating discomfort. The goal of Christianity is to step outside our "natural" inclinations and to organize our lives "around a different matrix of values, so that it is not about our comfort and security." For the sake of our neighbors "[w]e are

[247]Hess, "White Religious Educators Resisting White Fragility," 54.
[248]Kim, *The Wake Up,* 77.
[249]Michael Battle, "Reconciliation as Mysticism" (The Gerald May Lectures, Shalem Institute, 2021), (private video downloaded).

willing to be made uncomfortable, to live with discomfort and acknowledge the cost of discipleship, knowing all the while that it will encourage and strengthen us."[250]

This battle is challenging as individuals and also as communities. Much of Michael Emerson and Christian Smith's *Divided by Faith* concerns the failed attempts of white (especially) evangelical efforts to move past the racism embedded in United States culture. Michelle Oyakawa recounts how in recent years an emphasis on "racial reconciliation" has become a "third way" between pursuing segregation on the one hand and racial justice on the other. Instead "racial reconciliation" centers around the pursuit of individual "interpersonal relationships across race,"[251] as a means to assuage consciences without actually changing the status quo. Thus "racial reconciliation" becomes for institutions what "color-blindness" is for individuals: a "suppressive frame"[252] that avoids actually dealing with the issues.

5.5 Edison

5.5.a Racial-group Behavior

Edison said three times in 30 seconds: "I don't want to be labeled." He was concerned that people generalize and make assumptions about him based on the idea Ibram Kendi labeled "racial-group behavior."[253] Alison Désir saw this clearly. "Crimes

[250]Wylie-Kellermann, "White Supremacy, Among the Giant Triplet," 55.
[251]Oyakawa, "Racial Reconciliation as a Suppressive Frame in Evangelical Multiracial Churches," 497.
[252]Oyakawa, 502.
[253]Kendi, *How to Be an Antiracist*, 94.

committed by white people, such as the bombing executed by Timothy McVeigh, the acts of torture carried out by soldiers in Abu Ghraib, the murder of unarmed protesters by Kyle Rittenhouse, the murder of grocery shoppers by Payton Gendron, are assumed to be acts of an individual, not reflective of the white race. But if a Black person commits a crime, it is used as further 'proof' that Black people are prone to such behavior. As one researcher put it, a Black or brown person 'seems to be always on trial.'"[254] Ibram Kendi summarizes this idea as a cultural tendency toward "*individualizing W*hite negativity and *generalizing* Black negativity."[255] Among black men, particularly, there is a "'presumption of dangerousness' that they must constantly bear."[256] Ta-Nehisi Coates describes this as a "broad sympathy toward some and broader skepticism toward others."[257] This is the generalization or label under which black people in the United States are accustomed to living.

Personally, this is the class of anti-black behavior which I notice most often in the world about me. Whether racist jokes, "dog-whistle" references in political speeches, or earnest expressions of care (still based upon assumption of racial-group behavior): language and ideas based on a presumption of racial-group behavior seem stubbornly fixed in the cultural milieu in which I live.

Particularly striking for me is Matthew Hughey's observation that "People are complex beings. At any moment, one could reasonably identify any given action as

---

[254]Désir, *Running While Black*, 180.
[255]Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning*, 43.
[256]McWilliams, "Bryan Stevenson On What Well-Meaning White People Need To Know About Race."
[257]Coates, *We Were Eight Years in Power*, 123f.

immoral, illogical, or wasteful. Hence, we must realize that *dysfunction* and *pathology* are raced, gendered, and classed terms that are deployed toward or against certain peoples' interests."[258] These terms might never, or very rarely, be deployed without racial or other animus, and thus are prime candidates for the expression of generalized negativity.

This is the kind of conundrum at the center of James Cone's work in Black Theology. Just as the center of the Hebrew Bible was the exodus from Egypt, the center of the Christian Bible is the cross of Christ, which "reveals the extent to which God is willing to go in order to set people free from slavery and oppression."[259] The presumption of weakness, inferiority, or evil imposed upon the Hebrew slaves in Egypt (or upon any underclass or "enemy") is refuted by God. The good news (Gospel) is that these generalizations and expressions of oppression are not definitive for anyone.[260] But in a world that still resists God's reign, there are certain "basic rights and benefits of the doubt"[261] which are culturally intended for all people equally, but which are actually rendered to black people with much less consistency than they are to white people.

5.5.b Accomplishments Unstained

Edison mentioned encountering grace as well as challenge, with opportunities and "assets" given to him by God or by other people. But, he worried, "even though I may have benefited from those blessings, I don't want it to stain the accomplishments that I do

---

[258]Hughey, *White Bound*, 77.
[259]Cone, *Risks of Faith*, 39.
[260]Cone, 115.
[261]DiAngelo, *White Fragility*, 28.

achieve." This same concern was voiced by Deacon, the other male respondent in the Council of Advice. This sounded to me like a great irony of black life.

Edison was concerned that, after accomplishing much in a system that has always been weighted against him, he might be thought to have been given an unfair advantage. This is an argument used about Affirmative Action for college admissions, and about hiring practices at large corporations. There is the specter that, when a black person is accepted or hired, their peers will be forced to ask, "Is this person here because they're smart/qualified/capable or because they fill out a needed diversity quotient?" This is ironic since the question might be asked with much greater relevance of white students and employees. Were they accepted/hired because of a privileged legacy, because they knew someone, or because they fit a white cultural norm? Or do they actually have the intelligence/background/drive needed?

Matthew Hughey points out that "the application of abstract liberalism to the affirmative action debate erroneously presupposes that nonwhites are on equal social ground with whites."[262] In an ideal world, everyone would be on an equal playing field and a pure meritocracy would be just and fair. In the world in which I live, Edison's successes and achievements are each likely to have come only after greater effort, longer waits, and with more "luck" than would have been needed by a similarly capable person who is perceived as white.

---

[262]Hughey, *White Bound*, 39.

Edison's accomplishments should certainly be unstained by accusations of unfair advantage; mine less so. Isabel Wilkerson suggests that "[w]e are responsible for recognizing that what happened in previous generations at the hands of or to people who look like us set the stage for the world we now live in and that what has gone before us grants us advantages or burdens through no effort or fault of our own, gains or deficits that others who do not look like us often do not share."[263] We don't get to change the past, but we are responsible for rightly assessing the present and engaging it in an ethical way.

5.6 Deacon

5.6.a Sustained Ministry Engagement

Deacon appreciates the community he finds at St. Timothy's. "So belonging to St. Timothy's gives me the opportunity to serve and to be able to be a light to the world, to the community. And that's why I love this campus, this church, because it offers me plenty of opportunities to do ministry." He remembers times and places where he was not afforded such opportunities, even in churches and hospitals.

"One of the most difficult tasks that confronts the Episcopal Church is how to dismantle structures/systems of oppression that are in fact generally being perpetuated by people of good will."[264] Congregations can express their commitment to justice both in

[263]Wilkerson, *Caste*, 388.
[264]Roland Guzmán, *Unmasking LATINX Ministry for Episcopalians*, vii.

"mission statement and programming,"[265] by what they say and by what they do. An expression of welcome on a worship bulletin can be important. A thoughtful sermon will say more. But an ongoing plan or program, by its enduring presence, will demonstrate a congregation's commitments beyond the inspiring emotion of a moment. An annual observance of Black History Month, or an annual celebration of the Feast of Absalom Jones, can be seen as token observances. But even tokens are better than absences, and their value will be known by a community's faithfulness to the practice.

Deacon is cautious, but committed to speaking out about inequality from the pulpit. At times he has been accused of "being political" in his homilies. Michael Battle counters that "injustice, racism, exploitation, oppression are to be opposed not as a political task but as a response to a religious, a spiritual imperative. Not to oppose these manifestations of evil would be tantamount to disobeying God."[266] Our faith calls us to "testify to the liberating power of the resurrection: naming groups and organizations that have created change in unjust systems, and breaking the death grip of corruption, greed, violence and oppression."[267] We do this by telling our own stories of brokenness, healing, and wholeness.[268] In this way we demonstrate as Christians a commitment to the central message of the Bible and a "desire for God's *world* as well as for God."[269]

---

[265]Dougherty and Huyser, "Racially Diverse Congregations: Organizational Identity and the Accommodation of Differences," 27.
[266]Michael Battle, *Reconciliation: The Ubuntu Theology of Desmond Tutu*, Revised & updated ed. (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2009), 32.
[267]Altagracia Pérez-Bullard, "Tierras Para Los Desterrados: Christian Practices That Sustain the Journey," *The Living Pulpit (Online)* 28 (February 2019).
[268]Eric A Thomas, "Tales from the Crypt: A Same Gender Loving (SGL) Reading of Mark 5:1-20 – Backwards," *The Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center* 41 (2015): 55.
[269]Fulkerson, *Places of Redemption*, 238.

5.6.b Diverse Worship

Deacon rejoiced, “Today, I think we’ve made a lot of progress in reconciliation. It’s amazing how now I can go to a so-called white church. Even though there’s no white church, it’s God’s church, no black church. And I see in the pews *Lift Every Voice and Sing* hymnal. That’s encouraging. That means they want to be inclusive. I like that.” Worship is not neutral.[270] Rather our practices of worship always express an identity.[271] The distinctions between “black church” and “[white] church” are well established. Multiracial congregations such as St. Timothy’s will almost always practice “white church.” Korie Little Edwards asserts that “whites are not comfortable with black church culture or addressing the elephant in the room, race.”[272] So “African Americans will bear the greater burden of maintaining a racially mixed worship experience.”[273]

Emerson and Smith address the “Homogeneous Unit Principle” (HUP) which holds that churches, as voluntary associations, will grow much faster when they specialize in attracting a specific kind of person because like will attract like. HUP has been a major barrier for evangelical churches interested in “racial reconciliation” but not willing to sacrifice the growth promises of HUP. HUP in a non-homogeneous society offers a clear choice.

---

[270]Swanson, *Rediscipling the White Church*, 100.
[271]Priest, “Doing Identity: Power and the Reproduction of Collective Identity in Racially Diverse Congregations,” 522.
[272]Korie L Edwards, “WHEN ‘DIVERSITY’ isn’t ENOUGH: Multiethnic churches have been growing over the past two decades. But are they thriving?,” *Christianity Today* 65, no. 2 (March 2021): 38.
[273]Edwards, *The Elusive Dream*, 37.

HUP acknowledges the power of exclusion, that same power which informs the very idea of whiteness. HUP is a compromise, settling for a community that represents less than the breadth of God's creation. Is the compromise of HUP a worthwhile one for the sake of growing the numbers involved in a community? Or is it a compromise of the Gospel, of the one-ness of God, which creates space for those who would claim a smaller god without having to make room in their hearts for neighbors different from themselves?

When I was in seminary, planning a church-planting effort in the Bronx, we had exactly this conversation. The vibrant diversity of the neighborhoods of the Bronx were for us the most compelling aspect of the setting. Would we be content to mainly attract people comfortable with the culture and traditions we came from, or would we stretch ourselves to create a space that was more broadly inviting? In the end we modified our [white] tradition's practices in favor of more "contemporary, expressive worship… capable of integrating racial groups."[274]

Sometimes our practices can still feel token. But I prefer to think of them as "raising a flag" that signals our intentions and desires to embrace greater diversity just as surely as the modest rainbow flag on our sign out front.

[274]Dougherty and Huyser, "Racially Diverse Congregations: Organizational Identity and the Accommodation of Differences."

5.7 Violet

5.7.a Black Culture

Violet remembered, “we had been in the church at St. Abelard’s as a family and we truly enjoyed it because it was an all black church. This is my first experience being in a multicultural... area... church and it was... I had a lot of questions. Even though [a black, female priest] was here, I still had a lot of questions.” Having lived most of her life in the *de facto* segregation that is the United States’ inheritance, Violet had a particular awareness and appreciation of the place of the black church. Black church was more than just churches that happened to be attended by black people. Black churches separated Christianity from the whiteness with which it was generally conflated. Black worship was shaped to “specifically reject the idolatry of white supremacy and offer ways for Blacks to imagine themselves free of the constraints of whiteness.”[275] Solidarity with Violet will recognize the value of these experiences and the ways in which St. Timothy’s simply does not provide the same function in her life. The desire for solidarity also calls me to ask, “In what ways might St. Timothy’s seek to be a little less specifically white?”

Just as black churches provided a Christian space for people excluded from churches which embraced whiteness, so black culture arose in response to the thoroughgoing rejection of people identified as black from what became white society. As segregation took hold through the strictures of Jim Crow, separation generated “fear

[275]Fisher-Stewart, *Black and Episcopalian*, 84.

among the strong and dominant,"[276] who in response enforced codes of segregation ever more strictly. A widespread response to such firm exclusion from a society becoming ever more "white" was a movement "to establish a dependable sense of black autonomy, to make articulate a collective sense of self, capable of nourishing and supporting the individual as he works out his destiny in American society and the world."[277]

Theoretically, black and white together might share Violet's sentiment: "Well, the goal is to be as one." But generations of enforced difference and conflict will not be resolved in a generation. For the foreseeable future, cultural differences remain relevant and important. "Culture-blindness is simply disunity disguised; it falls short of the unity to which we have been called."[278] Solidarity calls us to recognize, respect, and appreciate differences. God's light shines differently in each of us, like in a mosaic of stained glass.

5.7.b Black Representation

Violet says, "I wish I could see more of us doing things, not necessarily the head, but being more involved as an usher, being more involved as, you know, as a person who works with the, what do you call it, people at night, the grounds people. Seeing more of us in those roles." There is a danger in "commoditizing" black people to help a white church signify as "not-racist."[279] On the other hand, the presence of black people in

---

[276]Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), 33.
[277]Howard Thurman, *The Search for Common Ground: An Inquiry into the Basis of Man's Experience of Community*, A Howard Thurman Book (Richmond, Ind: Friends United Press, 1986), 99.
[278]Christena Cleveland, *Disunity in Christ: Uncovering the Hidden Forces That Keep Us Apart* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Books, 2013), 187.
[279]Idea discussed in a personal conversation with Dr. Tony Lin, Sociologist of Religion, Trinity Church, Wall Street, on October 15, 2021.

visible positions of leadership "is a key characteristic of multiracial ministry."[280] A committee of black Catholic Bishops wrote, "The Catholic Church is not a 'White Church' nor a 'Euro-American Church.' It is essentially universal and, hence, Catholic. The Black presence within the American Catholic Church is a precious witness to the universal character of Catholicism."[281]

There is value in congregations that support cultures and identities, ways of bearing the image of God, that are in danger of being erased by whiteness. I would not argue the same for congregations that support white culture and identity, which are essentially negative: a refusal to share in identity with others.[282]

Ironically, Violet reported the difficulty she experienced in beginning (and thus leading) a new ministry at St. Timothy's. Wanting to provide groceries for people facing food insecurity, she was initially rebuffed with the outrageously inaccurate excuse, "there are no poor people in our town."

Solidarity with the Violets in our midst might include inviting them into public ministry roles and taking seriously their offers to lead surprising new ministries that had not been considered before. While there is intrinsic value in getting a job done, there will often be additional value in inviting a specific person to fulfill that job. While many people could admirably execute the duties of the Vice President of the United States,

---

[280]Dougherty and Huyser, "Racially Diverse Congregations: Organizational Identity and the Accommodation of Differences," 24.

[281]Joseph Howze, "What We Have Seen and Heard": A Pastoral Letter on Evangelization from the Black Bishops of the United States (Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1984), 19.

[282]Willie James Jennings, *After Whiteness: An Education in Belonging*, Theological Education between the Times (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2020), 141.

Miriam noted much meaning and encouragement in seeing them carried out by a black woman.

5.8 Corinne

5.8.a Space for Everyone

It was not until after our formal interview that Corinne relaxed and said, “Yeah, ‘cause when we go into somewhere new, we always feel like they’re like, ‘oh no, some more black people coming in.’ You have to think about that.” She said this after reflecting on how her initial welcome at St. Timothy’s wasn’t quite as warm as she had originally reported. It had taken some time for people to get to know her family, to warm up. Bobbie had reported a similar experience. Nor were these alone in their experience: Chris Munn reports that “the greatest struggle for the interracial church is getting people to commit to relationship with one another.”[283]

One especially appropriate and effective strategy for growing relationships and connecting people is in the telling of stories. “Sharing our stories with each other is pretty much the only way to develop meaningful relationships.”[284] More specifically, DeWolf and Geddes write that “[s]torytelling makes it possible to confront and overcome white supremacy, separation, and hierarchies of human value and develop authentic,

[283]Munn, “The One Friend Rule and Social Deficits: Understanding the Impact of Race on Social Capital in an Interracial Congregation,” 10.
[284]DeWolf and Geddes, *The Little Book of Racial Healing*, 44.

accountable, and healthy relationships from which to plan collective actions to bridge divides and transform our communities."[285] In this they have good form: the Holy Scriptures themselves may be aptly summarized as "stories of people journeying with God through the centuries."[286] They are a model for we who practice the faith of the Bible because "[t]aking the time to share our experiences, personal and in ministry in the world, deepens the roots of our faith."[287]

Solidarity can mean building relationships by telling our stories in order to create "spaces of belonging." These are not spaces which enforce conformity to white culture as normative or default. Rather, they are spaces where everyone experiences "feeling free to be your full self without fear and having equal opportunity to thrive."[288]

5.8.b The Least of These

In thinking more specifically how we could ensure that everyone was welcome, Corinne suggested, "We could focus more on special holidays like Women's Day, address that, talk about women in priesthood because we're starting to see a lot of that. Hispanics like the [family name with Hispanic members], like talk more about Hispanics in their church and faith." Corinne's practice of de-centering herself and her prophetic inclusion of others echoes the urging of womanist theologians before her.[289]

---

[285]DeWolf and Geddes, 45.
[286]Wylie-Kellermann, "White Supremacy, Among the Giant Triplet," 56.
[287]Wylie-Kellermann, 55.
[288]Désir, *Running While Black*, 222.
[289]e.g., Douglas, *The Black Christ*, 107.

Pope Francis wrote in his encyclical "Fratelli Tutti" to warn of the "vicious attitudes" that would be ready to "discard others," seen especially in continuing examples of racism.[290] This readiness to discard others points to the possibility of discarding anybody – including myself. As long as it is possible for others to be discarded, I too will dwell under threat of the axe, knowing in my most honest moments that I don't measure up either to the perfection of God or, more damning, my own demands and expectations. An intolerance for or discrimination against others is a sure sign of my own uneasy lack of confidence in my adequacy and worthiness of God's grace.

In "Laudato Si" Pope Francis points to injustice throughout the world and a widespread lack of basic human rights which "immediately becomes, logically and inevitably, a summons to solidarity and a preferential option for the poorest of our brothers and sisters."[291] It is care for one another that will faithfully guide us into "the most just, loving, and equitable paths toward our collective liberation."[292] Stephanie Spellers describes solidarity as that love which will draw us out of "self-centrism" and into healing mutuality that "enacts God's beloved community."[293]

Care for "the least of these" is the essential requirement in order to understand the womanist's perception of Christ.[294] It is the key to living in solidarity with all people,

---

[290]Francis, "Encyclical Letter Fratelli Tutti of the Holy Father Francis on Fraternity and Social Friendship" (The Holy See, October 3, 2020), 20, accessed June 19, 2023, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html

[291]Francis, *Praise Be to You: Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home* (Erlanger, Kentucky: Dynamic Catholic Institute, 2015), 125.

[292]Kim, *The Wake Up*, 231.

[293]Spellers, *The Church Cracked Open*, 107.

[294]Douglas, *The Black Christ*, 109.

including with God and with oneself. Kimberlé Crenshaw summarized this expression of solidarity beautifully when she spoke of including all marginalized groups so that we can finally and confidently say, “When they enter, we all enter.”[295]

5.9 Reflection

Of the writing of books there is no end. Conversation partners in ink are many and varied and to be treasured. They often present themselves clearly, and frequently resonate with me in ways that make me cry out loud. It is easy to be shocked by them, because they are safely tamed, held between two covers, where they may be put down and taken up again, brought into conversation with others, and dwelled upon for days or weeks. Texts and formal theology are useful for drawing out, examining, and filling in, the espoused and operant theologies of the congregation.

Conversations with real people are both more exhilarating, more exhausting and more dangerous. Recording conversations and listening to them repeatedly is surprisingly informative, allowing their words to sink in as the words of a book might. The conversations with people, though, are more personal. They apply to contexts I know and in which I live and move. There is risk in my responses, whether they will express solidarity and build relationship, or whether I might speak a word in foolish obliviousness or even in evil malevolence. The body which is the church “includes bodies that are complicated templates of power, oppression, healing, and brokenness themselves.”[296]

---

[295]Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex,” 167.
[296]Fulkerson and Mount Shoop, *A Body Broken, a Body Betrayed*, 26.

I enter these conversations knowing myself to be an outsider in important ways. Not even knowing what I don't know, I strive to take the posture of a student with people whose institutional expectation is that I should teach. Solidarity is to hold these roles and responsibilities together, sharing that which is given me to share, and receiving in humility that which others might offer me.

5.10 Summary

Each member of the Council of Advice offered their own perspectives on the work of solidarity and what it might mean for St. Timothy's to embrace minoritized communities more fully. Their comments frequently reminded me of authors treating topics of black and womanist theology, racial theory, and churches and race.

For Bobbie, solidarity meant learning about and remembering black history, along with the white work of acknowledging white supremacy. For Miriam, solidarity could be seen in pushing past white fragility to tolerate one's own discomfort and express curiosity and openness to knowing about anti-black discrimination. Edison emphasized the harm done by perceptions of racial-group behavior and his desire to be acknowledged for his accomplishments rather than stigmatized by a false belief that the playing field had been tipped in his favor. Deacon found solidarity in the sustained practice of ministry and an openness to choosing diverse worship practices. Violet felt heard when one acknowledged her experiences of black culture and the black church, and finds a better sense of acceptance when she sees black people in visible positions of leadership.

Corinne emphasized the importance of making space for everyone at St. Timothy's and the special value of showing reverent care for "the least of these."

6 Conclusions

6.1 Invitation

“I can’t breathe!” Three years ago George Floyd was murdered in broad daylight. Three years ago the whole world was suffering together in a global pandemic. Three years ago the United States was convulsing with rage. The pandemic brought death on a scale not previously experienced by my generation. It brought sickness, fear, and distrust. Our church buildings were closed by order of the Diocese and the state, confining our gatherings to online events. Hyper-partisan politics were being magnified on the televisions of a whole country confined indoors. Anti-black and anti-Asian animosity were being expressed at the highest levels of the United States government, exploited in pursuit of popularity with white voters.

That is where this project began. The entire United States had fallen into a false dream that “racism was over” after two terms with a black President. As an inexperienced priest, I had mostly ignored my special calling and responsibilities in this multi-ethnic congregation I served. But now alarm bells were sounding as some of us struggled to wake.

My timid efforts at mentioning race in homilies and newsletters were frequently met with both gratitude and resistance. For one leader in the parish, a line was crossed when I chose, in consultation with my wardens, to offer the use of our bathrooms to the organizers of a “Black Lives Matter” march that was beginning across the street from our

church buildings. This leader penned a vitriolic email to me, with the entire Vestry copied. I forwarded this email to my Bishop with a note: “Just so you know, I’m making a mess down here!”

This was my opportunity to proclaim clearly and proudly that “Black Lives Matter”: my opposition to injustice and anti-black discrimination. But I was only doing so in small ways. The responses were strongly worded and emotional. Some people were leaving the parish. Is this what I signed up for when I was ordained?

6.2 Overview

In these brief chapters, I have striven to cover a great deal of ground. Beginning with a selection of relevant literature and continuing with interviews with those who have suffered direct harm from anti-black racism, I have introduced conversation partners whom I thought would be helpful to the work of learning about my own calling as an Episcopal priest, a Christian, and a human being. In this section I review some of the basic ideas that underlay my research, beginning with Theology in Four Voices, the practice of Action Research, and my own experience of learning. I follow these up with a summary consideration of the broadly applicable ideas of paying attention, leadership, and solidarity. In each of these sections, I hope to extract core ideas that have proved useful to me and may be encouraging to someone else as well.

6.3 Theology in Four Voices

Though I believe in one God, I also believe there are at least as many ways to understand God as there are human beings. God exceeds our capacity to understand by a great measure and every creature of God approaches God in a manner that is influenced as much by that creature's nature as by God's. Even within an individual's understanding of God, there are conflicts, contradictions, and tensions. "Theology in Four Voices"[297] is a helpful tool for pulling apart those tension points. The meat of our understanding often lies in the tensions, when platitudes push up against practice and their misalignment becomes clear.

6.3.a Normative Theology

Throughout this project there has been a light scatter of references to the Bible and to the *Book of Common Prayer.* Each of these references is an example of *Normative Theology,* the texts and ideas that spring from our sacred or authoritative texts. Most of those references concern the oneness of God and the unity of all human beings as God's creatures.

The central story of the Hebrew Bible, the story to which practically every other biblical story refers explicitly or implicitly, is the story of the exodus of God's people from Egypt. Knowing God's people to be oppressed and enslaved, God entered history in novel ways to liberate them and to establish an ongoing relationship between human

[297]Cameron, *Talking about God in Practice,* 53ff.

beings and God. The center of the Christian Bible is the death and resurrection of Jesus on the cross. Once again, God entered history in a novel way to liberate humanity and to establish an ongoing relationship between human beings and God. *The Book of Common Prayer* consists in large part of Scripture, with the rest of its contents reflecting sustained reflection upon Scripture.

None of these expressions of normative theology offer support for anti-black racism, though they have at times been used to do so. Few modern interpreters would consent to such uses of these texts today. Even when black people were enslaved and held in enforced illiteracy in the United States, the liberating messages of Scripture were available to all with ears to hear. Today, Black and Womanist theologians offer perspectives on Scripture that make plain God's calling to preserve the dignity of every human being.

6.3.b Formal Theology

Writers like James Cone, Dolores Williams, and Kelly Brown Douglas draw out theological premises that existed in our Christian tradition all along, but which went unseen by earlier theologians blinded by white supremacy. Cone reminds us that emancipation is God's central work in Scripture and in the world. Cone offers a choice: do we understand the cross as aligned with power and comfort or aligned with the victims of the lynching tree and discrimination? Jennings reminds us that early Christians, Jewish or otherwise, were all considered Gentiles and removed to the edges of society. Douglas asserts that, no matter what his skin tone, the Christ we meet in the Bible has a social

location that reminds us of the suffering of those labeled "black." Because of these things, ideas like "white privilege," "white solidarity," and "white transparency," all under the banner of "white supremacy" or "white hegemony," are all relevant theological terms. They are all conditions directly relevant to the project of transformation that the Holy Spirit is working out in the heart of every Christian.

Solidarity with others reflects a core theological commitment of the Christian faith. It is our confession that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3.23 NRSV). My neighbor is my equal in this way. This is a central argument of Karl Barth's *The Epistle to the Romans* when he asserts that "Our solidarity with other men is alone adequately grounded, when with others… we stretch out beyond everything that we are and have, and behold the wholly problematical character of our present condition. Men *fall short of the glory of God."*[298] Without this confession of our essential equality in need, we find ourselves unable to receive God's grace in full measure. It is God alone whose judgment renders us equal and God alone who calls us equally beloved.

6.3.c Espoused Theology

Claims of color-blindness and a refusal of racial privilege can sound virtuous, but I have considered above how they usually are an attempt to excuse oneself from meaningful action. While the cry "Black Lives Matter" seems too obvious to some, those who are paying attention will be painfully aware of just how much black lives seem *not*

[298]Karl Barth and Edwyn Clement Hoskyns, *The Epistle to the Romans* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 101.

to matter in the United States from day to day. “All Lives Matter” again becomes an excuse for inaction and studied indifference to real suffering.

Christians and our churches excel in the use of words: they are our inheritance from the generations before us. We have many good and noble words that speak clearly of justice, fairness, righteousness, and respect for others. But Christians also believe that words and actions must match, and espoused theology must issue forth in operant theology.

6.3.d Operant Theology

Ultimately, words can be cheap and behaviors do not always match up with claimed beliefs. An operant theology in which the value of black lives is diminished yields a world in which the murder of black people, or the denial of a whole variety of other basic human rights and dignities, is commonplace. Attempts to consider or provide those rights and dignities often result in expressions of outrage and the severance of relationships by those who feel their own well-being threatened with talk of equality. Attempts to redress, repair, and right past wrongs get overturned by those reluctant to cede power: from the crippling and revocation of the General Convention Special Program to the termination of Affirmative Action in college admissions.

But there is hope in the operant theology of very many. As leadership is shared and stories are told, new opportunities to repair past wrongs are uncovered and those who have managed to find alignment in normative, formal, espoused, and operant theologies will find in that alignment reservoirs of strength and courage to overcome the inertia or

fear, the white solidarity and white fragility, that might otherwise inhibit them from doing the right thing.

6.4 Action Research

Action Research is a process of iterative congregational change that identifies five specific stages to which attention should be paid. I find these stages are intuitively present in every practice of congregational change, but often one or more of them will be passed over very quickly and with inadequate attention. Action Research formalizes the process of giving due consideration to each step. While I often feel isolated in my work as the sole priest and sole employee in the parish I serve, the Action Research process invited me to relinquish my single-minded compulsion to “get things done” in favor of connecting to others and leveraging their wisdom, insight, interests and passions in order to accomplish more activities and more appropriate activities than I could have done on my own. The evaluation steps following Action Research were more than my normal, instantaneous “gut check” after an activity, and provided opportunity for sustained reflection, affirmation, and brainstorming about future improvements.

6.5 My Learning

In the weeks that followed our Black History Month activities and our debrief about them, I considered my own process of learning in this project. Learning is often a subtle, cumulative effect in my experience. Ideas that seem obvious afterward were not

quite as firm before the reading, conversation, and practice which constituted this investigation. Three of the most important ideas to me were:

6.5.a Silence is not an option

I am a reluctant prophet. Am I going to stir up more trouble than I resolve? If I talk about anti-black racism, will that make black people as uncomfortable as it does white people? In the end, there are numberless excuses for not speaking up. But this study has suggested two things for me to keep in mind.

First, silence is complicity. Part of the power of white supremacy is its capacity to change appearance and to exercise its power even (especially) when unremarked. From chattel slavery to Jim Crow to red-lining to putative meritocracy, white supremacy is a shape-shifter. Changing legal contexts and ethical fashions don't seem to kill it, but simply to spur it to take on new forms. White supremacy is so thoroughly woven into the systems of modern life in the United States that it does not require people of evil intent to have its evil effect on black lives. Simply refraining from speaking of it leaves its power uninhibited. Change will only come when we can speak of it and name it aright. Terms like "white supremacy," "white privilege," "white transparency," "white solidarity" and "white fragility" are all relevant to the battle.

Second, I have power. My race and my gender are both given power in the culture in which I live. My nationality has power in the world. My education and financial status give me power. The clerical collar around my neck is a symbol both of service and of power. Power is a responsibility entrusted to me by society and by the Church. Even if

some power I would decline, such as that which comes by virtue of my race or gender, it is nigh impossible for me to place it out of reach. It is mine whether I want it or not. The question is, what will I do with that power, and whether I will use it "to dismantle the master's house."[299] As a disciple of Jesus, will I use my power the way that he uses his?

6.5.b Race is a relevant conversation for Christians in the United States of America

James Cone insists that race is central to the Christian practice of any person in the United States of America. Nearly every aspect of our lives is inextricably bound up in race. If those lives are to be surrendered to Jesus, our encounters with race will be part of the package. When I preach or teach about race in the majority-white church I serve, the fact that I periodically receive complaints (some gentle, some vehement), protests, and severances from the congregation, does not mean that race is at all an inappropriate topic for preaching or teaching.

Likewise, race is not just a personal issue. It is a foundational element of the structures of our common life. When I speak of race, some accuse me of "being political." My common argument is that "politics" concerns our life together, how we live in community. That is exactly the subject of the second commandment and most of the teaching of the Bible. If partisans of a particular party commonly embrace policies connected to anti-black discrimination, this does not absolve me of my responsibility to proclaim God's concern for the oppressed. When social, political, and economic

[299]Spellers, *The Church Cracked Open*, 112.

structures maintain an anti-black status-quo, I am not any more free to ignore them than Moses was to ignore Pharaoh's mistreatment of the Israelites.

6.5.c White supremacy is a white invention and a white problem

As I wrestled with the terminology throughout this project, I was increasingly struck by the fact that white supremacy is not a black problem. It is not a black invention. Black people bear no responsibility for it. Black people did not ask for it and, even when some black people internalize enough anti-blackness that they can be said to help maintain it, that is merely a measure of the distortion caused by white supremacy.

White supremacy is a white invention, a white failing, and a white problem. It is not up to black people to "solve it." Whiteness is an exclusion of others, a demarcation of who is "not us."

As I began this project, Dr. Lin pointed out to me that all churches express identities. He has history in Taiwanese churches. We considered the value of all manner of ethnic-flavored churches. Why would I be so reluctant to serve in a purposefully "white" church? Because whiteness is not an ethnicity or a question of national origin. It is a claim of power and exclusion. It is a claim to be "the default" against which every other identity is to be measured and, by implication, found wanting. Whiteness is a mass delusion that Ta-Nehisi Coates illustrates in one essay by referring to people not as white but as "those who believe they are white."[300]

---

[300]Coates, *Between the World and Me*, 6.

Whiteness is a white problem and it represents a deep twistedness in every "white" heart which has been normalized (along with so much else evil in the human condition). It is not in the power of black people to change this. Except perhaps the black Christ.

Change is rarely easy. Changing something as embedded as whiteness is going to be fraught for anybody. For most white people today, much of our identity and self-knowledge is based on the foundation of whiteness. Even encountering the idea of whiteness (penetrating the illusion of "white transparency") involves emotional labor. Acknowledging the hurt and injustice perpetrated upon millions of my neighbors, and what fairness might demand in my response is very uncomfortable. Learning to encounter, process, and channel my own emotions is a necessary part of combating white supremacy. But weighing my comfort against my neighbor's safety leaves no question in my mind about the call of the Gospel.

6.6 Paying Attention

How can I begin to disrupt white supremacy in my life? I begin by paying attention. While it is unfair to ask black people around me to do the labor of helping me to unwind white supremacy in my life, there are many who have volunteered to do so. Helpful books abound to explain about black experiences and the insidious nature of whiteness. Groups advocating for racial justice regularly encourage white people to begin

their work by “educating yourself.” There is no lack of helpful resources one can access, addressing all levels of need and readiness.

A second aspect of paying attention is by nurturing one’s own connection to wider cultural influences. Having “one black friend” is a stereotype of the white person seeking to defend themselves from the label “racist.” But putting oneself into contexts where one can rub elbows with people different from oneself, where one struggles to understand and appreciate others’ words and actions, and putting in the work to develop relationships that might seem challenging at first, is invaluable for escaping the depths of whiteness.

More than one respondent in this project spoke of the racial segregation and isolation which continue to be the norm for the vast majority of people in the United States. From the beginning, churches were communities where different social classes mixed and the labels that divided people faded from consequence. Structures, such as church events or even Action Research projects, can provide excuses and opportunities for the interactions which mutually enrich lives and help each of us to touch the wider reality of the human experience. Priests, in my experience, are in an especially privileged place to engage in such connections: that is one of the great joys of this vocation.

6.7 Leadership

The *Book of Common Prayer* (e.g., p, 855: “Who are the ministers of the Church?”) and the very structure of the Episcopal Church point to the shared ministry and cooperative leadership intended within the Episcopal Church. Scripture does likewise

(e.g., Eph. 4.4–7). I find it too easy to do things on my own for the sake of "getting things done." This is expedient and possibly helpful. But this project has suggested at the least that more careful discernment is called for. Implementing programs and holding forth in sermons that seek to address questions of race was a fraught proposition, at best, for this white priest, when doing so on my own.

Working in cooperation and under the advice of a counsel of black persons changed my expectations about what we needed to do and my understanding of how we should do it. None of the activities or conversations we chose were shocking to me: they seemed almost too pedestrian. Instead of seeking to incite a revolution, my companions in this project pushed forward the slow, steady work of wooing hearts and changing minds, desiring to bring everyone along with them to a place of mutual acceptance and dignity. Leadership is best when shared, especially when shared with experts in the subject-area in question.

Leadership also means tolerating my own discomfort as I speak clearly, calmly, and confidently about the importance of the work we are doing together. White people will question activities that highlight black perspectives. Those exposed to a steady diet of cable news will reflexively regurgitate the talking points they have been consuming faithfully for years on end. The upset of these recent years has had the effect of improving my dedication to prayer as I seek the grounding I need to hold my discomfort and respond out of faith rather than out of anxiety.

On a related note, leadership means using my power and my resources to support those who might be denied those privileges. Choosing to use LEVAS regularly, offering positions of leadership to those who have been under-represented, and highlighting activities that may be less well-attended are ways that I can exercise leadership that promotes racial justice rather than supporting the status quo of white supremacy.

6.8 Solidarity

Above I listed the four practices of solidarity suggested by Ada Tseng. These involve centering others' voices, using one's own power on their behalf, focusing on sustained relationships, and healing the pain of experiences of racism. There are many paths to practicing solidarity; this project explored one. The practice of solidarity lies squarely in the middle of what Christian practice looks like in any time or place. It seems to begin with entering into another's words, another's experiences, just as in the baby Jesus God put on flesh and entered into humanity's experience.

Solidarity is a transferable skill. It is not a zero-sum game. Practicing solidarity with the black people in the parish I serve prepares me to practice solidarity with those who identify as LGBTQ+. Or those who identify as Native American. Or those who identify as Hispanic. As I, and perhaps others in the parish I serve, grow in our capacity for solidarity, our habits of welcome and inclusion are mutually reinforcing. It is hard for

me to imagine a more Christ-like sentiment than that of a well-known advocate for racial equality: “When they enter, we all enter.”[301]

6.9 Reflection

In the Bronx there was a feeding ministry called POTS: Part of the Solution. As with Kendi’s explanation of racism and anti-racism, sometimes there is not middle ground. Am I going to be a part of the problem, or a part of the solution? I am not especially courageous or skilled in conflict resolution. I am often envious of other clergy around me who seem more extroverted and more eager to press an important argument. But those qualities are not the question. The question is, am I going to be a part of the problem, or a part of the solution?

At St. Timothy’s, I have received kind words and encouragement every time I have dared to address race in my words or actions. I have also sometimes stumbled into vehement, belligerent expressions of white fragility. These both seem to come with the territory of parish ministry. If I could choose to encounter one without the other I would do so. But I do not think that is an option given to me. So I desire to respond in faith and courage to the choices available in this time and place. I desire to align myself with the cross, the Crucifed One, and the God to whom that particular path toward justice and healing made the most sense.

---

[301]Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex,” 167.

6.10 Summary

How does a white priest look past his own limited perspective to show solidarity with the people of color in the congregation he serves?

I brought into this project some beliefs and some questions. I found in my early conversations and review of the literature that some of my beliefs were challenged (e.g., that a multiracial church is necessarily a good thing) while others were deepened and affirmed (e.g., Jesus' particular concern for the oppressed).

The perspective of the literature, however, was one-sided. It did not reflect the complexity or the specific dynamics of the particular congregation I am privileged to serve. Conversations engaged in with members of the parish and subsequently reflected upon repeatedly help me to grow in my depth of understanding of the dynamics of white supremacy, social justice, and the Gospel at work in the lives of our whole parish. These conversations led us to practices that were lovingly crafted to include as many as possible even as we invited the change and growth that would come with setting aside bits of the white-supremacist worldview we have been handed by our environment.

Surprisingly to me, the Council of Advice was not fatigued by our effort or frustrated. They rejoiced in what had been accomplished and looked forward to next steps. In our Christian vocation, we are handed not the sword of judgment but a bag of seed. "Listen! A sower went out to sow (Matt. 13:3b NRSV)." The Council helped me to remember we are responsible only for faithfulness in sowing, and that it is God who gives the growth.

The murkiness of misunderstanding provides cover for white supremacy and anti-black racism in the United States today. I believe God's call to me is clear. The more clearly I see it, the more courageously I may act. Solidarity begins by choosing to have eyes to see and ears to hear. Seeing and hearing may begin with education: learning how to see and how to hear. Ultimately solidarity involves de-centering myself and my concerns in order to hear my neighbor's suffering, and then using my own privilege to support my neighbor.

7 Coda

7.1 It's Personal

7.1.a Invitation

"Have you called your sister?" I'm seated on the couch with Becky again. Today is 21 March 2021. I extract my brain from the context of the book I'm reading and process her question. Have I called my sister? Why do I need to call my sister? It's the middle of March: her birthday isn't until August! Becky points to the spa shootings in metro Atlanta a few days prior. It still takes me a few minutes to comprehend. Oh! My sister was born in Korea, from whence my parents adopted her as an infant. I never thought of her as Asian before: she's just my sister! But the victims in Atlanta were Asian, and my sister attended graduate school just outside Atlanta, in Athens. I text my sister. She has missed two days of work due to the emotional distress she feels, not just due to this shooting but due to a whole complex of factors, beginning with "the increased brazenness and violence around anti-Asian racism, especially since Covid"[302] and including layers of conflicting information. From her earliest memories, she has been invited to trust the white community and "essentially pretend it is my own"; yet these events consist of people who look like her family murdering people who look like her. To top it all off we, her white family, are not proving terribly supportive. Instead, anti-Asian

[302]This and the following quote are taken from a personal email to me dated 10/8/2023.

racism was dismissed by a close family member as “fake news,” despite her frequent personal encounters with it throughout her career as a psychologist. Despite encountering clear and explicit examples of it from our extended family while she was growing up. How do I respond in a supportive way? How can I show my sister the solidarity she craves?

7.1.b Reflection

Some of the books referenced in this project were suggested to me by my sister. Besides “black,” “Asian” is another popular taxonomy when making distinctions about “them” and “us.” In the effort to push back against injustice and discrimination, all kinds and classes of people deserve to be acknowledged and cared for.

Acknowledging Asian, or black, people in one’s family does not automatically give one insight into the systems of racism that govern modern life or the experiences of that minoritized relative. Just as “racial reconciliation” can be a way to avoid doing the hard work of racial justice, so acknowledging as family someone with a different racial heritage can provide an individual excuse for the same avoidance. This is roughly analogous to the popular trope of one’s “one black friend.”

Just as the Council of Advice were very sensitive in their projects for Black History Month, I am timid around my sister. I want to acknowledge her racial experience, but not re-traumatize her (she says I won’t). I want to express solidarity, but not use her to work out my own guilt and ignorance.

I bring to my parish a desire to promote racial justice and to create a space where all our identities, not just the white ones, will find expression in our life together. This is a very personal mission for me.

7.2 It's Ongoing

7.2.a Invitation

The date is 2 July 2023. I am on Sabbatical, writing this thesis. On Sundays, I take advantage of the time off work to go visit other churches. Mostly I visit black churches. I want to see how they differ from St. Timothy's and what new awareness I might gain in serving the people of my own parish. Today I visited a local Pentecostal church in the same town as St. Timothy's. I had met the pastor at occasional ecumenical events we both supported in our community. The pastor played music and sang with great ability. During the liturgy he was generous in sharing attention with others, both lay and clergy. His preaching was inspiring, theologically apt, and connected to the lives of those present.

That week, the Supreme Court of the United States overturned the practice of Affirmative Action in college admissions (Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard). I received that news with a sigh and a cynical refusal to be surprised. In sharp contrast to my response, the pastor whose church I visited preached about the visceral disappointment felt by himself and his congregation. They could expect their children to have a more difficult time getting into college than they had. Their hope for the future was dimmed. The hope offered by the Gospel on the day of Pentecost, on the other hand,

cannot be rescinded by any court: it is “for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him” (Acts 2:39 NRSV).

I was not at home on the couch with a book in my lap, but I had that same sinking feeling in my heart. Something tragic had happened in the news. I had felt sorrow, yes, but still reverted to my old habit of quickly trading that sorrow for cynicism and unfeeling. Once again, I had chosen self-protection instead of solidarity.

7.2.b Reflection

Three years after George Floyd’s murder, white people still do not want to talk about race. Three years after George Floyd’s murder, black people are still being murdered, while “lesser” forms of discrimination continue to be so prevalent that they are both beyond numbering and also statistically relevant. Three years after George Floyd’s murder, black voices still are not listened to. What has changed?

There are certain projects in life that are doomed to be forever unfinished, imperfect, and unsatisfying. These are efforts that can feel futile. There is always another book to read, another problematic behavior to change, another good deed to do.

In the Christian tradition, μετάνοια (*metanoia*) is the idea of repentance, turning around, changing. It is a process that is never finished; instead at every stage the vista of possibilities is so vast that it feels like it is just beginning. Repentance can be frustrating at times for the feeling of futility that comes when we find ourselves repeating past mistakes and reverting to old ways we thought we had left behind. Ultimately, repentance is a process that Christians can resist, but one that we cannot bring to pass on our own

power. Just the opposite: repentance means coming face to face with my own limitations and my own powerlessness. Repentance often finds expression in confession, and encouragement and hope in the liturgical act of absolution.

I am not the person I was when I started this project. I have grown. I am very much the person I was when I started this project. I make the same mistakes. Both these things are true. Christian faith invites me to hold these together, in humility and hope, and to continue walking forward. Just like the long fight for Civil Rights in the United States, the landscape may be bleak at times. But faith comes to expression as hope, and hope is power for change. As I practice listening to black voices with a heart open to change, I will continue participating in the work of dismantling white supremacy and claiming membership in a different regime, a Beloved Community, the Kingdom of God.

8 Methodology and Literature Bibliography

8.1 Methodology

Campbell-Reed, Eileen R. “The Power and Danger of a Single Case Study in Practical Theological Research.” In *Conundrums in Practical Theology*, edited by Joyce Ann Mercer and Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore. Theology in Practice, volume 2. Leiden Boston: Brill, 2016.

Coghlan, David, and Teresa Brannick. *Doing Action Research in Your Own Organization*. 3rd ed. London: SAGE, 2009.

Miller-McLemore, Bonnie J., and Wiley-Blackwell (Firm), eds. *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*. Wiley-Blackwell Companions to Religion. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.

Rabinow, Paul. *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco*. 30th anniversary ed., Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011.

8.2 Black Theology

Battle, Michael. “Reconciliation as Mysticism.” Presented at the The Gerald May Lectures, Shalem Institute, 2021. (private video downloaded).

———. *Reconciliation: The Ubuntu Theology of Desmond Tutu*. Revised & Updated ed. Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2009.

Cone, James H. *Risks of Faith: The Emergence of a Black Theology of Liberation, 1968 - 1998*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1999.

———. *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*. Paperback edition. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2013.

Copeland, M. Shawn. “Anti-Blackness and White Supremacy in the Making of American Catholicism.” *American Catholic Studies* 127, no. 3 (2016): 6–8.

———. *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being*. Innovations. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010.

Copeland, M. Shawn, Mosely, LaReine-Marie, and Albert J Raboteau. *Uncommon Faithfulness: The Black Catholic Experience*, 2009. https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=1880927.

Dorrien, Gary. "The Making of Raphael Warnock." *Commonweal* 149, no. 9 (October 2022): 22–28.

Douglas, Kelly Brown. *The Black Christ*. 25th Anniversary Edition. The Bishop Henry McNeal Turner/Sojourner Truth Series in Black Religion, v. 17. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2019.

Fisher-Stewart, Gayle, ed. *Preaching Black Lives (Matter)*. New York: Church Publishing, 2020.

Griffin, Paul. Edited by Harold T. Lewis. *Anglican and Episcopal History* 66, no. 3 (1997): 400–402.

Jennings, Willie James. *After Whiteness: An Education in Belonging*. Theological Education between the Times. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2020.

———. "Overcoming Racial Faith." *Divinity* 14, no. 2 (Spring 2015): 4–9.

———. *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race*. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2010.

King, Jr., Dr. Martin Luther. "Letter from Birmingham Jail," April 16, 1963. https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/sites/mlk/files/letterfrombirmingham_wwcw_0.pdf.

Rivera-Pagán, Luis N. "God the Liberator:" In *Essays from the Margins*, 1st ed., 63–83. The Lutterworth Press, 2014. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1cgdxng.7.

Thurman, Howard. *Jesus and the Disinherited*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1996.

———. *The Meaning of Loyalty, Part 1, 1951 May 6*. Mp3. Vol. 1. 6 vols. The Meaning of Loyalty. Fellowship Church, San Francisco, CA, 1951. https://thurman.pitts.emory.edu/items/show/921.

———. *The Meaning of Loyalty, Part 2, 1951 May 13*. Mp3. Vol. 2. 6 vols. The Meaning of Loyalty. Fellowship Church, San Francisco, CA, 1951. https://thurman.pitts.emory.edu/items/show/588.

———. *The Meaning of Loyalty, Part 3: The State, 1951 May 20*. Mp3. Vol. 3. 6 vols. The Meaning of Loyalty. Fellowship Church, San Francisco, CA, 1951. https://thurman.pitts.emory.edu/items/show/589.

———. *The Meaning of Loyalty, Part 4: Job's Dilemma, 1951 May 27*. Mp3. Vol. 4. 6 vols. The Meaning of Loyalty. Fellowship Church, San Francisco, CA, 1951. https://thurman.pitts.emory.edu/items/show/922.

———. *The Meaning of Loyalty, Part 5: Deutero-Isaiah, 1951 June 3*. Mp3. Vol. 5. 6 vols. The Meaning of Loyalty. Fellowship Church, San Francisco, CA, 1951. https://thurman.pitts.emory.edu/items/show/923.

———. *The Meaning of Loyalty, Part 6: Deutero-Isaiah II, 1951 June 10*. Mp3. Vol. 6. 6 vols. The Meaning of Loyalty. Fellowship Church, San Francisco, CA, 1951. https://thurman.pitts.emory.edu/items/show/924.

———. *The Search for Common Ground: An Inquiry into the Basis of Man's Experience of Community*. A Howard Thurman Book. Richmond, Ind: Friends United Press, 1986.

West, Traci C. *Disruptive Christian Ethics: When Racism and Women's Lives Matter*. 1st ed. Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006.

———. *Solidarity and Defiant Spirituality: Africana Lessons on Religion, Racism, and Ending Gender Violence*. Religion and Social Transformation. New York: New York University Press, 2019.

Williams, Delores S. *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993.

Wright, Jeremiah A. “Doing Black Theology in the Black Church.” In *Living Stones in the Household of God*, edited by Linda E. Thomas, 13–23. The Legacy and Future of Black Theology. 1517 Media, 2004.

Wu, Rose. “Little White Fox.” In *Theologies of the Multitude for the Multitudes*, edited by Rita Nakashima Brock and Tat-siong Benny Liew, 65–88. The Legacy of Kwok Pui-Lan. Claremont Press, 2021.

8.3 Race Theory

Baldwin, James. *The Fire next Time*. New York: Vintage International, 1993.

Barth, Karl, and Edwyn Clement Hoskyns. *The Epistle to the Romans*. London: Oxford University Press, 1968.

Bell, Derrick. *Faces at the Bottom of the Well: The Permanence of Racism*. New York: Basic Books, 2018.

Berrey, Ellen. “Diversity Is for White People: The Big Lie behind a Well-Intentioned Word.” *Salon*, October 26, 2015. https://www.salon.com/2015/10/26/diversity_is_for_white_people_the_big_lie_behind_a_well_intended_word/.

———. *The Enigma of Diversity: The Language of Race and the Limits of Racial Justice*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015.

Blee, Kathleen M., ed. *Feminism and Antiracism: International Struggles for Justice*. New York: New York University Press, 2001.

Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States*. 2nd ed. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006.

Coates, Ta-Nehisi. *Between the World and Me*. New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2015.

———. *We Were Eight Years in Power: An American Tragedy*. New York: One World, 2017.

Collins, Sean, and Izzie Ramirez. “Discrimination Isn’t Just Infuriating. It Steals Black People’s Time.” *Vox*, June 12, 2023. https://www.vox.com/race/23739082/discrimination-racism-black-people-time-juneteenth.

Cose, Ellis. *Color-Blind: Seeing beyond Race in a Race-Obsessed World*. New York, N.Y.: HarperPerennial, 1998. https://archive.org/details/colorblind00elli.

Crenshaw, Kimberlé, ed. *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings That Formed the Movement*. New York: New Press, 1995.

———. “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics.” *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989, no. 1 (n.d.): 139–67.

———. “Race to the Bottom How the Post-Racial Revolution Became a Whitewash.” *The Baffler*, no. 35 (June 2017). https://thebaffler.com/salvos/race-to-bottom-crenshaw.

Désir, Alison Mariella. *Running While Black: Finding Freedom in a Sport That Wasn’t Built for Us*. New York: Portfolio / Penguin, 2022.

DiAngelo, Robin J. *White Fragility: Why It’s so Hard for White People to Talk about Racism*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2018.

Du Bois, W. E. B. “The Souls of White Folk.” In *Darkwater; Voices From Within the Veil*, 17–29. Project Gutenberg, 2005.

Du Bois, W.E.B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. Project Gutenberg, 1996. https://gutenberg.org/ebooks/408.

Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. 30th anniversary ed. New York: Continuum, 2000.

Hague, Dan. “Trauma of Racism and the Distorted White Imagination.” In *Post-Traumatic Public Theology*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

Hall, Amy Laura. “In What Sense Equal?” In *The New Atlantis*, no. 7 (Fall 2004/Winter 2005): 124–131.

Hong, Cathy Park. *Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning*. New York: One World, 2020.

hooks, bell. *Killing Rage: Ending Racism*. Penguin Social Sciences. London: Penguin Books, 1996.

Hughey, Matthew W. “COLOR CAPITAL, WHITE DEBT, AND THE PARADOX OF STRONG WHITE RACIAL IDENTITIES.” *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race* 9, no. 1 (2012): 169–200. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1742058X11000506.

———. *White Bound: Nationalists, Antiracists, and the Shared Meanings of Race*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012.

Jennings, Willie James. “Race and the Educated Imagination: Outlining a Pedagogy of Belonging.” *Religious Education* 112, no. 1 (January 2017): 58–65. https://doi.org/10.1080/00344087.2016.1247320.

Kendi, Ibram X. *How to Be an Antiracist*. New York: One World, 2019.

———. *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America*. History / African American Studies. New York: Bold Type Books, 2017.

Lewis, Amanda E. “‘What Group?’ Studying Whites and Whiteness in the Era of ‘Color-Blindness.’” *Sociological Theory* 22, no. 4 (2004): 623–46.

McWilliams, James. “Bryan Stevenson On What Well-Meaning White People Need To Know About Race.” *Pacific Standard*, February 6, 2018. https://psmag.com/magazine/bryan-stevenson-ps-interview.

Morrison, Toni. *The Bluest Eye: With a New Afterword by the Author*. New York: Plume, 1994.

Reynolds, David S. *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights*. 1st ed. New York: Alfred A. Knopf : Distributed by Random House, 2005.

Richardson, James. *The Abolitionist's Journal: The Memories of an American Antislavery Family*. Albuquerque: High Road Books, 2022.

Roschelle, Anne R. "Our Lives Matter: The Racialized Violence of Poverty among Homeless Mothers of Color." *Sociological Forum* 32, no. S1 (2017): 998–1017.

Sanneh, Kelefa. "The Limits of 'Diversity.'" *The New Yorker*, October 9, 2017, sec. A Critic At Large. https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/10/09/the-limits-of-diversity.

Sleeper, Jim. "Scrapping the Color Code." *Commonweal* 148, no. 9 (October 2021): 20–23.

Wilkerson, Isabel. *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*. First edition. New York: Random House, 2020.

Wong, Brittany. "Why We Need More Close Interracial Friendships (And Why We're Bad At Them)." *HuffPost*, September 4, 2020. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/close-interraacial-friendships_l_5f5122c8c5b6946f3eaed704.

Wong, Jessica Wai-Fong. *Disordered: The Holy Icon and Racial Myths*. Waco (Texas): Baylor University Press, 2021.

8.4 Activism

Kendi, Ibram X. *How to Be an Antiracist*. New York: One World, 2019.

"Martin Luther King, Jr., Interview." *Meet the Press*. Washington, DC: National Broadcasting Company, Inc., April 17, 1960. https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/interview-meet-press.

Reynolds, David S. *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights*. 1st ed. New York: Alfred A. Knopf : Distributed by Random House, 2005.

Swanson, David Winston. *Rediscipling the White Church: From Cheap Diversity to True Solidarity*. Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP, 2020.

Tseng, Ada. “What Solidarity Is and How You Can Practice It.” L. A. Times, August 11, 2021. https://www.latimes.com/lifestyle/story/2021-08-11/what-is-definition-solidarity-how-can-practice-it.

8.5 The Church of the United States of America

Archdiocese of Indianapolis. “Global Solidarity Definitions.” Accessed May 30, 2023. https://www.archindy.org/cc/globalsolidarity/definitions.html.

Baylor University. “Multiracial Congregations in U.S. Have Nearly Tripled, Study Finds,” November 11, 2020. https://phys.org/news/2020-11-multiracial-congregations-tripled.html.

Cleveland, Christena. *Disunity in Christ: Uncovering the Hidden Forces That Keep Us Apart*. Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Books, 2013.

Cobb, Ryon J., Perry, Samuel L., Dougherty, Kevin D.,. “United by Faith? Race/Ethnicity, Congregational Diversity, and Explanations of Racial Inequality.” *Sociology of Religion* 76, no. 2 (2015): 177–98.

Cruz, Joel Morales. “Brief Introduction to Theology in Latin America.” In *The Histories of the Latin American Church*, 55–106. A Brief Introduction. 1517 Media, 2014. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt9m0tw5.5.

Dougherty, Kevin D., Mark Chaves, and Michael O. Emerson. “Racial Diversity in U.S. Congregations, 1998–2019.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 59, no. 4 (December 1, 2020): 651–62. https://doi.org/10.1111/jssr.12681.

Dougherty, Kevin D, and Kimberly R Huyser. “Racially Diverse Congregations: Organizational Identity and the Accommodation of Differences.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 47, no. 1 (March 2008): 23–43.

Edwards, Korie L. “Bring Race to the Center: The Importance of Race in Racially Diverse Religious Organizations.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 47, no. 1 (March 2008): 5–9.

Edwards, Korie L. “Multiracial Churches Don’t Challenge Racism until They Challenge White Supremacy.” *Faith & Leadership*, September 29, 2020. https://faithandleadership.com/korie-little-edwards-multiracial-churches-dont-challenge-racism-until-they-challenge-white.

———. *The Elusive Dream: The Power of Race in Interracial Churches*. Updated ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2021.

Edwards, Korie L. “WHEN ‘DIVERSITY’ Isn’t ENOUGH: Multiethnic Churches Have Been Growing over the Past Two Decades. But Are They Thriving?” *Christianity Today* 65, no. 2 (March 2021): 36–41.

Emerson, Michael O., and Karen Chai Kim. “Multiracial Congregations: An Analysis of Their Development and a Typology.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 42, no. 2 (June 1, 2003): 217–27.

Emerson, Michael O., and Christian Smith. *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2001.

Francis. “Encyclical Letter Fratelli Tutti of the Holy Father Francis on Fraternity and Social Friendship.” The Holy See, October 3, 2020. https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html.

———. *Praise Be to You: Laudato Si’: On Care for Our Common Home*. Erlanger, Kentucky: Dynamic Catholic Institute, 2015.

Fulkerson, Mary McClintock. *Places of Redemption: Theology for a Worldly Church*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Fulkerson, Mary McClintock, and Marcia W. Mount Shoop. *A Body Broken, a Body Betrayed: Race, Memory, and Eucharist in White-Dominant Churches*. Eugene: Cascade Books, 2015.

Hess, Mary E. “White Religious Educators Resisting White Fragility: Lessons From Mystics.” *Religious Education* 112, no. 1 (January 2017): 46–57. https://doi.org/10.1080/00344087.2016.1253124.

Howze, Joseph. “*What We Have Seen and Heard”: A Pastoral Letter on Evangelization from the Black Bishops of the United States*. Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1984.

Jones, Robert P. *White Too Long: The Legacy of White Supremacy in American Christianity*. First Simon&Schuster trade paperback edition. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2021.

Marti, Gerardo. *A Mosaic of Believers: Diversity and Innovation in a Multiethnic Church*. Bloomington.: Indiana Univ. Press, 2009.

Martinez, Brandon C. “The Integration of Racial and Ethnic Minorities into White Congregations.” *Sociological Inquiry* 88, no. 3 (August 2018): 467–93. https://doi.org/10.1111/soin.12215.

Munn, Christopher. "The One Friend Rule and Social Deficits: Understanding the Impact of Race on Social Capital in an Interracial Congregation." Master's thesis, Ohio State University, 2013. http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc_num=osu1372330327

Oyakawa, Michelle. “Racial Reconciliation as a Suppressive Frame in Evangelical Multiracial Churches.” *Sociology of Religion* 80, no. 4 (2019): 496–517.

Pratt, Tia Noelle. “Authentically Black, Truly Catholic: Liturgy & Identity in African-American Parish Life.” *Commonweal*, April 1, 2020. https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/authentically-black-truly-catholic.

Priest, Kersten Bayt, Edwards, Korie L,. “Doing Identity: Power and the Reproduction of Collective Identity in Racially Diverse Congregations.” *Sociology of Religion* 80, no. 4 (2019): 518–41.

Seah, Audrey. “Racism and the Liturgy: Q&A with a Sociologist,” November 15, 2018. https://www.praytellblog.com/index.php/2018/11/15/racism-and-the-liturgy-qa-with-a-sociologist/.

Tisby, Jemar. *The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church's Complicity in Racism*. Epub edition. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2020.

United States Catholic Bishops. "Economic Justice for All: Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy." National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1997. https://www.usccb.org/upload/economic_justice_for_all.pdf.

8.6 The Episcopal Church

"A Declaration by Priests Who Are Negroes." The Archives of the Episcopal Church, DFMS, 1967. https://www.episcopalarchives.org/church-awakens/items/show/198.

African Descent Ministries. "Biographies of Black Bishops," March 16, 2022. https://www.episcopalchurch.org/blackministries/biographies-of-black-bishops/.

Baskerville-Burrows, The Rt. Rev. "Reparations and Beloved Community: A Report from Theology Committee of the House of Bishops for Its September 2021 Gathering." Theology Committee of the House of Bishops, 2021. https://www.episcopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/05/BBC-HOB-Theology-Cmte-Report-On-Reparations.pdf.

Battle, Michael. *Ubuntu: I in You and You in Me*. New York: Seabury Books, 2009.

"Becoming Beloved Community: The Episcopal Church's Long-Term Commitment to Racial Healing, Reconciliation and Justice." The Episcopal Church, 2017. https://www.episcopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/11/bbc_eng_vision.pdf.

Boyer, Horace Clarence, ed. *Lift Every Voice and Sing II: An African American Hymnal*. New York: Church Publishing, 1993.

Diocesan Press Service. https://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/digital_archives/DAsearch.pl, accessed 24 August 2023 [search keys in square brackets]

- "Episcopal Church Approves Funds for Ghetto Organizations, Businesses." June 5, 1968. [66-1].

- “General Convention Special Program Receives Praise.” May 21, 1970. [87-8].
- “General Convention Special Program Reports to Executive Council.” May 26, 1969. [77-14].
- “Modeste to Produce Permanent Report on GCSP.” December 13, 1973. [73266].
- “Province IV Votes to Continue Special Program.” June 30, 1970. [88-6].

Executive Council of the Episcopal Church. “Report To The Church On The GCSP.” Records of Episcopal Church Publications: Printed Documents, 1968. https://www.episcopalarchives.org/church-awakens/items/show/197.

———. “What Good Is The GCSP?” Records of the Special Program of the General Convention, 1969. https://www.episcopalarchives.org/church-awakens/items/show/196.

Fisher-Stewart, Gayle. *Black and Episcopalian: The Struggle for Inclusion*. New York: Church Publishing, 2022.

Forest, Jim. “Letter to a Young Activist.” In *Fearful Times; Living Faith*, edited by Robert Boak Slocum and Martyn Percy. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, an imprint of Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2021.

Foster, Sr., Willis, and Edna Johnston. “Juneteenth and the Call to Remember.” *Racial Reconciliation* (blog), June 15, 2022. https://www.episcopalchurch.org/racialreconciliation/juneteenth-and-the-call-to-remember/.

General Convention. “2006-A123: Study Economic Benefits Derived from Slavery.” *Journal of the General Convention of The Episcopal Church*, 2006 (2007): 664–65.

———. “2009-A143: Extend 2006 Resolution to Examine and Repent for Complicity in Slavery.” *Journal of the General Convention of The Episcopal Church*, 2009 (2009): 711.

———. “2015-A182: Address Systemic Racial Injustice.” *Journal of the General Convention of The Episcopal Church*, 2015 (2015): 438–39.

———. “2015-C019: Work for Racial Justice and Reconciliation.” *Journal of the General Convention of The Episcopal Church*, 2015 (2015): 310–11.

80th General Convention of the Episcopal Church, Resolutions (Baltimore, MD: 2022), https://2022.vbinder.net/, accessed 24 August 2023.

- A019: Theological Education and Formation in Languages Other than English.
- A050: Support Collaborative Efforts with Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) to Place Historical Markers.
- A052: Revise the Mandate of the Executive Council Committee on Anti-Racism and Reconciliation.
- A061: Amend Canon I.4.6.j to Include Data Regarding Gender.
- A086: Continuing the Task Force for Care of Creation and Environmental Racism.
- A125: A Resolution Extending and Furthering the Beloved Community.
- A126: A Resolution Supporting a Comprehensive Review of the Book Of Common Prayer, The Hymnal 1982, and Other Approved Liturgical Material.
- A127: Resolution for Telling the Truth about The Episcopal Church's History with Indigenous Boarding Schools.
- A129: Resolution for a Forensic Audit of the Funds of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society.
- A130: Resolution for the Development of Best Practices in Hiring and Developing Organizational Cultural Competencies.
- A131: Resolution Regarding Language.
- A140: Urge The Episcopal Church and Constituents to Designate Indigenous Peoples' Day.
- A141: Develop Indigenous and Native Liturgical Resources.
- C004: Inclusion of June 19th, 'Juneteenth' in the Church's Liturgical Calendar in Recognition of the End of Slavery in the United States.
- C009: Mandates Anti-Racism & Racial Reconciliation Training for the House of Deputies.
- C010: Amending Biographical Information for the Feast of Peter Williams Cassey and Annie Besant Cassey.
- C020: Petition to the 80th General Convention to Add Howard W. Thurman to the Episcopal Church Calendar.
- C023: On Commemorating the Rt Rev Barbara Harris.
- C054: Address the Issue of Voter Suppression.
- C058: Resolution Requiring Action in Response to TEC's Racial Audit.
- C072: Land Acknowledgment.
- D001: Resolution for Funding of The Chaplaincies at The HBCUs.
- D002: A Resolution to Promote Equity and to Reduce Differences in Health Outcomes.
- D004: A Resolution for Continued Funding of The Beloved Community.

- D006: Resolution Establishing Equity in The Awarding of TEC Grants.
- D008: Resolution to Address the Issue of Mass Incarceration.
- D019: Acknowledgement of Indigenous Lands.
- D020: Addressing Implications of the Digital Age.
- D025: Lili'uokalani, by the Grace of God, Queen of the Hawaiian Islands.
- D031: Opposition to Detention and Surveillance of Immigrants and Asylum-Seekers.
- D047: Addressing Our Models for Mission and Ministry.
- D082: Addressing the High Rates of Missing and Murdered Indigenous and All Women and Girls of Color.
- D090: The Church's Teaching on Racism.
- D091: Defining Equal Place in the Life of the Church.
- D093: Broad Representation in Discernment Processes.
- D094: Reaffirming the Role of Ethnic Ministries.

Gorsuch, John P. *An Invitation to the Spiritual Journey*. New York: Paulist Press, 1990.

Harris, Barbara C. *Hallelujah, Anyhow! A Memoir*. New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 2018.

House of Bishops. "Covenant for Reckoning with White Supremacy as a House of Bishops and as a Church." The Episcopal Church, November 2020. https://www.episcopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/11/bbc_hob_covenant_to_break_free_of_white_supremacy.pdf.

———. "House of Bishops Pastoral Letter on Sin of Racism, March 1994." The Archives of the Episcopal Church, DFMS, March 1994. The Church Awakens: African Americans and the Struggle for Justice. https://www.episcopalarchives.org/church-awakens/exhibits/show/awakening/item/111.

———. "The Doctrine of Discovery and Beloved Community." The Episcopal Church, March 2022. https://www.episcopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/05/BBC-HoB-Theology-Cmte_Doctrine-of-Discovery_March-2022.pdf.

House of Bishops Theology Committee. “White Supremacy, the Beloved Community, and Learning to Listen.” The Episcopal Church, November 2020. https://www.episcopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/11/bbc_hob_theo_cmte_report_on_white_supremacy.pdf.

Jefferts Schori, Katharine. “Service of Repentance, St. Thomas, Philadelphia.” The Episcopal Church, October 4, 2008. https://www.episcopalchurch.org/jeffertsschori/service-of-repentance-st-thomas-philadelphia/.

“Journal of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America Otherwise Known as The Episcopal Church 1952.” The Archives of the Episcopal Church, DFMS, 1952. https://www.episcopalarchives.org/sites/default/files/anti-racism/anti-racism-training/GC1952_277.pdf.

“Journal of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America Otherwise Known as The Episcopal Church 1967.” The Archives of the Episcopal Church, DFMS, 1967. https://www.episcopalarchives.org/sites/default/files/publications/1967_GC_Journal.pdf.

Kater, John L. “Experiment In Freedom: The Episcopal Church And the Black Power Movement.” *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 48, no. 1 (1979): 67–81.

———. “Under Fire: Faith, Prejudice, and Compassion in a Virginia Parish, 1861-1865.” *Anglican and Episcopal History* 71, no. 1 (2002): 1–25.

Lesser Feasts and Fasts 2022: Conforming to General Convention 2022. New York, NY: Church Publishing Incorporated, 2023.

Lewis, Harold T. “Racial Concerns in the Episcopal Church Since 1973.” *Anglican and Episcopal History* 67, no. 4 (1998): 467–79.

———. *Yet with a Steady Beat: The African American Struggle for Recognition in the Episcopal Church*. Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1996.

Lichtenberger, Arthur. “Time to Act! A Statment by the Presiding Bishop.” *The Living Church*, June 2, 1963, 7–8.

Marshall, John F. “Continuation of GCSP Recommended by Bishop’s Advisory Committee.” *Diocesan Press Service*, September 2, 1970. https://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/ENS/ENSpress_release.pl?pr_number=91-1.

Matthews, Westina, ed. *This Band of Sisterhood: Black Women Bishops on Race, Faith, and the Church*. New York, NY: Church Publishing, 2021.

Merritt, Bruce G. “Faith and Fair Housing.” *Southern California Quarterly* 95, no. 3 (August 1, 2013): 284–316. https://doi.org/10.1525/scq.2013.95.3.284.

Modeste, Leon. *Leon Modeste, Director of General Convention Special Program*. Mp3. The Church Awakens: African Americans and the Struggle for Justice, 1968. https://www.episcopalarchives.org/church-awakens/items/show/325.

Pérez-Bullard, Altagracia. “In Times Like These: Comfort and Courage for Change.” In *Fearful Times; Living Faith*, edited by Robert Boak Slocum and Martyn Percy. Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2021.

———. “Latina/o Practical Theology: Reflections on Faith-Based Organizing as a Religious Practice.” In *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Latino/a Theology*, edited by Orlando O. Espín, 439–51. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2015. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118718612.ch24.

———. “Liderazgo En Conjunto: A Leadership Development Model for the Twenty-First-Century.” *Anglican Theological Review* 101, no. 4 (2019): 625–50.

———. “Tierras Para Los Desterrados: Christian Practices That Sustain the Journey.” *The Living Pulpit (Online)* 28 (February 2019).

Racial Reconciliation. “Successful Racial Justice, Healing and Reconciliation-Related Legislation,” July 18, 2022. https://www.episcopalchurch.org/racialreconciliation/successful-racial-justice-healing-and-reconciliation-related-legislation/.

Rathell, Barbara. “You Won’t Succeed If You Don’t Survive: A Washington-Based Agency Awarded $46,800 GCSP Grant.” *Diocesan Press Service*, 8/10/1972 edition. Accessed August 26, 2022. https://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/ENS/ENSpress_release.pl?pr_number=72112.

Roland Guzmán, Carla E. *Unmasking LATINX Ministry for Episcopalians: An Anglican Approach*. New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 2020.

Shattuck, Gardiner H. *Episcopalians and Race*. 1st ed. University Press of Kentucky, 2000.

Shin, Allen K., and Larry R. Benfield, eds. *Realizing Beloved Community: Report from the House of Bishops Theology Committee*. New York, NY: Church Publishing, 2022.

Spellers, Stephanie. “Let’s Talk CRT: Christian Race Theory.” The Episcopal Church, November 8, 2021. https://www.episcopalchurch.org/racialreconciliation/lets-talk-crt-christian-race-theory/.

———. *The Church Cracked Open: Disruption, Decline, and New Hope for Beloved Community*. New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 2021.

“Summary: Becoming Beloved Community: The Episcopal Church’s Long-Term Commitment to Racial Healing, Reconciliation and Justice.” The Episcopal Church, 2017. https://www.episcopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/11/bbc_eng_vision.pdf.

The Archives of the Episcopal Church. “Anti-Racism.” Accessed October 13, 2022. https://www.episcopalarchives.org/anti-racism.

———. “Research Report: The Church’s Contemporary Response to Racism,” March 19, 2015. https://www.episcopalarchives.org/sites/default/files/anti-racism/anti-racism-training/ResRep_Anti-RacismTraining_AEC03202015.pdf.

———. “The Church Awakens: African Americans and the Struggle for Justice.” Accessed October 13, 2022. https://www.episcopalarchives.org/church-awakens/.

———. “The Executive Council Committee on Anti-Racism Digital Archive,” August 27, 2020. https://www.episcopalarchives.org/anti-racism.

———. “The Executive Council Committee on Anti-Racism Digital Archive for General Convention Resolution 2009-A143; Diocesan Responses: N-W,” November 8, 2013. https://www.episcopalarchives.org/anti-racism/diocesan-responses-n-w.

The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church: Together with the Psalter or Psalms of David According to the Use of the Episcopal Church. New York : [Greenwich, Conn.]: Church Hymnal Corp., 1979.

Thomas, Eric A. “Tales from the Crypt: A Same Gender Loving (SGL) Reading of Mark 5:1-20 -- Backwards.” *The Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center* 41 (2015): 39–61.

Wylie-Kellermann, Bill. “White Supremacy, Among the Giant Triplet.” In *Fearful Times; Living Faith*, edited by Robert Boak Slocum and Martyn Percy. Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2021.

8.7 Resources for Praxis

“Becoming Beloved Community: Understanding Systemic Racism; Facilitator’s Guide.” Churchnext. Accessed October 25, 2022. https://cdn.filestackcontent.com/PKIcKga_QLKv1rkAdPQB/content=t:attachment,f:%22Facilitator-s%20Guide%20Becoming%20Beloved%20Community.pdf%22/I8IOYClNR7yTfiGnUELm.

“Becoming Beloved Community: Understanding Systemic Racism; Participant’s Guide.” Churchnext. Accessed October 25, 2022. https://cdn.filestackcontent.com/PKIcKga_QLKv1rkAdPQB/content=t:attachment,f:%22Participants%20Guide%20Becoming%20Beloved%20Community.pdf%22/B1O4CQpLQlqijwFTyo4C.

DeWolf, Thomas Norman, and Jodie Geddes. *The Little Book of Racial Healing: Coming to the Table for Truth-Telling, Liberation, and Transformation*. The Little Books of Justice and Peacebuilding. New York: Good Books, 2019.

Diversity, Social, and Environmental Ministries Team, Mission Department of the Episcopal Church Center. “Seeing the Face of God in Each Other: The Antiracism Training Manual of the Episcopal Church.” The Episcopal Church, 2011. https://www.episcopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/02/antiracism_book-revise3.pdf.

Episcopal Diocese of Maryland. “ON THE TRAIL OF SOULS: A PILGRIMAGE TOWARDS TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION.” 2014. https://trailofsouls.org/.

Ferguson, Tom, and Ivy Forsythe-Brown. “Becoming Beloved Community: Understanding Systemic Racism For Groups.” Video Series. Accessed October 25, 2022. https://www.churchnext.tv/library/becoming-beloved-community-understanding-systemic-racism-for-groups-174527/385890/about/.

Fisher-Stewart, Gayle, ed. *Preaching Black Lives (Matter)*. New York: Church Publishing, 2020.

Jarrett-Schell, Peter, and Stephanie Spellers. *Reparations: A Plan for Churches*. New York: Church Publishing, 2023.

Kim, Michelle MiJung. *The Wake up: Closing the Gap between Good Intentions and Real Change*. New York: Hachette Go, 2021.

Mayo, Valerie, and Katrina Browne. “Sacred Ground’s Next Chapter.” The Episcopal Church. Accessed August 26, 2022. https://www.episcopalchurch.org/racialreconciliation/sacred-grounds-next-chapter/.

Pacheco, Christina M. “Sacred Ground Evaluation Report 2022.” Indígena Consulting, LLC., April 25, 2022. https://www.episcopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/04/Sacred-Ground-Evaluation-Report-4.25.22.pdf.

Perkins, Spencer, and Chris Rice. *More than Equals: Racial Healing for the Sake of the Gospel*, 2021. https://public.ebookcentral.proquest.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=6614333.

"RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICES FOR ORGANIZING AND FACILITATING SACRED GROUND CIRCLES." Accessed October 3, 2022. https://www.episcopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/04/Sacred-Ground-Recommended-Best-Practices-.pdf.

Redding, Ann Holmes, and Pat Russell. "Sacred Ground Dialogue Norms." The Episcopal Church. Accessed September 22, 2022. https://www.episcopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/08/sacred_ground_dialogue_norms_cttt_touchstones.pdf.

"SACRED GROUND; A FILM-BASED DIALOGUE SERIES ON RACE AND FAITH; FACILITATOR PREPARATION GUIDE." Accessed October 3, 2022. https://www.episcopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/04/Facilitator-Preparation-Guide-.pdf.

"SACRED GROUND; A FILM-BASED DIALOGUE SERIES ON RACE AND FAITH; INVITATION AND INTRODUCTION." Accessed October 3, 2022. https://www.episcopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/04/Invitation-and-Introduction-.pdf.

"SACRED GROUND; A FILM-BASED DIALOGUE SERIES ON RACE AND FAITH; ORGANIZING A DIALOGUE CIRCLE." Accessed October 3, 2022. https://www.episcopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/04/Organizing-a-Dialogue-Circle-.pdf.

"SACRED GROUND; A FILM-BASED DIALOGUE SERIES ON RACE AND FAITH; PARTICIPANT PREPARATION GUIDE." Accessed October 3, 2022. https://www.episcopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/04/Participant-Preparation-Guide-.pdf.

"SACRED GROUND; A FILM-BASED DIALOGUE SERIES ON RACE AND FAITH; RECOMMENDED FORMAT FOR SESSIONS." Accessed October 3, 2022. https://www.episcopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/04/Recommended-Format-for-Sessions.docx.

"SACRED GROUND; A FILM-BASED DIALOGUE SERIES ON RACE AND FAITH; SYLLABUS." Accessed October 3, 2022. https://www.episcopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/04/sacred_ground_syllabus_v7.docx.

"SACRED GROUND CURRICULAR CHANGES," April 26, 2022. https://www.episcopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/05/Sacred-Ground-Curriculur-Changes-April-2022.v.pdf.

"SACRED GROUND DEEPER DIVE: Recommendations for Supplementary Reading and Viewing." Accessed October 3, 2022. https://www.episcopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/03/Deeper-Dive-Full-1.docx.

Sangiovanni, Andrea, and Juri Viehoff. "Solidarity in Social and Political Philosophy." In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2023. https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2023/entries/solidarity/.

Seattle Times. "Under Our Skin." 2016. https://projects.seattletimes.com/2016/under-our-skin/.

Spellers, Stephanie, Isaiah Shaneequa Brokenleg, Charles Wynder, Jr., and Heidi J. Kim. "Becoming Beloved Community Where You Are." The Episcopal Church, 2022. https://www.episcopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/05/Becoming-Beloved-Community-Where-You-Are_2022.pdf.

Stephens, H. Mallette. "Beloved Community StorySharing Guidebook." The Episcopal Church, February 2018. https://www.episcopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/11/bbc_storysharing_guidebook.pdf.

The Archives of the Episcopal Church. "Consulting the Past Through the Archival Record A Guide for Researching the Impact of Slavery on Church Life and African Americans." The Episcopal Church. Accessed September 22, 2022. https://www.episcopalarchives.org/church-awakens/files/original/2253337c254b62e28a5d3b44307faa75.pdf.

Tisby, Jemar. *The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church's Complicity in Racism*. Epub edition. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2020.

"Welcome, Inclusion, Solidarity: Facilitator's Guide." Center for LGBTQ and Gender Studies in Religion (CLGS), 2018. https://fefamiliaigualdad.org/resources/latinx-curriculum/.

"Welcome, Inclusion, Solidarity: Participant's Workbook." Center for LGBTQ and Gender Studies in Religion (CLGS), 2018. https://fefamiliaigualdad.org/resources/latinx-curriculum/.

9 Appendices

9.1 Letters of Introduction

9.1.a Letter to Bishop

Dear Bishop XXXX and Canon XXXX,

A couple years ago I received Bp. XXXX's warm encouragement to pursue a DMin program at General Theological Seminary. This January I will participate in my final classroom component of the program and all that's left is a research project.

I write to tell you of this project and to be accountable to you because I am centering my project around the parish I presently serve.

St. Timothy's previous Rector was a woman of color, and approximately 1/3 of the congregation consists of people of color. This was THE major attraction to me as I was looking for my next place of ministry. As a white man, I am conscious (but probably not sufficiently conscious) of my weaknesses in serving the whole congregation. My project is entitled "Paying Attention to Black Voices." I have attached the project proposal in case you are interested in reading more.

In that proposal, I specify a schedule which is already slipping past! Last month I received approval from the Vestry of St. Timothy's, and last week I (finally!) received IRB approval. I hope to begin moving forward soon.

This email is intended as a courtesy, to let you know what I am up to. Of course if you have any questions or concerns, I am very open to your guidance.

Faithfully,

Todd+

--
The Very Rev. Todd Foster
Rector, St. Timothy's Episcopal Church
Dean, XXXXXX Convocation

9.1.b Letter to Vestry

Vestry of St. Timothy's Episcopal Church
XXX Main St
Greenville, XX XXXXX-XXXX

1 November 2022

Dear Friends,

As some of you know, I am engaged in a course of theological study at General Theological Seminary. This is because I desire to keep learning and growing, to be a better priest, pastor, and teacher for St. Timothy's and our Diocese. The primary emphasis of my coursework at General is upon “Practical Theology”: taking what I learn in the academy and using it to speak hope, encouragement, and growth into my parish setting. The core practice I am learning is new ways of listening and asking questions that will help me to see more clearly and speak more accurately to the present realities of St. Timothy's.

When I had my first video-interview with the search committee at St. Timothy's, my first question was about what it meant for St. Timothy's to go from having a black woman for a Rector to a white man. One of the chief attractions of St. Timothy's on paper is the ethnic diversity of the congregation. To this day I am mindful that I have blind spots about how to serve parishioners who don’t look like me, and how to serve those who do and are striving, like me, to be a friend, ally, and advocate for those who don’t enjoy all the same privileges I do. This work is, by its very nature, uncomfortable and challenging.

But St. Timothy's is a special place, in part because of the unusual racial diversity we enjoy. This diversity is one of the *charisms*, the attractive features, we have to offer for newcomers. This is also a gift to us, the members of St. Timothy's, from God: useful for learning to live more authentically within God’s kingdom.

To this end, the central research project for my work at General is focused on our practice of hearing the black voices among us. I want to begin by interviewing about a half-dozen people who identify as black (“collaborators”), asking about experiences of race, racism, solidarity, and community. Together with these collaborators, I want to design a program to offer at St. Timothy's which elevates the black experience in order to invite hearing, understanding, and solidarity. This program is intended to commence in early January 2023.

This letter is to inform you of my intentions and to ask the Vestry to formally approve of my activities being used for research purposes. My research and reporting will be guided by the regulations around Human-Subject Research with oversight by my adviser at General Seminary. Please find attached the “Informed Consent” form I will be sharing with all those I interview.

Faithfully,

The Very Rev. Todd Foster, Rector

9.1.c Letter to Congregation

Season of Epiphany
21 January 2023

Dear Friends,

At Epiphany we celebrate the coming of light: the darkest part of the winter has passed and the days are growing longer. More light promises the coming of spring. At Epiphany we also celebrate the wise persons from the east, strangers who came to visit the baby Jesus. Jesus, too, was a stranger, being God who exists outside of time and space now come to live within our very human limits. When we thought God was *other*, God transcended that otherness and became *Immanuel*, God-with-us.

St. Timothy's is a special place for many reasons. One of the reasons that really drew me in was our racial diversity. It is striking and unusual within the Christian Church in the United States to find parishes as colorful as ours. This diversity is one of the *charisms*, the attractive features, we have to offer for newcomers. This is also a gift to us, the members of St. Timothy's, from God: useful for learning to live more authentically within God's kingdom.

Growth, of course, involves change, and change is always uncomfortable. It is a special Christian virtue to be able to tolerate discomfort and so enter more deeply into the presence of God. Paying attention to questions of racial identity can be uncomfortable: but that just indicates how powerful and important it is to do so. That is why we celebrate Black History Month at St. Timothy's.

As some of you know, I am engaged in a course of theological study at General Theological Seminary. This is because I desire to keep learning and growing, to be a better priest, pastor, and teacher for St. Timothy's and our Diocese. This course of study involves research, and my setting for research is St. Timothy's. My project, called "Paying Attention to Black Voices," concerns how we can continue to celebrate our charism of diversity, including in our observance of Black History Month, centering and amplifying Black voices in our midst. I have assembled a small team of parishioners to work with me in this project. As you participate in the activities of Black History Month, you will be supporting us in this project. I will be taking notes and reflecting on the things we experience together. This summer I intend to write up what I have found in a paper to be shared with you, and later submitted for academic credit.

Participation in this research project is entirely voluntary. If I wish to quote something you say or write, I will ask for your explicit permission before I do so. I hope that this project might yield an Epiphany or two, shedding light on who we are as

members of St. Timothy's and followers of Jesus Christ. I hope you will participate by paying attention to Black voices, and indeed to all the wonderful diversity which so beautifully manifests God’s presence among us.

Faithfully,

The Very Rev. Todd Foster, Rector

9.2 Consent Forms

Informed Consent for Participating in Human-Subject Research

Title of Project
"Paying Attention to Black Voices"

Study Background
This study is concerned specifically with St. Timothy's Episcopal Church, Greenville. Historically mostly white, St. Timothy's grew in the number of persons of color participating and providing leadership during the last 20 years.

The principal investigator of this study is the Very Rev. Todd Foster, who serves as Rector of St. Timothy's. Father Todd also has a background in cross-cultural and multi-cultural ministry, serving in hispanic and Spanish-speaking congregations and in a church plant in the Bronx which included members from over 20 different countries.

Primary participants in this study will consist of approximately six people who will be invited to participate as collaborators, an "advisory council." These persons will participate in formal, recorded interviews and then participate in a focus group that designs, implements, and later evaluates an "intervention" designed to help black voices and concerns be heard more clearly at St. Timothy's.

Secondary participants in the study may engage in a formation program or other activity offered by the parish. These gatherings will not be subject to recording, but Father Todd will take notes on what he observes.

Purpose
Father Todd is interested lifting up black voices at St. Timothy's so that they will be heard and acknowledged for their particular manifestations of God's presence in our midst. Father Todd also desires to grow in his own ministry, to become a better priest for the entire parish of St. Timothy's, including those with a different racial background and experience than his own.

Procedures
Collaborators participating in interviews will be asked to schedule a private interview with Father Todd in a location that is comfortable for them. This interview will be recorded and transcribed for later use.

Other participants may be involved in parish programs at which Father Todd may be in attendance, and may take notes on what he observes. Comments and conversations will *not* be recorded at these events, but Father Todd may write down ideas, actions, and

comments that shed light on how the program is being received and whether it is effecting its intended purpose. He will ask permission before quoting participants in his academic work.

Voluntary Participation
Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. You may also choose not to participate in certain ways or choose not to allow use of certain research procedures. If you choose to withdraw from the study, all information you provide will be destroyed and no identifiable materials will be included in study findings. Participation in this study will not affect your standing in the parish of St. Timothy's one way or the other.

Benefits and Risk
Benefits to participation include the opportunity to contribute to theological research intended to inform Christian congregations who wish to engage more seriously with questions of race and solidarity. St. Timothy's, specifically, stands to benefit by growing in its practice of listening to one another, processing difficult emotions, and expressing support and solidarity with one another. Some participants will find the interviews or programs to be personally enlightening and they may benefit from such reflection.

Some autobiographical questions may yield sensitive information or uncomfortable memories. While every effort will be made to secure research notes, transcripts and recordings, there is a very slight risk that these could be compromised. In such a case, any personal information shared could lead to negative social implications within the congregation or beyond.

Confidentiality
Every effort will be made to keep any identifiable information obtained through this research study confidential. All research data will be handled with care. Research notes will remain under lock and key at the home of the principal investigator and electronic files will be stored on a password protected computer and encrypted cloud storage. The identities of all participants will be protected by pseudonyms and will never be intentionally disclosed without the written permission of the participant or as required by law. No one else will have access to this data.

St. Timothy's is not a large congregation. Father Todd's assignment to St. Timothy's is publicly available information. Pseudonyms might be punctured easily by anyone who makes an effort to do so. Participants will be given opportunity to review the research results before they are made public.

Contact Information

If at any time you have any further questions about the study, you may contact the principal investigator: [contact information provided below]

9.3 Conversation Schedules

Research Interview Schedule
TEF, 20221228

Why I'm here and what I'm up to:

- GTS: continue to grow in vocation --- thesis: research
- Interested in nurturing the special gift of StT: multi-ethnic composition: topic=belonging
  - especially interested in my own blind-spots, obliviousness, ignorance as white priest

Thesis → formal interviews (IRB, recording, transcript)

- Formal process "Informed consent": stop any time, withdraw comments, no impact on care
- not offended by whatever you choose to say or not to say: grateful for whatever you share

Questions?

1. How is it to be you in the world today?
2. When did you first come to St. Timothy's?
   a) What was it that brought you to St. Timothy's?
   b) What does it mean to belong to St. Timothy's?
3. What makes you as a whole person belong to St. Timothy's?
   a) Is there some other place where you more fully belong? What makes you belong?
4. Experiences that made you question/doubt whether you belonged at St. Timothy's?
   a) Elsewhere?
5. What does the church's historic mission of reconciliation look like today?

6. What are the things we need to be talking about, especially pertaining to race (in church or between persons)?
    a) (e.g., Raised children not to refer to skin color. But in recent years come to realize that refusing to talk of race, claiming to be “colorblind,” is just another excuse to ignore something that has real effects on all our lives.)
    b) Are there things we should refrain from talking about?
7. What do you wish white people at St. Timothy's knew or understood about your experience of race?
    a) What do you wish I, as your priest, knew or understood about your experience of race?
8. What are some ways that black and other non-white or non-male voices could be given more attention and made to feel more central to the life of St. Timothy's?

9.4 Interventions handout

Paying Attention to Black Voices
Program Ideas

Sacred Ground *1 hour alternating weeks for 22 weeks + homework on other weeks*

Sacred Ground is used in most Episcopal Dioceses by all kinds of people. Originally produced by a White woman to engage other White Episcopalians in the work of anti-racism, the Union of Black Episcopalians has heartily endorsed the curriculum as encouraging for all kinds of people. The curriculum is lengthy, with up to 90 minutes of video and 35 pages of reading assigned as homework between each class session. But it seems well-received and appreciated.

Check out the introductory video here: https://www.episcopalchurch.org/sacred-ground (4 min)
And the video from the UBE: https://www.episcopalchurch.org/sacredground/we-bless-you/ (22 min)

Becoming Beloved Community: Understanding Systemic Racism for Groups
6 weeks, 1 hr

A priest and a professor, a white man and a black woman, lead a video series for six weeks. Each week has a half-hour video and conversation following.

(Free account required at churchnext.tv to preview.)

Beloved Community StorySharing Guidebook *5 minutes at Coffee Hour or Sunday School or 4-6 weeks for an hour*

The Rev. Hershey Mallette Stephens provides a guidebook for inviting us to hear one another's stories. Everybody participates, everybody is heard, stories are not judged or critiqued; simply offered. Stories are told one-to-one or in circles where we listen to each story in turn.

https://www.episcopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/11/bbc_storysharing_guidebook.pdf

Seattle Times: Under Our Skin *4-6 weeks for an hour*
The Seattle times produces a series of videos with a diverse cast (including one Episcopal Bishop) who talk about race and racism from a variety of points of view. We can select a word or phrase, hear several perspectives on it, and then talk about what it might mean to us.

https://projects.seattletimes.com/2016/under-our-skin

Consulting the Past Through the Archival Record *Research followed by presentation*
Research in church and governmental records can unearth connections between a parish and the system of slavery. St. Timothy's is old enough to have ties. Can we discover documentary evidence of the connection between St. Timothy's and slavery, and make choices about what to do with that legacy?

https://www.episcopalarchives.org/church-awakens/files/original/2253337c254b62e28a5d3b44307faa75.pdf

More…. How would you like your voice to be heard?