

Committee On Representation Toolbox



We hope you find some 'jewels' in our toolbox to help you with issues of diversity.

Contents:

Section 1: Getting started

Section 2: Book suggestions

Section 3: Study guide

Section 4: Article

Section 5: Valuable resource sites

SECTION 1: Getting Started

For Congregations Discerning That *All May Enter* – Many Ways to be Inclusive

*The prophets call your people to do justice (Amos 5:24; Micah 6:8). The prophets understand that no matter what else the people of God do, we are not fulfilling your requirements of us unless we work for justice. You call all of us—members with disabilities and members without disabilities—to work together for justice wherever people are unjustly handicapped by structural and attitudinal barriers. Help us, we pray, to remove the injustices our church and our society place upon some of your people.***

*Paul teaches the church that all are baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:27–28). He implores each church to see itself as a body with many members, and to trust that God has given each member different gifts for the work of the church. He tells us to be dependent on your power and interdependent communities of love (1 Cor. 12:4–26). Help us, we pray, to be dependent on your power and interdependent communities of your love.***

IS YOUR WORSHIP SPACE PHYSICALLY READY FOR INCLUSIVENESS?

Check List:

+ EASY Stuff:

_____ Signs pointing the way to enter your facility

_____ Signage for Directions to Bathrooms, Nursery, Sunday School Rooms

+ It Takes a LITTLE MONEY Stuff:

_____ Offer large print bulletins

_____ Audio ear phone sets

+ The MONEY Questions:

_____ ADA Compliance Requirements Met

_____ Entry Way Ramp or other easy access to your facility

_____ Is someone assigned to be sure that door is unlocked?

_____ Handicapped Accessible Bathrooms

_____ Fellowship Area and Meeting Rooms Handicapped Accessible

_____ If you have Multiple Floors, there is an Elevator

SECTION 2: Books

If you haven't already, please use the book Waking Up White, by Debby Irving

Books on racial inequality: (Your local library may have some of these. If not try Amazon, PC(USA) store, pcusastore.com, Westminster John Knox Press, <https://www.wjkbooks.com/>, Cokesbury, <https://www.cokesbury.com>)

The Help, Katherine Stockett

The Invention of Wings, Sue Monk Kidd

Red River, Lalita Tademy

To Kill a Mockingbird, Harper Lee

This I Accomplish, Harriet Powers

Any book by James Baldwin

Poetry by James Weldon Johnson (Amazon did have his book, God's Trombones which is subtitled, "Seven Negro Sermons in Verse" first copyright was 1927)

Books on non-Christian religions:

Afghani Author, Khaled Hosseini --

The Kite Runner

And the Mountains Echoed

A Thousand Splendid Suns.

David Guterson,

Snow Falling on Cedars, is about problems between nationalities, specifically Japanese/American during and following WW2

Ten Thousand Sorrows, Elizabeth Kim is a Korean War orphan

Books on poverty:

Accidental Saints, Madia Bolz-Weber

Millennials:

Already Gone, by Ken Ham

These are only a few of the many books on these and other diversity issues. You can 'Google' books on racial divide, books by Muslim authors, and so on—whatever issues you may be dealing with.

We realize this is only the tip of the iceberg. These are books some on the committee have read and recommended. If you know of other good book resources please let us know.

You may e-mail the moderator of COR, Martha Flora at jamarflo34@ligtel.com with your suggestions.

SECTION 3: Study Guides

Anti-Racism & The Bible

15 Passages Interpreted for Today's Crisis

By Rev. Aaron Ban

INTRODUCTION

I have compiled a brief list of Scriptures that relate to on-going issues of racism, power and identity in and beyond the church. I have included concise statements with each that explain my reason for including the passage and I hope that these comments may fuel conversation.

Within the Christian tradition, it is important to have conversations on race grounded biblically. It is my goal to help make plain the connection between social justice, conversations on race and the Bible.

1. THE CREATION

So God created humankind in his image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.
(Genesis 1:27 NRSV)

All of humanity is one: the human race. Each and every one of us is in the image of God. Without this fundamental understanding, Christians cannot have a conversation on racism. Racism is a sin that divides our society into segments and denies the basic image of God in people of color. Racism is a sin against God and an unlawful response to neighbor.

2. THE FIRST MURDER

³ In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground,
⁴ and Abel for his part brought of the firstlings of his flock, their fat portions.
And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering,
⁵ but for Cain and his offering he had no regard.
So Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.
⁶ The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your countenance fallen?
⁷ If you do well, will you not be accepted?
And if you do not do well, sin is lurking at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it."
⁸ Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let us go out to the field."
And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel, and killed him.
⁹ Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?"
He said, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?"
¹⁰ And the LORD said, "What have you done?
Listen; your brother's blood is crying out to me from the ground!
¹¹ And now you are cursed from the ground,
which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.
¹² When you till the ground, it will no longer yield to you its strength;

you will be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth."

¹³ Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is greater than I can bear!

¹⁴ Today you have driven me away from the soil, and I shall be hidden from your face; I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and anyone who meets me may kill me."

¹⁵ Then the LORD said to him, "Not so! Whoever kills Cain will suffer a sevenfold vengeance."

And the LORD put a mark on Cain, so that no one who came upon him would kill him.

(Genesis 4:6-15 NRSV)

The fourth chapter of the first book of the Bible gives us a story of murderous envy. Abel had something Cain wanted desperately: God's regard for his offering. Whenever we envy, we are walking in the terrible footsteps of Cain, but hopefully not to the same terrible conclusion.

Historically, some interpreters of this story have believed God marked Cain with brown skin and African features; through a lens of anti-racism, it may be that Cain represents whites who are willing to kill their brothers in order to enforce a racial hierarchy. Among whites, there has been orientalism that puts black men and women on a pedestal for athleticism and stature, a pedestal that might resemble Cain's envy of his brother's approval from God.

3. THE STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM

After a long time the king of Egypt died.

The Israelites groaned under their slavery, and cried out.

Out of the slavery their cry for help rose up to God.

(Exodus 2:23 NRSV)

While Genesis begins with Creation, Exodus begins with the enslavement of the Hebrew people, setting the tone for the liberation that God will render. In the United States, we still struggle with the legacy of slavery: as a group, blacks were unable to gain anything from their toil for generations. Meanwhile, whites were able to own property, invest money and profit from their labor.

Blacks were only able to gain from their toil after the Civil War, and even then, Jim Crow laws in the South and discrimination in the North limited their capacity for the attainment of wealth. Many whites are the descendants of immigrants who came after the Civil War, but even they faced the advantages of "whiteness" in housing, banking, labor organizing, voting and police relations.

While African Americans were systematically enslaved, indigenous people were forcibly removed from their property and culturally decimated, while Asian and Hispanic migrants were paid extremely low "slave" wages.

These words and the narrative of liberation found in Exodus have been echoed throughout our land, as well.

4. GOD'S PRIORITIES

⁵ Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob,
whose hope is in the LORD their God,

⁶ who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them;
who keeps faith forever;

⁷ who executes justice for the oppressed;
who gives food to the hungry.

The LORD sets the prisoners free;

⁸ the LORD opens the eyes of the blind.

The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down; the LORD loves the righteous.
(Psalm 146:5-8 NRSV)

Here the Psalmist lays out a framework for God's work in the world: after creation and faithfulness, justice for the oppressed and food for the hungry are evident. God also sets the prisoners free: they are forgiven and able to start over with lives of honest work and social responsibility. These words mirror the intentions of God found in Isaiah 42 and in the ministry of Jesus as outlined in Luke 4:18-19. In a nation that oppresses while espousing democracy; that gluts itself while letting children go hungry; that imprisons more people per capita than anywhere else in the world, we need to re-visit God's priorities as witnessed by the 146th Psalm.

5. TRUE PEACE FOLLOWS JUSTICE

¹³ For from the least to the greatest of them,
everyone is greedy for unjust gain;
and from prophet to priest, everyone deals falsely.

¹⁴ They have treated the wound of my people carelessly,
saying, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace. (Jeremiah 6:13-14 NRSV)

¹¹ They have treated the wound of my people carelessly,
saying, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace. (Jeremiah 8:11 NRSV)

Being white gives white people an advantage. This is called "privilege," and is a set of unfair advantages given to whites in our society. It benefits many types of people, as Jeremiah says, "prophet to priest, and everyone deals falsely." In defense of the status quo, some may cry "peace, peace" when there is no peace.

Anyone who claims that racism is no longer a problem in our country is making a false claim. Any clergyperson, or religious or political leader who uses his/her authority to make this claim is either ignorant or lying. Racism is a societal disease, a still-open "wound of my people" which requires gentle care and a long recovery process.

6. WEALTH FROM VIOLENCE

⁸ He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

⁹ The voice of the LORD cries to the city (it is sound wisdom to fear your name):
Hear, O tribe and assembly of the city!

¹⁰ Can I forget the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked,
and the scant measure that is accursed?

¹¹ Can I tolerate wicked scales and a bag of dishonest weights?

¹² Your wealthy are full of violence;
your inhabitants speak lies, with tongues of deceit in their mouths.

(Mic 6:8-12 NRS)

Micah 6:8 is a favorite verse, and it certainly carries poetic weight. However, we cannot afford to take it out of context. If justice, kindness and humility are to be the standard for meeting God's requirements, we must take a good look at "the treasures of wickedness." Do our institutions invest in private prisons, sub-prime mortgages or pornography? Is our inherited wealth gained on the backs of slaves?

I know of a beautiful church in St. Louis that was built using the donation of a wealthy slave owner. What is the obligation of that church's membership to fight racism today? If the church does nothing, does it fulfill Jeremiah's prophecy, "your wealthy are full of violence?"

7. AUTHORITY AND POWER

¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,

baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.

And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

(Mat 28:18-20 NRS)

The crucified Jewish carpenter has now been given all authority in heaven and on earth, which is scandalous to the Roman Empire, who would have had everyone believe that the emperor was a god and that "all roads led to Rome," not Galilee.

Baptism is not for one race or nation or religious group but is for "all nations." Baptism is followed with action: "teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you."

What kind of Jesus do we follow? What kind of Christ do we worship? Does he have perfect hair, flowing robes and white skin? Or does he challenge us, as he challenged his own disciples? How does the divine authority of Christ challenge our understanding of power?

8. JESUS AND "THE DOGS"

²⁴ From there he set out and went away to the region of Tyre.

He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there.

Yet he could not escape notice,

²⁵ but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet.

²⁶ Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophenician origin.

She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter.

²⁷ He said to her, "Let the children be fed first,

for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs."

²⁸ But she answered him, "Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs."

²⁹ Then he said to her, "For saying that, you may go-- the demon has left your daughter."

(Mark 7:24-29 NRS)

In this story, Jesus shows his deeply human side. The woman seeking his help is "racially" different, a Syrophenician. He responds to her request for her daughter's healing by saying that the Hebrew "children should be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." She is quick-witted, and answers, "Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." Jesus appears to be impressed with her answer, and heals her daughter. This story represents a turning point in the early church's understanding of the Gospel and its possibilities. Rather than an insider reforming Judaism, Jesus is now starting a new movement that is something big enough for different races and even the whole world.

9. GOOD SAMARITANS AND OTHER UN-DESIRABLES

²⁵ Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said,

"what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

²⁶ He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?"

²⁷ He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself."

²⁸ And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live."

²⁹ But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

³⁰ Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead.

³¹ Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

³² So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

³³ But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity.³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.'

³⁶ Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?"

³⁷ He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

(Luke 10:25-37 NRSV)

We often miss the scandal of the Good Samaritan: in those days, to Jesus' audience, the only "good" Samaritan was a dead Samaritan. Jesus tells this parable to illustrate the surprising ways in which people of different and even competing backgrounds can show good will, hospitality and grace. Furthermore, he claims publically that a Samaritan can be a neighbor, even if too many Samaritans in your neighborhood could drive the real estate value down.

For the roots of these two greatest commandments of Jesus, see the Torah: Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18.

10. THE SPIRIT OF LISTENING

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.

² And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.

³ Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them.

⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

⁵ Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem.

⁶ And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each.

⁷ Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?"

⁸ And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language?

⁹ Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,

¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes,

¹¹ Cretans and Arabs-- in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." ¹² All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?"

(Acts 2:1-12 NRSV)

At the festival of the Pentecost, Jews and proselytes (those who followed the Jewish religion, but were not “members” of it) from all over were gathered in one place. All of a sudden, they could understand one another despite different backgrounds, races and languages. They all listen to a sermon by the Apostle Peter. We are called to listen to each other, which might take a miracle, especially if the act of listening requires us to overcome social barriers.

11. THE REALITY OF SIN

²⁰ For "no human being will be justified in his sight" by deeds prescribed by the law, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin.

²¹ But now, apart from law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets,

²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.

For there is no distinction,

²³ since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...

(Romans 3:20-23 NRSV)

Although most of us strive to be “good people,” we are not absolved of the sins handed down to us by previous generations, nor are we expected to overcome these social sins on our own or with great speed. How can a problem that has been plaguing us for 400 years be solved in one generation? The truth is that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” We all suffer from racism. Lives are cut short, relations between people are strained, entire parts of cities are forsaken by our authorities. White, black and brown people all suffer the consequences of the sin of racism.

12. THE EQUALITY OF BAPTISM

²⁷ As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

²⁸ There is no longer Jew or Greek,
there is no longer slave or free,
there is no longer male and female;
for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

²⁹ And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.

(Galatians 3:27-29 NRSV)

For Christians, the most important social signifier is Baptism. It is not a sign that can be visibly seen. It has nothing to do with race, class or language. Although it is administered differently in different Christian traditions, it still binds Christians together into a broad community that strives to be faithful to God through Jesus Christ. For the Apostle Paul, it was an important alternative to circumcision, which certainly didn't treat “male and female” the same, and which was hotly debated among the new followers of Jesus because it put a special burden on uncircumcised gentiles. Baptism was seen by Paul as a great equalizer. Baptism could also set you free. How could a master and slave remain the same after both joining into God's promise through baptism? (See section on Onesimus.) As we gather together in justice ministry, listening to the stories of Christians from other churches, races and backgrounds, we strive to live into the egalitarian witness of Baptism.

13. ONESIMUS'S FREEDOM

¹⁰ I am appealing to you for my child, Onesimus,

whose father I have become during my imprisonment.

¹¹ Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful both to you and to me.

¹² I am sending him, that is, my own heart, back to you.

¹³ I wanted to keep him with me,

so that he might be of service to me in your place during my imprisonment for the gospel;

¹⁴ but I preferred to do nothing without your consent,

in order that your good deed might be voluntary and not something forced.

¹⁵ Perhaps this is the reason he was separated from you for a while,

so that you might have him back forever,

¹⁶ no longer as a slave but more than a slave, a beloved brother—

especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

¹⁷ So if you consider me your partner, welcome him as you would welcome me.

(Philemon 1:10-17 NRSV)

In the brief letter to Philemon, the Apostle Paul puts his “money where his mouth is” regarding what he said in Galatians about no more “slave or free.” Not only is Onesimus to be welcomed back to his household as “more than a slave, a beloved brother,” but also to be welcomed as well as Paul himself would be, an honored guest.

14. PERFECT LOVE

¹⁷ Love has been perfected among us in this:

that we may have boldness on the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world.

¹⁸ There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear;

for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love.

¹⁹ We love because he first loved us.

(1John 4:17-19 NRSV)

We have been loved by God, and our love is being “perfected” in community. There is no fear in love, which means if we love one another we will be able to make mistakes without fear of humiliation or punishment, but in a forgiving atmosphere of growth. Talking about issues of race and racism can be difficult; activism even more so. It is impossible for us imperfect humans to avoid all mistakes. Thankfully, our tradition teaches us how to love ourselves and one another because first we ourselves were loved.

15. THE END

³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them;

⁴ he will wipe every tear from their eyes.

Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more,

for the first things have passed away."

(Revelation 21:3-4 NRSV)

The visions cast by John of Patmos in the beautifully rendered Book of Revelation require much study and interpretation. One thing is clear from the book: God will end history in God’s own time. There will be no more death or mourning and crying and pain. Societal sins such as poverty and racism will no longer be a problem and every tear shall be wiped by our God.

SECTION 4: Articles

Gate A-4

[Naomi Shihab Nye](#), 1952

Wandering around the Albuquerque Airport Terminal, after learning my flight had been delayed four hours, I heard an announcement: "If anyone in the vicinity of Gate A-4 understands any Arabic, please come to the gate immediately."

Well—one pauses these days. Gate A-4 was my own gate.

I went there. An older woman in full traditional Palestinian embroidered dress, just like my grandma wore, was crumpled to the floor, wailing. "Help," said the flight agent. "Talk to her. What is her problem? We told her the flight was going to be late and she did this."

I stooped to put my arm around the woman and spoke haltingly. "Shu-dow-a, Shu-bid-uck Habibti? Stani schway, Min fadlick, Shu-bit-se-wee?" The minute she heard any words she knew, however poorly used, she stopped crying. She thought the flight had been cancelled entirely. She needed to be in El Paso for major medical treatment the next day. I said, "No, we're fine, you'll get there, just later, who is picking you up? Let's call him."

We called her son, I spoke with him in English. I told him I would stay with his mother till we got on the plane and ride next to her. She talked to him. Then we called her other sons just for the fun of it. Then we called my dad and he and she spoke for a while in Arabic and found out of course they had ten shared friends. Then I thought just for the heck of it why not call some Palestinian poets I know and let them chat with her? This all took up two hours.

She was laughing a lot by then. Telling of her life, patting my knee, answering questions. She had pulled a sack of homemade *mamool* cookies—little powdered sugar crumbly mounds stuffed with dates and nuts—from her bag—and was offering them to all the women at the gate. To my amazement, not a single woman declined one. It was like a sacrament. The traveler from Argentina, the mom from California, the lovely woman from Laredo—we were all covered with the same powdered sugar. And smiling. There is no better cookie.

And then the airline broke out free apple juice from huge coolers and two little girls from our flight ran around serving it and they were covered with powdered sugar, too. And I noticed my new best friend—by now we were holding hands—had a potted plant poking out of her bag, some medicinal thing, with green furry leaves. Such an old country tradition. Always carry a plant. Always stay rooted to somewhere.

And I looked around that gate of late and weary ones and I thought, this is the world I want to live in. The shared world. Not a single person in that gate—once the crying of confusion stopped—seemed apprehensive about any other person. They took the cookies. I wanted to hug all those other women, too.

This can still happen anywhere. Not everything is lost.

Section 5: Valuable resource sites

A FEW OF MANY RESOURCES:

+ **PCUSA** web site: <http://www.pcusa.org>

+ **A Celebration of That All May Enter****

The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) recommends that the 212th General Assembly (2000) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) prepare to celebrate, reaffirm, and recommit to *That All May Enter* (Minutes UPCUSA, 1977, Part I, pp. 99-108) as the basis for a call to greater concern for the inclusion of all members in every aspect of the life and work of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Downloadable PDF – 29 pages of valuable resources and information:

<http://www.pcusa.org/resource/celebration-all-may-enter/>

+ **Loving Justice The ADA and the Religious Community Paperback – 1996**

by [Ginny Thornburgh](#) (Editor) – available from Amazon

+ **The Presbyterians for Disability Concerns (PDC)**

Presbyterians for Disability Concerns <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/phewa/pdc/>

One of the ten networks of the Presbyterian Health, Education and Welfare Association (PHEWA)

<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/phewa/> in conjunction with the Office of the General

Assembly, has created a new church resource, [“Better Together: Transformed by God’s Variety of](#)

[Gifts”](http://pma.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/phewa/docs/pdc-better_together-) http://pma.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/phewa/docs/pdc-better_together-

[final_version-050715.pdf](http://pma.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/phewa/docs/pdc-better_together-final_version-050715.pdf). It includes testimonies and strategies for inclusion in every setting, from worship and Christian education to employment.

Here’s the link to the co-moderators’ Waking Up White study guide (complete with bible study!)

http://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/oga/pdf/waking_up_white_study_english.pdf

General questions regarding racism can be directed to:

facing.racism@pcusa.org