

Racism: History, Complicity, and the Whitest Denomination in the US

Class organized and led by Dianne Eller at West Linn Lutheran Church, West Linn
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WEEK ONE: From 1619 to the Antebellum Era

1. Introductions

Please share your name and a few words about why you are here.

This class will provide a very brief history of slavery in North America and will focus primarily on how the church responded throughout this history. This is not intended to be an indictment of white people, but rather an opportunity to learn from our history and to consider where we might go from here. While we will focus on African slavery, it is important to note that there were white slaves (called indentured servants) and Native Americans who were kidnapped and forced into slavery as well. This class simply cannot cover it all!

2. August 20, 1619-Fort Comfort, VA

The first African “indentured servants” arrive in North America. At this time slavery was illegal in the colonies as well as in England. Plantation owners were solely responsible for deciding whether or not these “servants” could or would ever be freed. Some were but most were servants for life. By 1667 a law enacted by The Virginia General Assembly included “key slavery statutes.” Slavery was now legal.

These early colonists felt they had a duty to “Christianize” these kidnapped Africans. But this posed a difficult question---would “Christianizing” their slaves grant them freedom through baptism? It had been a longstanding custom in England that Christians, being spiritual brothers and sisters, could not enslave one another. More than 100 years before the Declaration of Independence, the Virginia General Assembly, made up of Anglican men, “enacted and declared...that the conferring of baptism does not alter the condition of the person as to his bondage or freedom.” The Assembly went on to state “Masters, freed from this doubt, may carefully endeavor the propagation of Christianity by permitting children, through slaves, or those of greater growth if capable, to be admitted to the sacrament.” Missionaries, ministers, and slave owners encouraged African Christians in America to be content with their spiritual liberation and to obey their earthly masters.

3. The Middle Passage

Over the next 300 years, the transatlantic slave trade transported more than ten million Africans to the Americas. About two million perished on the voyage.

Video: Life Aboard a Slave Ship <https://www.youtu-be.com/watch?v=PmQvofAiZGA>

Missionary Francis Le Jau (South Carolina, 1706-1717) made slaves converting to Christianity to accept this declaration: “You declare in the presence of God and this congregation that you do not ask for holy baptism out of any design to free yourself for the Duty and Obedience you owe to your master while you live, but merely for the good of your soul and to partake of the Grace and Blessings promised to the Members of the Church of Jesus Christ.”

4. The Revolutionary War

When colonists in North America fought and won the war for independence from Britain, they used the rhetoric of liberty and natural rights to argue for the righteousness of their cause. While white soldiers and political leaders were declaring their inalienable right to independence, they were also enslaving countless women, men, and children of African descent. The American Church participated in and defended the contradiction between

freedom and slavery embedded in the constitution of the new, young nation. Whatever religion they practiced, the authors of the Declaration of Independence applied the idea of universal human liberty passed down from an all-powerful deity. The document mentions “the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God,” the rights bestowed on all people by the “Creator,” and it appeals to the “Supreme Judge of the world” for legitimacy of revolutionary cause. But the “universal” rights referred to in the Declaration of Independence were not universally applied.

In 1773, African Americans wrote a letter to the Massachusetts General Court stating “We cannot but expect your house will again take our deplorable case into serious consideration, and give us that ample relief which, as men, we have a natural right to.” Africans in the colonies took up arms to fight for freedom, some with the Patriots hoping for the abolition of slavery; others with the British with a promise of freedom for fighting against the rebellious colonists. Either way, the message was the same: they wanted freedom. Despite the vigorous efforts of African-descended people to apply revolutionary rhetoric to the problem of slavery, the institution endured long after the Revolution had ended.

5. The Great Awakening

In the decades before the Revolutionary War another revolution was taking place. The Great Awakening altered the shape of Protestantism in the colonies and among the slaves. Emphasis was placed on a personal encounter with God and the role of emotion in the Christian faith. In contrast to the more staid worship of Anglicans, Dutch Reformed, Congregationalists, and Presbyterians, the Great Awakening moved American Christians toward more informal and less structured forms of worship. Enslaved Africans did not merely adopt Christianity, they made it their own. Aspects of the faith such as the notion of rebirth, baptism by immersion in water, and emotional expressiveness resembled African traditions. Revival preaching mirrored familiar practices of West African religions. Full-throated singing, emotional expressiveness, and physical movement had cultural resonance with people of African descent. And Christianity held out the hope of freedom. They connected spiritual salvation with earthly salvation and hoped their white slave owners would begin to see them as full human beings deserving of emancipation.

It didn’t happen, of course. For example, Jonathon Edwards, well known preacher and theologian, compromised his own Christian principles by owning slaves. Why? Maybe it was because of his educated and elite status in New England society. Slave owning signified status. Evangelicalism focused on individual conversion and piety. One could adopt an evangelical expression of Christianity yet remain uncompelled to confront institutional injustice.

Video: Georgia churches split by slavery confront painful past

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SihpfCsB-FY>

6. Institutionalizing Race in the Antebellum Era

The *chattel principal* is the social alchemy that transformed a human being made in the image of God into a piece of property. The economy of the antebellum South was based on the monetary worth on the bodies of the enslaved. Height, skin color, perceived intelligence, and reputation for following orders increased the selling price. Slaves could be used as collateral for loans and were often sold as part of the estate when the owner died.

Interstate sales of slaves destroyed marriages, families, and children who were sold away from their parents. Female slaves were valued for both productive and reproductive abilities. While white women were seen as delicate and in need of protection, black women were seen as strong and durable. Even while pregnant, black women were expected to work in the fields even up to the time of birth.

Video: Roots: The System of American Slavery <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zZkDYr7qsCw>

Rather than defending the dignity of black people, American Christians at this time chose to turn a blind eye to the separation of families, the scarring of bodies, the starvation of stomachs, and the generational trauma of slavery. For black Christians, however, saw their faith as a source of strength and survival. And they found ways, both subtle and spectacular, to resist oppression. Breaking tools, starting fires, or feigning illness were some of the ways of resisting. Some pretended to be less capable or slower than they really were. Escape was dangerous, so they created songs which gave clues as to the best escape routes. Some started rebellions which often ended in the death of all slaves involved---often in dehumanizing and torturous ways.

A majority of white Christians simply refused to take a stance against race-based chattel slavery. Segregation and inequality defined most of American Christianity in spite of giving lip service in opposition to slavery. The antebellum era was a time of compromise and complicity. Christians engaged in evangelism to enslaved and freed blacks and the black church grew, laying the foundation for a distinctive tradition that would stand at the center of the black freedom struggle for the next century.

Even as the white Evangelical churches became more mainstream, they were unwilling to confront the evil of what became institutionalized slavery. Those who maintained a prophetic voice were drowned out by a louder chorus of Christian complicity. But the competing understandings of freedom, equality, and belonging would soon explode into Civil War.

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WEEK TWO: Slavery before and during the Civil War/Reconstruction & Jim Crow

1. Two Facts about the Civil War

The Civil War remains the deadliest war the United States has ever waged. Between 650,000 and 850,000 people died. The war began just as technological innovations allowed for deadlier guns and canons, but battle tactics resembled that of the Revolutionary War. Disease also accounted for two-thirds of all who perished in the Civil War—dysentery was most common, but typhoid fever, pneumonia, small pox, and gangrene were also factors in decimating troops.

The two relevant facts are that the Civil War was fought over slavery and that countless devout Christians fought and died to preserve it as an institution. This fact is not in dispute, but after the war when giving reasons for the Confederacy's defeat, southerners and their sympathizers tried to obscure slavery as a cause for the war. The fact that many Christians supported slavery to the extent of being willing to risk their lives to preserve it has not been fully acknowledged by the American church even after 150 years. Slavery has always been a profound contradiction at the heart of both the United States and the American church. The Civil War was the climactic, bloody reckoning of this contradiction. The nation emphasized liberty as a natural (inalienable) right but made repeated concessions to slavery. The church, which prioritizes the love of God and neighbor, capitulated to the status quo by permitting the lifelong bondage of human persons based on skin color.

Video: How did Christian slave owners justify slavery? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rDV1e1yPpk0>

2. The Split of Denominations over Slavery (Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians)

John Wesley, founder of the Methodist movement, found slavery appalling. "It cannot be, that either war, or contract, can give any man such a property in another as in sheep or oxen. Much less is it possible, that any child of man, should ever be born a slave," Wesley wrote. Yet as the denomination grew more socially conservative, views shifted, especially in the South. Methodist ministers in the South became more comfortable with slavery and accommodated their practices and preaching to its presence. In 1808, the General Conference decided to allow regional conferences to decide for themselves whether local Methodists could buy and sell slaves. With the surge of abolitionists in northern Methodist churches, tensions increased. In 1844, the General Conference focused on a Methodist bishop, James Osgood Andrew, who owned slaves. When Andrew was censured, he and his allies split from the Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC) to form the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (MECS).

Since the 1790's the Baptist General Convention took a neutral stance toward slavery and allowed local congregations decide for themselves. In 1844, the Georgia Baptist Convention put forth James E. Reeve as a missionary to the Home Mission Society. Reeve, like Andrew, enslaved black people. The Home Mission Society Board refused to deliberate on the issue of slavery. Reeve's application was not accepted which further divided the denomination. The Alabama General Conference demanded their brethren acknowledge "the distinct, explicit avowal that slaveholders are eligible, and entitled, equally with non-slaveholders, to all the privileges and immunities of their several unions." The Home Mission Society responded with a clear rejection of any slave owner to office. Baptists in the South gathered in 1845 to form a new church association inclusive of slave owners, called the Southern Baptist Convention.

Presbyterians had already begun to split in 1837 over the issue of the religious experience of revivals. "Old School" Presbyterians preferred a less emotionally expressive and more traditional form of worship, but the issue of slavery still lurked in the background. A powerful, well known preacher in New York, Gardiner Spring, became a staunch abolitionist. In the 1861 General Assembly, Spring presented a set of propositions which called all Presbyterians to pledge their allegiance to the federal government and, by implication, to its antislavery stance as a

requirement for membership. Given this ultimatum, southern Presbyterians viewed separation as their only option. They formed the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America (PCCS) which later became the Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUS). As the northern and southern drifted apart, each hardened their stance on slavery.

Lutheran immigrants to the United States in the 17th and 18th centuries organized congregations that combined in various synodical organizations. In 1820 several of them met to draw up a constitution for a confederation to be known as the General Synod. As Lutheranism expanded, additional synods were formed, and by 1860 the General Synod had a membership of about 164,000, or two-thirds of the Lutherans in the United States.

Cooperative efforts were limited, however, by the slavery question and the American Civil War, which caused the Southern synods to leave the General Synod and establish their own General Synod in 1863. Further disruption was caused by controversy over the Lutheran confessions. Some of the more conservative synods left the General Synod in 1866 and organized in 1867 the General Council, a federation of 11 synods that accepted the Unaltered Augsburg Confession.

3. Biblical Arguments For and Against Slavery

In the years before the Civil War, slavery was seen not just a civil issue but also as a religious one. Christians in the South believed that the Bible approved of slavery because it never clearly condemned slavery and even provided instructions for its regulation. Southern theologians challenged their abolitionist opponents to produce chapter and verse where Jesus, or the Bible generally, condemned slavery. Presbyterian minister and professor, Robert Lewis Dabney, not only believed that slavery was morally acceptable, it was actually positive, writing “Was it nothing, that this (black) race, morally inferior, should be brought into close relations to a nobler race?” Left to their own devices, Dabney argued, they (blacks) would only tend toward “lying, theft, drunkenness, laziness, (and) waste.” He believed white Christian slave owners as loving people standing between the enslaved and eternal damnation. In Dabney’s mind, the gentle ministrations of the whip and the admonition of slaves to obey their masters had the positive effect of commending Christianity to black people.

The curse of Ham was also used to justify slavery. Ham, who had walked in on his naked, sleeping father, Noah, leaves to tell his brothers, Shem and Japheth. The two brothers grab a blanket, walk in backwards, and cover their father. Upon awaking, Noah condemns Ham (Canaan) and blesses Shem and Japheth, even saying Canaan will be the slave of the other two. This passage (Genesis 9:18-29) was seen by slave owners as God’s decree that a specific race of people to be cursed and live their days in bondage. It was assumed by southern Christians that blacks were descendants of Ham, while Jewish people were descendants of Shem and white people were descendants of Japheth.

While abolitionists argued against this interpretation of Genesis 9, their claims were mostly met with skepticism because they advanced their arguments on the “spirit” rather than on the “letter” of the law. Even when they made their case from the Bible (“Where is the sentence of Scripture in which God ever appointed you, the Anglo-Saxon race over another people, you, the mixture of all races under heaven, you, who cannot tell whether the blood of Shem, Ham, or Japheth mingles in your veins?”), they were criticized because they could not cite one passage that explicitly condemned slavery. Arguments for “love of neighbor” and the unity of humankind fell on deaf ears.

Video: A More Truly Christian Model of Slavery <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q4gURdCCK7Q>

In the years leading up to the Civil War, adroit theologian, James Henley Thornwell argued for the spirituality of the church. This stance separated the church from politics or social issues which meant that on the issue of slavery, Christians could insist on the liberty of conscience to choose the practice of slavery or not because the Bible nowhere explicitly condemns it.

The doctrine of the spirituality of the church continues to influence the American church. The injunction against church involvement in polity has not, however, kept the church from being involved in the temperance movement, debates on evolution, or discussions on overturning *Roe vs. Wade*. But on the issues of white supremacy and racism, the American church has been mostly silent.

4. The Hope of Reconstruction

No other period of American history held as much hope for black equality as the time of Reconstruction following the Civil War. For the first time in the nation's history, race-based chattel slavery was over, a thing of the past. Reconstruction could have been the start of a new America where black people enjoyed the full promises of liberty. But powerful forces conspired to re-create the former racial hierarchy in the post emancipation nation.

For about a decade after the Civil War, the newly freed black population energetically entered the civic life of the nation. In March 1865, President Lincoln established the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands (the Freedmen's Bureau). Responsibilities included providing food and clothing to newly freed slaves, helping them locate family members sold to other plantations, assisting in finding them employment, setting up hospitals and schools, and partnering with black people as they adjusted to being free.

This era also saw a blossoming of black political participation, pursuit of education, and ownership of land. In 1865, Union General William T. Sherman handed down Special Field Order No. 15 which reserved a tract of land for black families 30 miles wide and 245 miles long. Sherman also promised each family a mule to help them gain economic self-determination. Unfortunately, blatantly racist President Andrew Johnson ordered the redistributed lands to be returned to former enslavers and many freed people became sharecroppers instead of land owners.

President Johnson also vetoed two bills—one to increase funding to the Freedmen's Bureau and the other designed to guarantee black civil rights. Yet three constitutional amendments did pass. The Thirteenth Amendment granted all black people in America their full freedom, something the Emancipation Proclamation did not do. The Fourteenth Amendment granted citizenship to "all persons born or naturalized in the United States" which nullified the three-fifths rule. (This amendment did not, however, apply to Native Americans.) The Fifteenth Amendment granted black men the right to vote (but not black women). Racist whites devised numerous ways to suppress the black vote which continued until the Civil Rights Act of 1965.

5. The Myth of the Lost Cause and White Supremacists' "Redemption"

The "Lost Cause" was the narrative about southern society and the Confederate cause invented after the Civil War to give meaning for the devastating military defeats for southern white Americans. The Lost Cause mythologized the white, pre-Civil War South as a virtuous, patriotic group of tight-knit Christian communities. This myth stated the South wanted simply to be left alone to preserve its idyllic civilization but was attacked by the aggressive, godless North, who swooped in to disrupt a stable society. This was a federal government intrusion into small-town, rural life. Southerners had no choice but to reluctantly rouse themselves to the battlefield simply to preserve and defend their virtue and honor. This alternative history is still used to defend disputes over monuments, flags, and the memory of the Civil War, the Confederacy, and slavery.

The book *Baptized in Blood*, author Charles Reagan Wilson details the religious character of Lost Cause mythology. This Lost Cause myth contributed to the cultural disenfranchisement of black people. Wilson pointed out the Lost Cause functioned as a form of civil religion with its own saints, devils, liturgies, and symbolism. In this myth, General Robert E. Lee became the quintessential "crusading Christian Confederate." Christian complicity with racism allowed for ceremonies like Confederate Memorial Day to be celebrated in Christian churches. Preachers eulogized Confederate heroes and invoked God's blessing on the "Old South."

In the hands of white supremacists, redemption became not biblical but social and political for southern whites. It justified racial oppression and violence in order to retain white power. The primary goal was the suppression of the black vote. Poll taxes, literacy tests, understanding tests (usually using obscure questions on the Constitution) and the “grandfather clause” (permitting the vote only to those who could vote prior to 1867 and their descendants) were all implemented to suppress the black vote. White “redeemers” introduced a deliberate and systemic reign of terror to prevent black people from voting, obtaining economic independence, and exercising their full humanity as citizens and human beings created in the likeness and image of God.

6. Christianity and the Ku Klux Klan

The Ku Klux Klan had three major iterations as an organization. The first was immediately after the Civil War and violently resisted Reconstruction efforts. The KKK became so unruly that in 1871 Congress passed the Ku Klux Klan Act, fining or imprisoning anyone who “conspire together, or go out in disguise ...for the purpose of...depriving any person...the equal protection of the laws.”

The next movement of the KKK was in the early 19th century when the movie *The Birth of a Nation* fancifully narrates how the Klan defends a noble South that faces the invasion by northerners and arrogant black people who have the temerity to consider themselves equal to whites. President Woodrow Wilson saw the movie in the White House and enjoyed it so much that he allegedly remarked it was like “writing history with lightning!” President Wilson’s father, a Presbyterian minister, was instrumental in the formation of PCCS.

The popular film spurred the rebirth of the KKK. On Thanksgiving Day, 1915, a former Methodist circuit rider assembled a group of white men to hold a ceremony on Stone Mountain. There they built an altar and placed on it an American flag and a Bible opened to Romans 12--- with the passage “be devoted to one another in love.” They also burned a cross. The KKK interspersed Christianity with racism to create a nationalistic form of religion that excluded all but American-born, Protestant white men and women. This second Klan was actually stronger in the North than in the South, numbering between 3 and 5 million in the North alone. The KKK’s dedication to race and nation rose to the level of religious devotion because of its overt appeal to Christianity and the Bible. Many believed that the KKK stood for the best of the “American way” and that meant Christianity as well.

Video: The First Resurgence of the KKK and The Birth of a Nation

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vz5p9VE0JAK>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OMVognai5P4>

7. The Rise of Jim Crow

The myth of the Lost Cause and the existence of the KKK bolstered white people who did not believe in equality for black people. To reinforce racial hierarchy, Jim Crow laws attempted to revise older social order that slavery had made possible. This system extended to all areas of the country not just the former Confederate states. The North and West created “sundown” towns where blacks had to be out before sundown or face violent repercussions. Hundreds of towns—like Appleton, Wisconsin; Levittown on Long Island; and Cicero in Chicago—kept their towns intentionally all-white. Larger cities like Tulsa and New York conducted periodic purges of black neighborhoods to intimidate residents to move out.

Other Jim Crow laws prevented blacks and whites to play on the same baseball fields, use the same textbooks, or be buried in the same cemetery. Even prison inmates had to be separated by race. Inter-racial marriage or sexual relations were illegal. Convict-leasing by employers meant that black men and women were often charged for crimes on even minor infractions and forced into free labor. Payments were made instead to the local government entities as a fee per worker. To keep Jim Crow laws effective, lynching became all too frequent. Any black—man, woman, or

child—could be the next lynching victim at the slightest offense. This detestable practice bred terror for black Americans that lasted for decades.

Video: Jim Crow Society Documentary <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SzK0TNf0rDs>

Racism never goes away, it just adapts. The Union may have won military victory, but the South won the narrative war. Some white Christians used their faith to justify the fiction of the Lost Cause, while others bent Christianity to support the Ku Klux Klan its racial terrorism designed to reinforce white power. This racist atmosphere and Christian complicity now permeated the entire country.

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WEEK THREE: Complicity in the North to the Civil Rights Movement/The Religious Right at the End of the 20th Century

1. The Social Gospel, Fundamentalism, and Racism

The Industrial Revolution tended to concentrate wealth in the hands of the few and the growing urban poverty led some Christians to proclaim it was their duty to improve the conditions that led to such large scale poverty and suffering. In 1896, Rev. Walter Rauschenbusch accepted a pastorate in the neighborhood in New York City known as Hell's Kitchen. Stunned by the over-crowding, inhumane working conditions, pitiful wages, and chronic health issues, Rauschenbusch realized he couldn't serve his members' spiritual needs unless he addressed the whole of their lives. In 1907, he wrote *Christianity and the Social Crisis* which stirred many Christians to become actively engaged in politics and reform in their communities. This became known as the "social gospel."

In contrast, a set of articles published between 1910 and 1915 called *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth* repudiated the social gospel and warned against getting too involved in politics. Their answer to those Christians who were working for equality, these "fundamentalists" admonished "ye must be born again!" They insisted that the only biblical way to transform society was to convert individuals to Christianity. Instead of political involvement, Christians were encouraged to focus on personal holiness and evangelism. But when volumes of *The Fundamentals* were distributed to pastors, black ministers were not included on the list of recipients. White Christians who adhered to fundamentalism coded their movement as white---where the twin towers of black inferiority and white paternalism were common beliefs.

Black Christians in the 1920s and 1930s did not fit into either the social gospel or the fundamentalism movements. Black Christian beliefs often were more conservative in areas of biblical interpretations, dancing, and prohibition, but more progressive on issues regarding spiritual, political and social equality of black people.

Is Christian unity ever going to be possible?

Video: When Does The Line Between Gospel Proclamation and Social Gospel

Get Buried? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8CdobdwiSyg>

History Brief: The Rise of Fundamentalism

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7qS1yztFKP8>

2. The Great Migration and the Great Depression

In 1916 Woodrow Wilson ran on the slogan "He Kept Us Out of War." The United States, at the time, did not consider the ongoing conflict in Europe to be enough of a problem to require American intervention. Wilson tried to stay neutral, but continued German aggression against the US convinced Wilson to present Congress with a resolution of war in April 1917. During his resolution speech, Wilson pledged to "make the world safe for democracy."

Black soldiers have fought in every American war despite racial discrimination. Largely confined to menial jobs, more than 350,000 black people served during WWI. Only about 42,000 black soldiers saw battle even as their white leaders questioned their valor and capability. Still, black soldiers often distinguished themselves. France awarded their highest medal, the Croix de Guerre, to the all-black 369th, 371st, and 372nd regiments for their fierceness on the front lines. It did little to eliminate anti-black racism back home.

Returning home, black soldiers refused to defer to Jim Crow laws and inspired other black people to do the same. With a firmer sense of their own civil rights, many black activists began engaging in armed self-defense and open resistance to racism.

Even though the violence of white supremacy was not confined to former Confederate states, it still seemed better for many black people to live anywhere other than the Jim Crow South. This led to a mass movement of black people to the North, Midwest, and the East and West coasts. This has been referred to as The Great Migration. Black populations more than doubled in some cities and changed white perceptions and increased interracial tensions.

The Great Migration was followed by the Great Depression which further exacerbated interracial tensions. Skyrocketing unemployment meant fierce competition for jobs between poor ethnic whites and newly settled urban blacks. Christian churches and nonprofits ran out of money as they tried to help.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, elected in 1932, initiated the New Deal. For the first time, the federal government extended citizenship to include positive rights like Social Security, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, the Securities and Exchange Commission, and the end of Prohibition.

Liberal Christians supported the New Deal, especially the federal government's effort to assist the poor and grant workers the right to organize for better work conditions. The Catholic Church weighed in with warnings against unrestricted capitalism and the government's function to protect everyone's rights. The Federal Council of Churches updated its teachings to promote the rights of workers in collective bargaining and social action.

Not all Christians were so excited. Fundamentalists had reduced their Christian mission almost entirely to winning converts. They were not enthused about the growing influence of the federal government to impose regulations on both public institutions and private enterprises. Due to the resistance of high level southern leaders worked to insulate the racial hierarchy in their communities from federal interference. Roosevelt's administration compromised with racists to pass racially discriminatory laws. For example, Social security provisions excluded most agricultural and domestic workers---the vast majority of whom were black. This was not an accident; it was by design.

Video: Once Upon a Time In Early Black Los Angeles

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wh_X8OeY8N8

3. Complicity with Racism in Post WWII North

When Japan forces bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, America roared back and entered WWII. Roosevelt's administration sought to exploit black soldiers while maintaining racial segregation. In spite of Executive Order 8802 which banned racial discrimination in the federal defense industry, FDR and his military leaders were unable or unwilling to dismantle racism within the armed forces. Black soldiers were mostly in menial labor roles and with few exceptions, were barred from advanced training.

Racial discrimination remained following the war. For example, black veterans were not eligible for the GI Bill (The Servicemen's Readjustment Act). Home loans, college tuition, and health coverage for veterans helped usher in a period of extended and rapid economic prosperity in America, but was awarded almost exclusively to white veterans. The Veteran's Administration denied mortgages to black soldiers and funneled them into lower-level education and training programs rather than four year colleges. In the postwar era, access to the proximity to good schools, extended families, grocery stores, workplace, and local amenities was mostly denied to black workers. Redlining denied loans to would-be black home owners in many areas and persisted into the 1950s and 1960s. HOAs also enacted restrictive

covenants which legally denied blacks from home ownership in white communities. When black families did move in, white neighbors vandalized the homes and held pickets and protests to drive black families out.

The American church once again proved complicit in racism by cooperating with racial segregation. As the white flight into the suburbs increased, white American churches uprooted and moved with their white members. Residential segregation only lent fuel to another dimension of the northern struggle for civil rights. Activists from the Coordinating Council of Community Organizations called on Martin Luther King Jr. for help. King well understood that changing laws alone was inadequate in addressing the national scope of racism. In January 1966 King announced his participation in the Chicago Freedom Movement. King moved his family to the West Side neighborhood of North Lawndale, nicknamed "Slumdale" by local residents. King led a march of 5,000 protesters in Marquette Park in August 1966. The opposition from white racists was fierce. Signs saying "The Only Way to End Niggers is to Exterminate" were held along with Confederate flags by white protesters. A rock was thrown that knocked King to his knees when it hit his head. Resolute, King stood up and marched on. He later told reporters, "I have never seen such hate. Not in Mississippi or Alabama. This is a terrible thing."

Video: George Wallace "Segregation Forever"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cQIDkRix_68

4. Compromising with Racism During the Civil Rights Movement

In 1951 the Supreme Court unanimously upheld *Brown vs. The Board of Education of Topeka* and struck down "separate but equal" education---segregation was overturned. It struck the South like a bolt of lightning. The reaction came from all segments of southern society, including many southern white churches. President emeritus, G. T. Gillespie, of Belhaven College in Jackson, Mississippi wrote a "Christian View of Segregation." His arguments outlined many of the ways Christians compromised with racism in the civil rights era. Gillespie acknowledge that Bible gave no clear mandate for or against segregation, but argued a so-called "natural law." Mockingbirds don't mate with blue jays was part of this argument. He then argued that just as Leviticus admonished the Israelites not to mix wool with linen, so too would this apply with even greater respect to human relations. Many preachers picked up on Gillespie's arguments. Jesus was labeled as the "Original Segregationist" and some even declared desegregation as a scheme of the devil himself.

If not openly supportive of segregation, more moderate Christian pastors tried to find middle ground. Billy Graham, one of the most respected of evangelical leaders of this time actually went further than many of his colleagues by removing ropes that separated blacks and whites at his crusades. But that's as far as he went...except to say "I believe the heart of the problem of race is in loving our neighbor." But Graham stood firm on the evangelical tenet that the only way to change society was to convert more people to Christianity---as long as it was the evangelical brand of Christianity. Graham also spoke out against communism, which many of his white followers equated with the civil rights movement.

Other ministers of the gospel spoke prophetically against segregation, but the numbers were small and they suffered a great deal of backlash. In reality, activists who courageously risked their well-being for black freedom and equality were few and far between. Many more Christian moderates were complicit with the status quo of institutional racism.

Other white Christian moderates argued against the marches and nonviolent protest by urging that blacks use the court system with litigation. They understood MLK's rhetoric of nonviolence but argued that his tactics would actually undermine democracy and increase the likelihood of bloodshed. In a very "reasonable" letter a group of white ministers (including Baptists, Methodists, one Presbyterian and one Jewish rabbi) acknowledge "natural

impatience” of black people, and that “hatred and violence” had no place in the church, and even promoted recourse through the courts, their “reasonableness” failed to understand talking and negotiating for what blacks wanted had been tried over and over to no avail. While they opposed violence, these moderates did relatively little to stop the countless lynchings, church bombings, and beatings black people continued to endure across the nation at the hands of segregationists. The situation demanded courageous outrage and confrontation, but they cautiously did nothing.

5. Segregation and Civil Rights Act of 1964

Martin Luther King Jr. stood directly behind President Johnson at the White House as he signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The law created the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission which authorized the federal government to enforce desegregation and prevented other types of discrimination based on religion and sex. While King understood the necessity of changing laws to ensure the rights of all citizens, he also knew he could not shy away from direct action that would cause constructive conflict in the effort to bring about change.

In contrast, Billy Graham and the moderate Christians he represented took a much more subdued stance on civil rights. Billy Graham helped start the publication of *Christianity Today* which was the de facto voice of white evangelism. The magazine refused to endorse the Civil Rights Act largely because it stuck to the stance that social change came best through personal conversion. This illustrates the gulf between Christian activists and Christian moderates. When the Watts riots broke out in Los Angeles in 1965, Graham was appalled and declared that this kind of disturbance was “being used by those whose ultimate end is to overthrow the American government” and called it “a dress rehearsal for a revolution.” Graham called for tougher laws to crack down on such flagrant disregard for authority.

King, on the other hand, understood that the chaos of Watts did not emerge from a single incident, but from the people living in this South Central Los Angeles neighborhood felt trapped by the forces of poverty, incarceration, failing schools, and racism. Even with activists working for change, the reality was that the cries of the people went largely unheard. Graham and other moderate Christians simply failed to respond to the evils of segregation and inequality experienced in black communities, which also spurred another expression in the black freedom struggle, the Black Power Movement.

The history of calls for black independence and racial defiance is a long one. The Nation of Islam began in Detroit in the 1930s and became an alternative to Christianity for many black people who had become disillusioned with Christian impotency in affecting change for racial equality. Malcolm X and Mohammad Ali are the two best known black American converts. A century after the Civil War Ali and many other black people still saw Christianity as the religion of enslavers, a belief system of those who oppressed black people.

Video: Taking Down the Ropes of Segregation <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UisbJq8Uflg>

6. Everyday Racism of American Christians

The barriers to overcoming racism are not easily removed. One of the most iconic images of Jesus is Warner Sallman’s “Head of Christ” in which Jesus has smooth white skin, long flowing brown hair, a full beard, and blue eyes. It was painted in 1940 but by the 1990s the image had been reprinted over 500 million times. This image even became ubiquitous among black Christians. In fact, the bombing at Sixteenth Street Baptist Church that killed four black Sunday School girls, also blew out the stained glass window picturing a white Jesus. This white, European looking Jesus subtly reinforced that God favored white people, and by extension, a free-market, capitalist-supporting America as well. Sallman’s famous but contrived image of Jesus served to reinforce among Christians the status quo of American racial hierarchy.

As with other periods in America's sordid racial history, the Christian church of the mid-century often served to reinforce racism rather than oppose it. Moderate Christians organized to oppose racial integration of neighborhoods, started segregation academies to keep their white children separate from black kids in school and continued to approve church leaders who espoused prejudiced remarks and actions. If not opposed to desegregation, the American church largely chose to compromise with racism through passive complicity and lost an opportunity to come alongside black people in the nation's "Second Reconstruction."

7. Evangelicals and Politics

Evangelicalism in America exploded during the 1970s and 1980s. The term evangelical has been used for centuries, but in the late twentieth century in America took on a decidedly more political tone. The rise of the religious right was swift on energetic and political and the nation started paying attention to them.

Richard Nixon and Billy Graham were longtime friends. Graham urged Nixon to run for president in 1968. Nixon won 68 percent of the evangelical vote. Four years later, Nixon's share of the evangelical vote was 84 percent. Part of Nixon's appeal to white evangelical voters was his commitment to the racially loaded stance of law-and-order politics. White voters heard it as social stability. Nixon pointed to the civil rights movement and its nonviolent direct action not as the endeavor to secure long-denied justice to black Americans, but as the tarmac to tyranny and disregard for the law.

Video: What Was the Southern Strategy?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MUzoEvSC_AU

This law-and-order rhetoric fueled an increasingly aggressive criminal justice establishment. Under the Nixon Administration criminal offenders received harsher sentences, undercover police squads were deployed in cities, and incentives were provided to construct more prisons. This became to be known as Nixon's "Southern Strategy." It exploited racial backlash to the civil rights movement and mobilized disaffected white voters (many of them evangelicals) to join the Republican Party. The rise of the Religious Right was predominately a grassroots movement in white suburbia—"suburban warriors" who "set in place the ideas, strategies, and politics that would pave the road to national power," That national power was on full display when Billy Graham officially endorsed Nixon's re-election in 1972. Nixon was no supporter of black equality—in fact, Nixon's stance was that the "whole problem is really the blacks. The key is to devise a system that recognizes this while not appearing to."

Many believe that the issue of abortion solidified unity of the Religious Right, but that actually came much later. Instead, the impetus that galvanized the movement came from the Internal Revenue Service. Three black families in Mississippi sued the Treasury Department to disavow tax-exempt status for three new "segregation academies" in the county. In 1971, the Supreme Court upheld *Green vs. Connally* and said that "racially discriminatory private schools are not entitled to Federal tax exemptions provided for charitable, educational institutions."

It only took one school---Bob Jones University—to bring the threat of government-enforced integration to the attention of Christian conservatives and to motivate them to political action. Bob Jones Sr. grew up in rural Alabama and adopted Jim Crow ideas of racial segregation. Although he experienced poverty that gave him more in common with blacks than rich whites, Jones absorbed the cultural values of racism and he brought these ideas of racial hierarchy with him when he set out to found a new school. The school forbid interracial dating and this placed the university in violation of racial discrimination laws. The IRS revoked the school's tax exempt status in 1976. The school sued the IRS based on the issue of religious freedom. Similar to what some proponents of slavery had argued in the Civil War era, 20th century segregationists considered it a "right" to separate people based on race. The IRS guidelines about racial integration galvanized the Christian community and they blamed Jimmy

Carter for intervening against Christian schools, denying them tax exempt status on the basis of “so-called de facto segregation.” Many other issues like abortion has held the Religious Right together, it was clearly racist resistance to integration that provided the initial charge that electrified the movement.

Video: White Savior: Racism in the American Church Trailer

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2FWenQCC4-s&t=1s>

8. The Moral Majority and Ronald Reagan

When Jerry Falwell and his associates formed the Moral Majority in 1979, the program had three simple steps: Get ‘em saved, get ‘em baptized, get ‘em registered. The platform was “pro-life, pro-family, pro-moral, and pro-America.” It became very popular with conservative Christians of all kinds. Within a few years they had an annual budget of \$6 million. They reached out to conservative Mormons, Jews, Catholics, Pentecostals and a variety of Protestants. And they organized just in time to support the man who would become the darling of the Religious Right, Ronald Reagan. Reagan, a divorced Hollywood actor turned politician who supported a liberal pro-abortion law while governor of California, certainly didn’t seem like a champion of Christian conservatism. But Reagan was a skilled campaigner and had a winsome speech making quality that quickly endeared him to the Religious Right. Reagan was quick to adopt the right talking points to win white evangelical voters. Reagan recognized the political advantage of this voting bloc and did everything he could to earn their favor. Reagan did not shy away from publicly aligning himself with racists or from using racially coded language in his appeal to white voters. It worked. Reagan won in a landslide against incumbent Jimmy Carter.

Video: How White Parents Stopped School Integration

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JB6sTWpVKKU>

After more than three centuries of deliberate, systematic race-based exclusion, the political system that had intentionally disenfranchised black people continues to do so, yet in less overt ways. By simply letting the political system to work as it was designed to, many well-meaning Christians were complicit in racism. As Christians consider the political connections between theologically conservative evangelism and conservative politics, mostly through the Republican Party, they can begin to acknowledge that they have supported racial inequalities.

Racism: History, Complicity, and the Whitest Denomination in the US

WEEK 4: Racial Reconciliation and the Black Lives Matter Movement

1. The White Evangelical Toolkit

The end of the twentieth century brought about a lot of changes. The Southern Baptist Convention, founded to protect slaveholders, issued a resolution repenting of racism and repudiated slavery as evil. The resolution pledged to eradicate racism and asked forgiveness from African Americans.

Promise Keepers, founded in 1990 to help guide men in leading godly lives, also worked diligently for racial reconciliation. Intentional, multicultural churches began to form and by 2010, 12.5 percent of churches considered themselves multiethnic. Hate crime legislation passed which made overt acts of racism legally punishable. And in 2008, America elected her first black President.

Yet nothing happened without the backlash of violence. Scenes of police officers killing unarmed black men made the news far too often. Debates over “law and order” and its racist undertones highlighted the stark racial divisions still present in America today. And the American church, in many ways, still remains divided along racial lines.

White evangelicals created their own “toolkit” with particular religio-cultural tools they use to understand race that actually tended to perpetuate the very problems they said they wanted to ameliorate. One such tool was “accountable individualism” which meant that individuals existed independent of structures and institutions, have freewill, and were accountable for their actions. This belief tended to reduce the importance of communities and institutions in shaping the way people think and behave...and made them skeptical of social structures that may have helped the communities around them find understanding for each other.

Another tool was “relationalism,” which blamed social problems on the breakdown of personal relationships, so that racism was seen as individually based “sin.” In other words, systems, structures, and policies are not to blame for problems in America, but came instead from harmful individuals. Thus “anti-structuralism” was another tool in their box. Systems didn’t need changing, sinful humans did instead.

Black Christians, speaking very broadly, could agree that a personal relationship with Jesus Christ is necessary for a saving faith. But they recognize all too well that America’s racial issues demand systemic changes. Poverty, then, for white evangelicals was caused by a lack of motivation of blacks. Likewise, income disparities are not considered be at all caused by racial discrimination.

Why Have Evangelicals Failed to Overcome Racism?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hOlo7nybNhk>

2. Christian Responses to Black Lives Matter

#blacklivesmatter began with three black women activists responded to each other’s posts following the acquittal of George Zimmerman, a multiracial man who shot and killed Trayvon Martin, a 17 year-old black high school student in 2013. The hashtag gained momentum a year later after another black teenager, Mike Brown, was shot and killed by a white police officer in Ferguson, Missouri. Brown’s body lay for several hours in the summer heat in front of an ever-growing crowd of community residents. The officer, Darren Wilson, was not indicted. Protestors took to the streets in more than 150 cities. It became more and more clear that the message was that black lives could be extinguished with impunity (just like slave

owners and lynch mobs before) as the lives of Stephan Clark, Philando Castile, Freddie Gray, Walter Scott, Jamar Clark, Rekia Boyd, Eric Gardner, Sandra Bland, and Tamir Rice, to name a few, were lost due to police actions. Black Lives Matter became a statement that blacks too were created in the image of God. The cry is also one of lament not only for lives lost but for the fact that racism has inflicted incalculable suffering on black people throughout the history of the United States. *#blacklivesmatter* presents Christians with an opportunity to mourn with those who mourn and to help bear the burdens that racism has heaped on black people.

Video: A History of Black Lives Matter Movement

<https://video.search.yahoo.com/yhs/search; ylt=Awr46ueq0MhdAT8Aljs0nIIQ; ylu=X3oDMTBncGdyMzQ0BHNIYwNzZWFyY2gEdnRpZAM-; ylc=X1MDMTM1MTE5NTcwMARfcgMyBGFjdG4DY2xrBGNzcmNwdmlkA3FUU3AyekV3TGpMaEJSRmxYWnFWNVFWUk1qWXdnUUFBQUFCeDk2X2MEZnlDeWhzLXN6LTAwMQRmcjldc2EtZ3AEZ3ByaWQDLkJudUI5dFRSOUNjUG9KT3Jva29HQQRuX3JzbHQDNjAEbl9zdWdnAzEwBG9yaWdpbgN2aWRlby5zZWYyY2gueWFob28uY29tBHBvcwMxMjBxc3RyA2J5YWNrJTlwbGl2BHBxc3RybAM5BHFzdHJsAzlyBHF1ZXJ5A2J5YWNrJTlwbGl2ZXMIMjBtYXROZXIEF9zdG1wAzE1NzMONDMxNjY-?p=black+lives+matter&ei=UTF-8&fr2=p%3As%2Cv%3Av%2Cm%3Aa&fr=yhs-sz-001&hsimp=yhs-001&hspart=sz#id=6&vid=7220729b3f8886764923bab4c97d346b&action=view>

The Black Lives Matter as an organization has received a lot of criticism for its strong platform advocating for gay, queer, and transgender rights, a position that is contrary to a conservative evangelical definition of marriage between one man and one woman. Additionally, the Black Lives Matter Organization does not align itself with any faith-based organization. As a result, the American evangelical church has distanced itself from or even opposed both the Black Lives Matter organization and the phrase. While the evangelical church has responded to racism it has yet to form a viable movement to address the concept that black lives do indeed matter.

Video: Do Black Lives Matter To White Christians?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ArBgJ1XIII>

3. The 2016 Election and the 81 Percent

Donald J. Trump has a long history of racist actions and statements against brown and black people. It is no surprise then that 88% of black voters and 94% of black women voted for Hillary Clinton. While 58% of white voters supported Trump, 81% of white evangelicals voted for Trump. So far during Trump's presidency, 80% of white evangelical Protestants who attend church at least once a month approve of the way Trump is handling his job as president. Those who did oppose Trump either did not vote or voted for a third party candidate.

Evangelical support for Trump was based primarily on two issues---an intense dislike of Clinton and the belief that Trump would champion their pro-life stance. But there were other Republican candidates who would also champion pro-life. Why Trump? Because Trump somehow tapped into a latent sense that evangelicals were losing their influence in American culture and politics. Many evangelical Christians actually felt they suffered from discrimination second only to that of Muslims. Trump's slogan "Make America Great Again" became "Make Evangelicals Great Again" for these voters.

The impact of the 2016 election was, according to Michael Emerson, co-author of *Divided by Faith*, "the single most harmful event to the whole movement of reconciliation in at least the past 30 years."

Video: How the Republican Party Went From Lincoln to Trump

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s8VOM8ET1WU>

Racism: History, Complicity, and the Whitest Denomination in the US

WEEK FIVE: What Can We Do Now?

1. Jehu's Table

Pastor Jehu Jones was the first African descent, or black, pastor in the Lutheran tradition in America. A tailor by trade, he inherited his father's business when his father opened a hotel for white travelers in Charleston, South Carolina in 1812. Jehu was an Episcopalian who eventually found his way to the Lutheran church. Encouraged to use his gifts for ministry, Jehu became ordained in New York and was set to work for the American Colonization Society. Upon his return to Charleston, he was arrested along with every other free black as a backlash to Nat Turner rebellion—a slave rebellion in Virginia in 1831 where rebel slaves killed at least 51 white people. Jehu languished in prison until after his father's death.

Eventually he was sent to Philadelphia to be a mission pastor to the black community there. He founded St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Center City Philadelphia. He bought the land and built the building using his own money. He never received any help—financially or otherwise---from the Lutheran church body. Here was the first black pastor in the Lutheran tradition in America who was sent to start a congregation in an ethnic specific, stressed inner city area of a large city. What was the response of the Lutheran body who had ordained him? It called his a failed experiment that for the “betterment” of the rest of the church and its treasury must be shut down. St. Paul's assets and land were bought by the Pennsylvania ministerium and sold off for profit.

Jehu's ministry included connecting sex workers at Magdalene House to the community, addressing alcoholism and addiction, and walking into opium dens to bring the word of God's grace to those who had never heard the Lutheran message or the gospel of Jesus Christ. He embedded himself in the community and walked along side of the oppressed. He talked about investing in black businesses. He pleaded for the rest of the church to join him, but all the synod could see was his low baptismal numbers and shut down his church. Jehu had worked with the sweat of his brow to build St. Paul's---all without ever being paid by the synod—and the Lutheran hierarchy shut his church down and sold it off for profit---a profit Jehu never received.

Jehu was never paid. These are the roots of black Lutheranism in America---rotted to the core. This reveals us for who we really are: systemically racist. Black Lutheran leaders today experience similar problems---many wait years for a call, are told to stop talking about racism from the pulpit, have been given gorilla dolls as gifts by the people they serve, and have been told by seminary presidents to go back to Egypt to serve because the watermelon tastes better there. Additionally, all black congregations in our Lutheran church often go for years—a decade or more at times—without a pastor. Many Black Lutheran pastors have given up and left the ministry in the Lutheran church after experiencing years of a constant barrage of micro-aggressions from white colleagues in the ministry. Black Lutheran ministries have languished because of a lack of support. For example, at one time Philadelphia---where over 45% of baptized Lutherans were black—there were over a dozen thriving black congregations. Now there is one. When Lutherans merged and became the ELCA in 1988, priorities and money were shifted. While black Lutheran leaders put their careers, lives, and safety on the line in this church, we failed to prioritize these peoples and places in God's vineyard.

Today many black leaders in our church are doing the same work as Jehu, with similar goals in similar circumstances. They are leading the way to liberation. When the seismic shift in politics took place a few years ago, white church leaders were stunned. But that wouldn't have happened if we had listened to our black leaders. They saw it coming and could have helped our church be prepared. But we didn't ask nor were we willing to listen. Yet together we can become the church in a new and powerful way---the ELCA could become a living sacrifice for those dying for the freedom that the way of the cross of Jesus leads. Like Jehu and others who followed, we can lead lives of unrecognized service. We can offer the liberation of the gospel.

2. The Color of Compromise in the 21st Century

There have been tangible gains for American blacks---from being slaves to being Fortune 500 CEOs, media moguls, award-winning academics, and even president. Although not unheard of, most American churches do not make openly racist statements or argue for black inferiority. But racism has not disappeared from the headlines. And while multiracial congregations have become more commonplace, many churches remain some of the most segregated places in America.

Christian complicity with racism in the 21st century looks different than complicity with racism in the past. It looks like Christians responding to black lives matter with the phrase all lives matter. It looks like Christians continually supporting a president whose racism has been on display for decades. It looks like Christians telling black people and their allies that their attempts to bring up racial concerns “divisive.” It looks like conversations on race that focus on individual relationships and are unwilling to discuss systemic solutions. Maybe Christian complicity hasn’t really changed much at all? Characters and specifics may be new, but many of the same rationalizations for racism still remain. Until we can recognize and discuss the deep social, political, and cultural divisions that exist, not much is likely to change. The solutions are simple but not easy. It is time for the church to undertake bold, costly actions with an attitude of unprecedented urgency or the narrative of the American church on race will not change.

Video: White Church, Black Church <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=El6H35PMVy4>

3. The Fierce Urgency of Now

What can we do? Start with the ARC of racial justice (Awareness, Relationships, Commitment).

Awareness ideas:

- watch documentaries about racial history in the US
- diversify your social media to include following racial and ethnic minorities
- access websites and podcasts created by racial and ethnic minorities
- do internet searches on specific topics you still have questions about

Relationships:

- talk to someone of a different race specifically about their experiences and perspectives of race and justice
- find new places to hang out
- join a sport, club, or activity with people who are different

Commitment:

- Create something. Write a blog. Write a book. Write a sermon. Write a song or poem. Teach a Sunday School class. Host a forum.
- join an organization that advocates for racial and social justice
- donate money
- talk to candidates running for office
- vote

Other actions:

Take down Confederate monuments. Remove Confederate symbols from public places. Recognize that the heritage these symbols and statues represent were founded on hate.

Advocate for reparations. Currently a typical white family has 16 times the wealth of a typical black family. For every dollar in a white household, a black household has less than 7 cents. These gaps will remain unless a broad-based reform effort takes place. Expressing remorse may begin the process, but it is not enough. We need both civic reparations---in government laws, policies and institutional changes—and ecclesiastical reparations. Black

churches have a lot of ideas, but lack funding. White churches could partner with black churches and help provide the funding needed.

Learn from the Black Church. Learn what it means to lament. Sing Negro spirituals that theologize suffering in song. Sing black lamentations that soar upwards as prayers to God to save them and grant perseverance to exist and resist. Learn also about black rejoicing---shouts of “Amen” and Hallelujah” punctuate every part of black worship with an unashamed praise for God. Learn from black churches how to engage our full selves in worship.

Video: Beyond Race: When Two Churches Become One

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wTvMmEuklw4>

Support black seminarians, schools and pilgrimages. Start a Freedom School that educates about civil rights, methods of protesting for change and getting involved in activism. Discuss current systemic injustices like mass incarcerations, police brutality, underfunded schools and healthcare inequality---and then organize to work for reform.

Help make Juneteenth a national holiday---which remembers the day 6/19/1865 when slaves in Texas finally learned about their emancipation. It is the oldest known celebration of black freedom from slavery. Currently over 40 states recognize Juneteenth as a holiday or observance---it should be a national one. Join and/or participate in the civil rights movement. Publicly denounce racism.

Be strong and courageous.