



Sacred Conversation on Race

The journey **continues**

UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST



Sacred Conversation on Race Continuum

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In May 2008, the United Church of Christ Collegium of Officers invited pastors across the nation to preach on race, “in the hope of inaugurating a sacred conversation in the coming months that is urgently needed in our churches, in our homes, and in the halls of power.” These conversations, launched nearly three years ago with the Sacred Conversation on Race resource guide, continue to happen with intentionality as United Church of Christ congregations seek to confront the sin of racism in their desire to see the Church live and be as one.

Sacred conversations took many forms during this past year. Some were fashioned as multi-part conversations which dealt with issues of institutional racism as well as personal racism. Others took on anti-racism training to get to the heart of how and where they could make a difference in their own attitudes and behaviors. And, there were those who addressed the matter by dealing with White privilege which contributes to the racism experienced by non-White individuals living in the United States. Our conversations continue!

As the United Church of Christ enters this third year of “Sacred Conversation on Race,” where do we go from here?

The disciples on the road to Emmaus encountered Jesus as they walked (Luke 23:13-35). Jesus joined them on their journey from Jerusalem following the events of the crucifixion and resurrection. They were so absorbed in the problems they were facing that they did not recognize Jesus among them. Our lives are a journey with places along the road where we encounter the risen Jesus in and through the eyes of all those we encounter along the way. Their eyes were opened as Jesus taught them, and then took bread with them. Our eyes will also be opened when we are willing to be taught and willing to break bread with the strangers who live among us.

The work on race and racism is not an event; it is a *process* that brings individuals to reflection and introspection about who they are and how they treat those with whom they are called to live with in communion. As children of God traveling the same road on this journey that is life, all are different places on the journey. There is much to be changed in global racial dialogue which begins with the need to engage this issue of race based on where individuals are, realizing there is work for all to do.

There are those who live in homogenous communities where they rarely encounter individuals who do not look like them. There are those who are in mixed communities, see themselves as finished with the work, and seeing no reason to work anymore at changing the world where the issue of race is concerned. Yet there is the need to be ever mindful of the need to be engaged regardless of the experience or the time given to learning and being aware of race.

Hate crimes continue to be present among us and abroad. Young men and women continue to be unfairly and unjustly incarcerated because of the color of their skin. Mothers and fathers are still denied the right to a proper education for their children because of their race and where they live. We are a society of inequities, where we claim justice, but no justice abounds for many. Our conversations must continue based on where we are on this journey.

In this next stage of *Sacred Conversation on Race*, there is a call to action beyond the scope of the many discussions we will have. The intersections of race and many social issues (criminal justice, sentencing, medical care, education, immigration, economics, etc.) beg our attention and action as advocates for those who have less than we do, are under represented and experience marginalization based on the color of their skin. There is a call for individuals to reflect on where they are and actively engage in the continuum which does not bring us to a place of finality, but places us on a track of life-long learning and discovery of where we are and how we can help make a difference in seeing racial justice for all. The call to conversation is not passive, but an active call to care and concern for all.

“No matter who we are or where we are on our journey...” all are welcome to the table to participate in Sacred Conversation on Race and to engage in meaningful, life-changing dialogue on race. The invitation to engage in this dialogue is an acknowledgement of the legacy and tradition of the United Church of Christ in combating racism and racial injustice, and the desire to live out Jesus’ desire for the world, “That they may all be one.” John 17:21

The differing levels where individuals enter this dialogue and engagement of race can be expressed on a continuum. The continuum speaks to where we are on the journey, and offers the possibility of more learning on every level to re-encounter the self and others as we seek to change the world around us.

SEEKER — New to race and racial justice dialogue. Ready to be involved in first, basic level conversation on race. Curious and seeking to know more about the issues. **Ready for Sacred Conversation on Race.**

LEARNER — Participated in first Sacred Conversation on Race. Is concerned with learning more and wants to be engaged in deeper, more meaningful conversation to learn how s/he can make a difference in impacting the social construct of race and racism. **Ready for Sacred Conversation on Race and how race intersects and permeates all areas of life.**

FACILITATOR — Served as facilitator for Sacred Conversation on Race. Received training as facilitator and is able to engage with others in dialogue, as well as lead dialogue on race. Has heightened sense of self awareness around issue of race. **Ready for “White Privilege,” “Internalized Oppression” and other focused dialogue.**

ENGAGER — Moved beyond basic dialogue. Desires to be in dialogue around changing systems and structures to have long-range impact on race dialogue and issues. **Ready for Anti-Racism Training.**

MOTIVATOR — Received training on different aspects of race and racism. Desires to know more about living out the tools received in training. **Ready for Diversity Training.**

EDUCATOR — Received many different levels of training. Realizes that there is the need to learn more from those who are on different levels of the journey. Actively seeks to participate with others on their journey as participant or facilitator. **Ready for lifelong learning which re-engages conversation and training.**

