

Sacred RECKONINGS

WHITE SETTLER-COLONIZER CHURCHES DOING THE WORK OF REPARATIONS

Gathered and Written by
Rev. Dr. Rebecca Voelkel and Jessica Intermill, J.D.

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Relationships are always central to the work of reparation. Particularly when we work as White settler colonizer religious communities, it is imperative that the work we do is grounded in solidarity and followership of Black and Indigenous communities. As you will read, one of the circles on the Reparatory EcoMap is that of relationship. We have sought to embody this truth as we have crafted this curriculum. We have sought the feedback, guidance, inspiration, and spiritual and theological wisdom of the following Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) friends, colleagues, mentors, and teachers throughout the writing of this curriculum.

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We also believe deeply in the power of creating community together with other White settler-colonizer folx who are committed to the work of reparation. Belonging to one another and creating spaces of “we” culture are also powerful tools that mitigate against White supremacy culture. So, we also thank our White settler-colonizer friends, colleagues, mentors, and teachers who have also supported, inspired, given us feedback and love along the way.

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- Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Chicago, IL
- Judson Memorial Church, New York, NY
- Lyndale United Church of Christ, Minneapolis, MN
- Macalester-Plymouth United Church (PC-USA and UCC), St. Paul, MN
- Plymouth Congregational Church, Minneapolis, MN

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- Edina Community Lutheran Church, Edina, MN
- Northfield United Methodist Church, Northfield, MN
- Unity Church-Unitarian, St. Paul, MN

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LANGUAGE ORIENTATION

Before we begin, we also want to offer a note explaining our linguistic choices. Language is not neutral. The words we choose and how we use them shape the narratives that shape our lives. We use the words repair and reparations interchangeably to include the work to intentionally undo the violence of White and Christian supremacy in the United States. Meaningful reparations require work in each of these areas:

- Truth telling;
- Spiritual practice;
- Relationship;
- Political solidarity; and
- Wealth return.

All are necessary; none alone is sufficient. We nevertheless realize that many White settler-colonizers are most resistant to and stymied by the practicalities of wealth return. Accordingly, this curriculum is structured to craft and vote on a wealth-return goal. But we intend and expect that the congregation will engage in all four other sectors in its work to reach that goal.

We use the gender-expansive word “folx” to be as inclusive as possible in our language. We use and capitalize “Black” and “Indigenous” to describe cultural experiences that are not subservient to a hyphenated American-ness, acknowledging that centuries of White and Christian supremacy actively worked to (and sometimes

did) strip these groups of all other ethnic and national ties. Where we speak more broadly of those who identify as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, we use the acronym “BIPoC.”

Perhaps more controversially, we also capitalize “White.” In doing so, we recognize that some have capitalized the word to assert supremacy, and that others avoid capitalization to either to distance themselves from these actors or because they do not view “Whiteness” as a force parallel to “Blackness” or Indigeneity. For example, in the racial reckoning of 2020, the “Star Tribune” joined a number of news organizations across the country in deciding to “capitalize Black as a racial, cultural and ethnic identifier[.]” It continued, “[w]e will not capitalize White; Black describes a shared experience in a way that White does not.”^[1] But as author Chad Montrie writes in his introduction to “Whiteness in Plain View: A History of Racial Exclusion in Minnesota”:

This is simply not true. Racial exclusion could not have happened if White people did not think of themselves and act as a race persistently over time (people can have a shared history and culture by being the oppressing group as well as by being the group oppressed). Claiming otherwise also treats “White” as a fact and leave it as a normative category, which dances dangerously on the margins of a different kind of racist thinking.^[2]

In **SACRED RECKONINGS**, we capitalize “White” because we ask our readers to look squarely at the harm they seek to repair. One of the defining features of Whiteness is its ability to hide in ubiquity, painting itself as an invisible nothing even as it routinely others anything and everything that it does not claim. We recognize that in this context,

[1] Star Tribune to capitalize Black as racial, cultural identifier, July 1, 2020.

[2] Whiteness in Plain View: A History of Racial Exclusion in Minnesota, Chad Montrie (Minnesota Historical Society Press 2022).

a lowercase “w” flattens Whiteness, feeding the forces of White Supremacy. Capitalization is a tool we use to help our readers recognize and wrestle with our inheritance of systemic racialized harm. For the same reason, we often pair this racial identifier with the “settler-colonizer” label. We name these forces as a measure of respect to the people whom they have harmed and as an invitation to the work we undertake.

SACRED RECKONINGS also assumes a primarily White audience. Certainly, we recognize and appreciate the role of BIPOC congregants and clergy within congregations and in this work. And. We know that White settler-colonizers have the most work to do. We look forward to later editions of this curriculum that will partner with BIPOC authors to create another track with additional exercises, tools, and curriculum that would assist BIPOC congregants who want to deepen their own racial identities and need different tools to engage with the reparations work of their congregations. To the BIPOC congregants who are willing to engage **SACRED RECKONINGS** now: we appreciate you, we’re working on it, and if you have suggestions for us, we’d love to receive them from you. And to their White settler-colonizer colleagues: know that this curriculum will land differently on BIPOC people because their histories and experiences are different than yours—trust them and listen to them when they tell you what they need.

And of course, as with the rest of the materials, these decisions are a work in progress. We invite you to share your experience of these choices or any other part of this curriculum. The world that we imagine is one we will create together.

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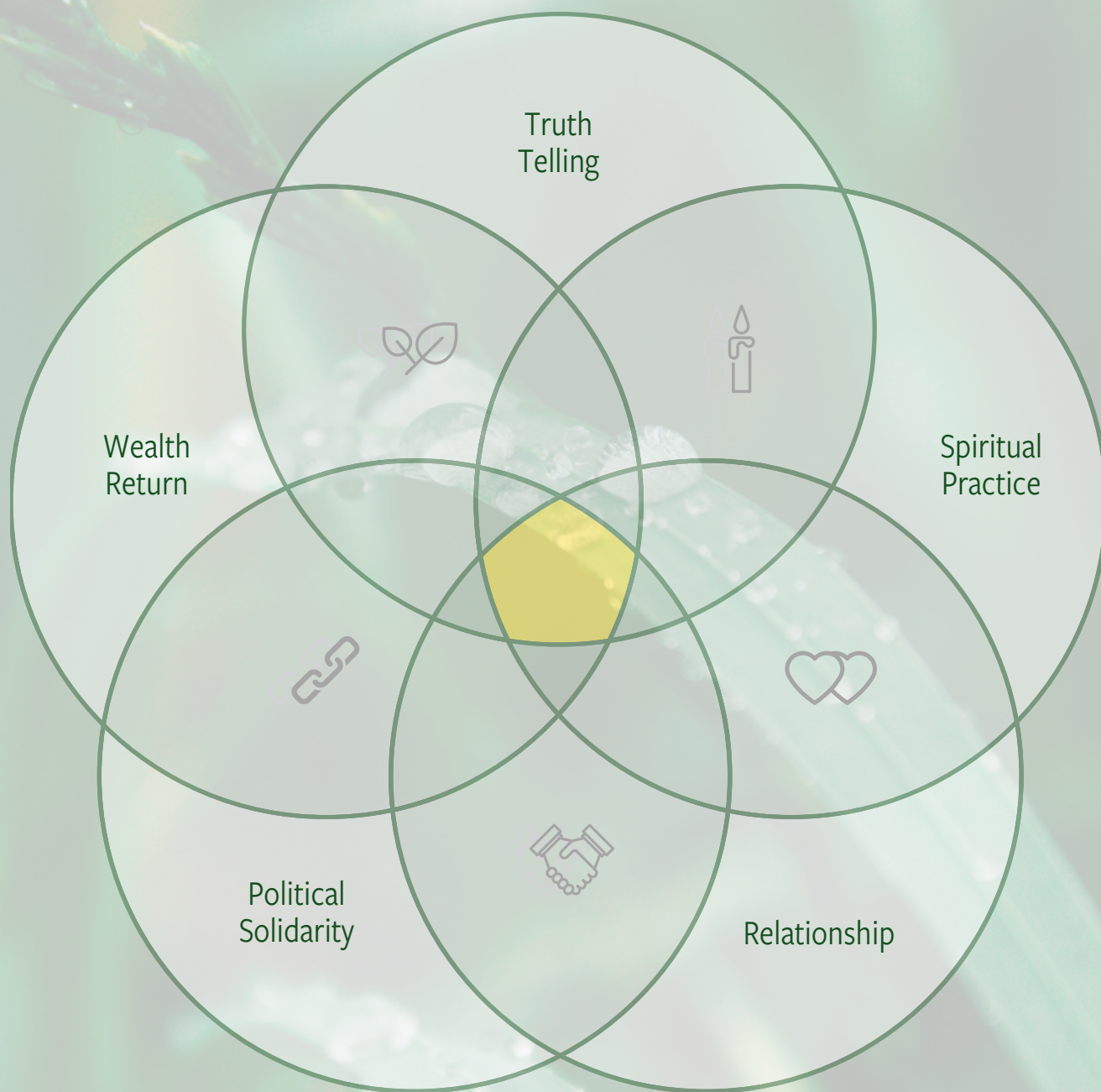


WELCOME

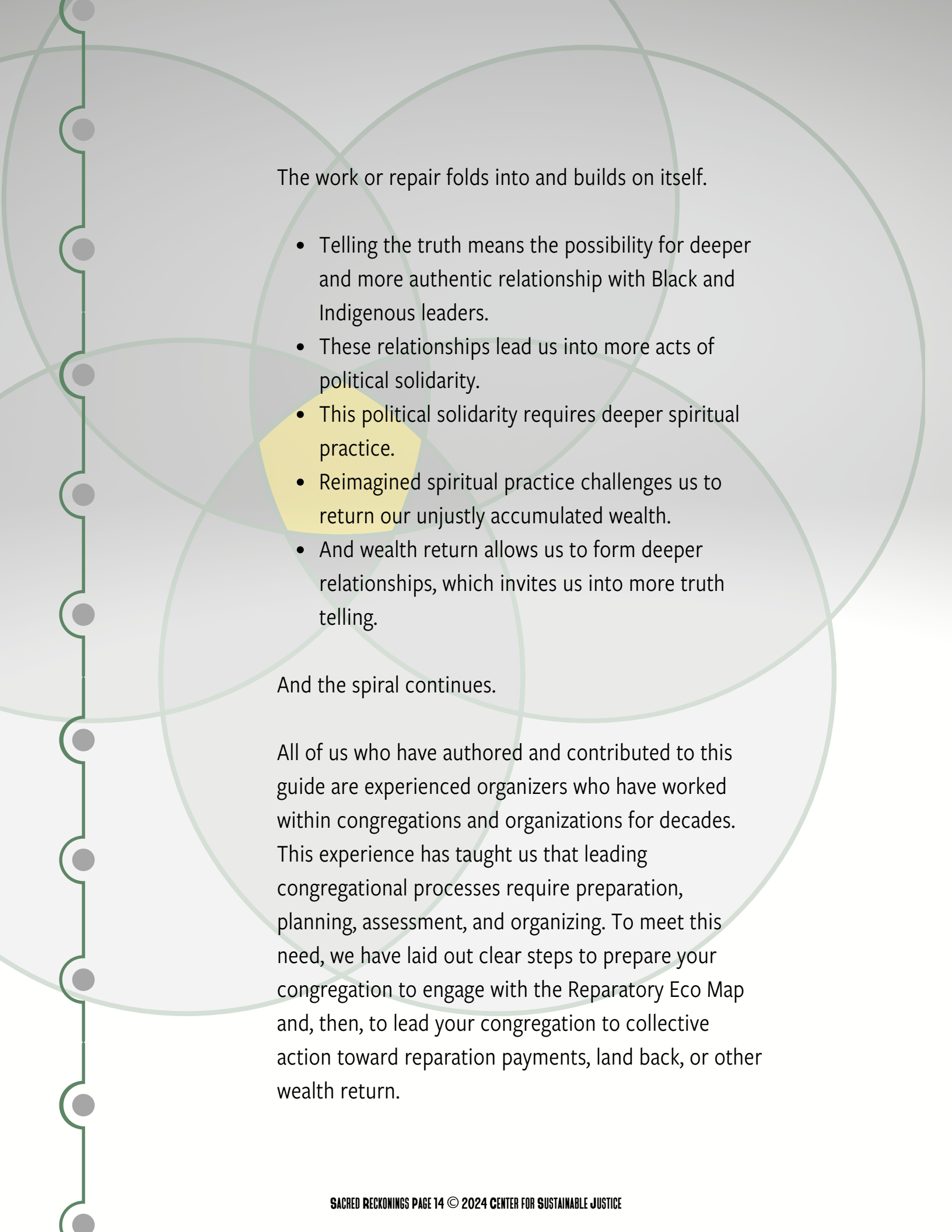
Welcome to **SACRED RECKONINGS: WHITE SETTLER-COLONIZER CHURCHES DOING THE WORK OF REPARATION**. We are so glad you have chosen to journey with us. The guide that follows is rooted in relationship, spiritual practice, and faithful responsiveness to a movement calling for reparations to Black and Indigenous communities that is emerging all over the country. This movement is calling us all to the sacred task of reckoning with the histories of colonization and White supremacy that have traumatized and deeply broken bodies, lives, relationships, and the Earth. Certainly, White supremacy's reach is far and wide, affecting every person in this country, and especially injuring BIPOC people and communities. In this guide, though, we focus reparations toward Black and Indigenous communities because theft of land and theft of labor are the foundational crimes of White supremacy in this country. This deep structural work calls us to the promise of liberation that is woven into the work of reckoning.

SACRED RECKONINGS is based on dozens of interviews, workshops, classes, and trainings that we have led or joined as participants. We have sought to gather this collective wisdom into a guide that you can use with your congregation to begin, further, and/or deepen your collective reparation practice.

The heart of **SACRED RECKONINGS** is a Reparatory Eco Map that illustrates how the very definition of congregational reparation work includes Truth Telling, Spiritual Practices, Relationship, Political Solidarity, and Wealth Return. This Reparatory Eco Map suggests that the work of reparation is an ongoing process that invites us into each of these topics again and again.



REPARATORY ECO MAP



The work or repair folds into and builds on itself.

- Telling the truth means the possibility for deeper and more authentic relationship with Black and Indigenous leaders.
- These relationships lead us into more acts of political solidarity.
- This political solidarity requires deeper spiritual practice.
- Reimagined spiritual practice challenges us to return our unjustly accumulated wealth.
- And wealth return allows us to form deeper relationships, which invites us into more truth telling.

And the spiral continues.

All of us who have authored and contributed to this guide are experienced organizers who have worked within congregations and organizations for decades. This experience has taught us that leading congregational processes require preparation, planning, assessment, and organizing. To meet this need, we have laid out clear steps to prepare your congregation to engage with the Reparatory Eco Map and, then, to lead your congregation to collective action toward reparation payments, land back, or other wealth return.


STEPS & CIRCLES

SACRED RECKONINGS relies on eleven steps to help you guide your congregation. A story helps demonstrate why we've chosen to organize the curriculum this way.

SACRED RECKONINGS: A HIKING ANALOGY

A family with a teenager decides to take a hiking trip. Well before the hike begins, organizing is necessary to get the buy-in, consent, and even the excitement of the entire family. But even excited hikers can't do just any hike. Once there is buy-in and excitement, the family must assess the level of physical shape for each person and compare that to their hiking goal. Likely, the family must choose the goal that the person in the least physical shape is able to reach.


In addition to destination, they also need to figure out what the best route might be, based on the assessment of the physical needs in the family. Then, they must determine what kinds of equipment they need, depending upon what route they choose. What kind of tents are needed, or do they need to make reservations in a hotel? Do they go hut to hut? What kind of boots are needed? What kind of poles? The family must complete all this assessment, planning, and preparation before they actually take the hike.



On hiking day, when the family reaches the trailhead, they need to have a map. Perhaps the map indicates the elevation gain. It needs to have the route clearly marked. The marking needs to include which turns to take, significant landmarks, and where there might be water, bathrooms, and other essentials. The hike itself is its own adventure. It may go smoothly, but may encounter unexpected obstacles or perhaps surprising moments of beauty and connection.

But when the family completes the hike, their journey still is not complete. They need to care for their equipment, cleaning and drying it. If there's been rain on the trip, they need to set out the tent to make sure that it dries out before it gets put away so that it doesn't mold and mildew. The family might need to chip out the mud from the soles of their shoes before they are put away, lest it makes their house into a mud room. As they clean, the family may reflect back on the trip in a way that might help lay the groundwork, particularly with the teenagers, for a future hike.


We share all of this as an analogy because the **SACRED RECKONINGS** process is akin to going on a hike with your family: it includes the preparation, taking the "hike," and your return after the hike, including the groundwork for taking another hike. All of this is included in the **SACRED RECKONINGS** process. The preparation for the hike appears here as relational organizing, frame setting, theological and biblical grounding, and congregational assessment (including identifying



congregational culture and their experience and ease with working around questions of racial justice). These are Steps 1-5. Then, the heart of **SACRED RECKONINGS** (the “hike,” if you will) is the Reparatory Eco Map, Step 6.


Following your congregation’s work on the Reparatory Eco Map (Step 6), you will work through Steps 7-10. These will lead you to a formalized congregational vote that is about taking concrete reparatory action. The action is all your own. It might look like land back, a line item in your congregational budget, perhaps having 5% of your congregational members practicing reparations in their own lives. Whatever it is, Steps 7-10 are designed to get you to take collective reparatory action. Then, Step 11 invites you to enter back into the Reparatory Eco Map and continue the work, deepening it over the course of the life of the congregation.

The Steps include Tools and Exercises. We intend that you will use the tools throughout your entire journey and beyond. The Tools are practices that will provide an opportunity for both the Racial Justice Team and the wider congregation to practice and embody some of the values and learnings suggested in the curriculum. Exercises are specific tasks that will advance your reparations work.



True transformation, though, is not a step-by-step checklist. The first contradiction of this curriculum is that we have created an artificially linear process—a favorite tool of White supremacy—to help us dismantle White supremacy and begin the work of reparation. But true learning is not linear and even within your Racial Justice Team and Reparations Task Force, different people will come to (and fall out of) different understandings at different times, and will return to some questions but not others. You are the expert on your congregation. If the steps, tools, and exercises do not feel appropriate for your audience or might make more sense in a different order, follow your instincts.

Throughout the **SACRED RECKONINGS** curriculum, our fundamental orientation is an invitation to White settler-colonizers to embody and practice OpenHeartedness. By this, we mean that the success of this curriculum relies on the ability of White settler-colonizers to listen with an open heart and to follow the wisdom, truths, and leadership of Black and Indigenous folx and organizations. Much in our training and conditioning as White folx and as settler-colonizers is toward leading and talking. Many of us have been to leadership trainings and to trainings on public speaking. We've been taught that competition and hard-nosed smarts are the way to get ahead. But that is not this. Instead, **SACRED RECKONINGS** starts with the invitation to act in counter-cultural ways through OpenHeartedness, listening, and following. When in doubt, listen and follow.



This raises the second contradiction of this curriculum. We are White folx telling you in our opening instructions that you should listen to Black and Indigenous folx first. How do we hold that? This curriculum shares what we have learned from Black and Indigenous folx, including that, sometimes, White folx need to “right size” and use our Whiteness and access to power to “take the mic.” We are hopeful that in this work to “come get our cousins” we take that mic only long enough to make space for Black and Indigenous folx to lead.

OpenHeartedness is also an important spiritual practice amidst this work. The truths that we will be invited to share can sometimes be overwhelming and threaten to shut us down. But practicing staying present and vulnerable is critically important. To avoid the inclination to fight, flight, or freeze when we hear about the devastation wrought by our ancestors (whether in our family or in our faith), we must root ourselves in the spiritual practices that allow us to keep our hearts open.

One final note of introduction. While **SACRED RECKONINGS** is deep spiritual work that is rooted in the hard work of dismantling supremacies, we understand it first and foremost as liberative work. As such, it is a spiritual opportunity for the congregation to grow in membership, stewardship, and vitality. So, thank you again for taking this journey with us. We return thanks to God!

USER'S MANUAL

The **SACRED RECKONINGS** journey is broken into 11 steps. Each step is supported by tools and exercises that you will find in the appendix. You will use both the steps and the appendix throughout your journey. If you are using the single PDF version of the workbook, use your app's "bookmarks" or other navigation tool to move between the steps and appendices.



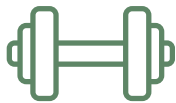
step

A discrete section of the **SACRED RECKONINGS** journey



tool

A guided learning that will teach you a skill that you will repeat throughout the **SACRED RECKONINGS** journey



exercise

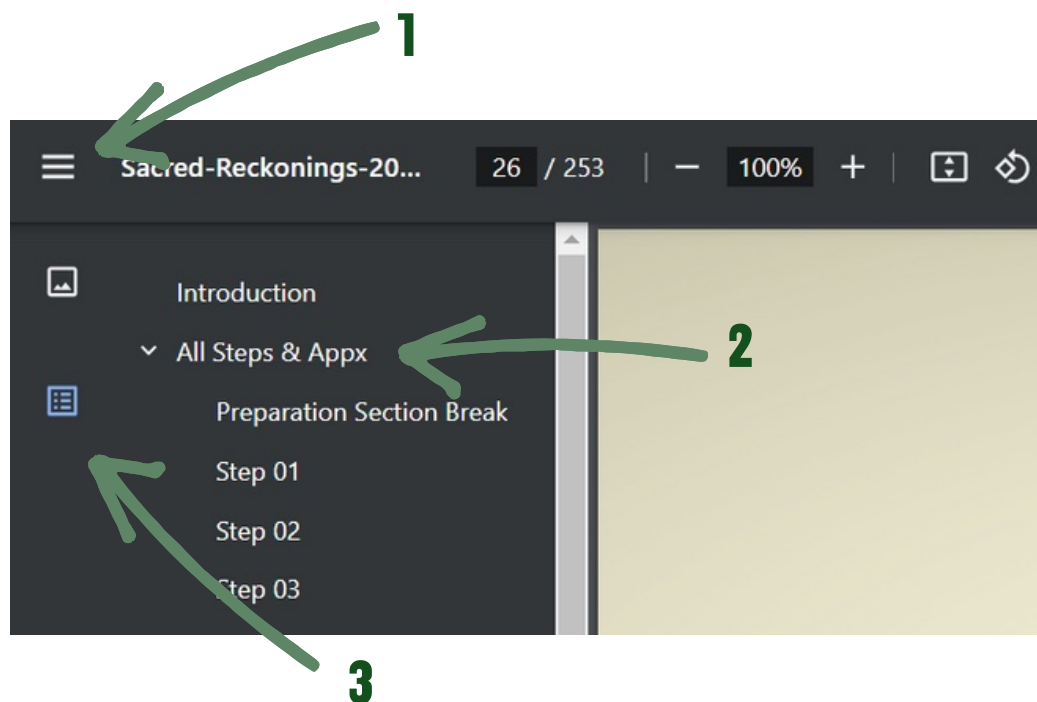
A guided learning that will teach you a step-specific skill or yield a specific conclusion that you will need to continue your **SACRED RECKONINGS** journey

Each **SACRED RECKONINGS** step offers an estimated time frame to complete that step. Step 2 will direct you to the Appendix 6: Congregational Assessment Exercise. You will use that exercise to determine which learning track—traditional, inclusive, or anti-racist—is best suited to your church. Starting on Step 4, we suggest three different time frames for each learning track.



Throughout the Steps and Appendix, you will encounter interview bubbles. Click on the bubble to play the video. If you have difficulty navigating to the videos through the workbook links, you can reach them directly at: <https://vimeo.com/showcase/10152327>.

Finally, the following pages map the steps to the exercises and tools as you first encounter them. Remember that although exercises are discrete learnings, you will rely on the skills and processes you learn in tools throughout your journey. To move around within this PDF without scrolling:



1. Click on the three lines (the “hamburger”) at the top left of the PDF to open the navigation panel.
2. Click on the list icon (under the image icon) on the left side to open the in-PDF navigation
3. Click on the arrow next to All Steps & Appx to open the drop down table of contents.

You’re ready to get started!

ELEVEN STEPS

PREPARATION AND INFORMATION GATHERING

Step 1: Leading the Journey

Appx. 1: One-to-One Visits Tool

Appx. 2: Liberation for All and Openheartedness Tool

Appx. 3: White Supremacy Culture Exercise

Appx. 4: Doctrine of Discovery Exercise

Appx. 5: Embodiment Practice Tool

Step 2: Gathering Information

Appx. 6: Congregational Assessment Exercise

Appx. 7: Congregations & Conflict Exercise

Appx. 8: How Does Change Happen Exercise

Appx. 9: Risk Discernment Exercise

Appx. 10: Framing Tool

Appx. 11: Power Analysis Exercise

PREPARATION AND INFORMATION GATHERING

Step 3: Planning Your Process

Appx. 12: Wealth Assessment Exercise

Appx. 13: Reparatory Muscle Exercise

Step 4: Building Relationships

Appx. 14: Fractal Exercise

Appx. 15: Telling Your Public Story: Self, Us, Now Exercise

Appx. 16: Public Storytelling Worksheet Exercise

Step 5: Community Recognition

Appx. 17: Vivifying Descendants Tool

Appx. 18: Re-Membering Exercise

TAKING THE JOURNEY WITH YOUR COMMUNITY

Step 6: The Reparatory Eco Map

Appx. 19: Start Where You Are Exercise

Appx. 20: Keep Going Exercise

Appx. 21: Psalm of Lament Exercise

Appx. 22 Small Group Spiritual Practice Exercise

Appx. 23: Relationship Mapping Exercise

TAKING THE JOURNEY WITH YOUR COMMUNITY

Step 6: The Reparatory Eco Map (continued)

Appx. 24: Political Solidarity Exercise

Appx. 25: Physical Audit Exercise

Appx. 26: Land Back Exercise

Appx. 27: Reparations Budgeting Exercise

Step 7: The Proposal

Appx. 24: Political Solidarity Exercise

Appx. 25: Physical Audit Exercise

Appx. 26: Land Back Exercise

Appx. 27: Reparations Budgeting Exercise

Step 8: The Exploratory Survey

Step 9: The Reparations Vote

Step 10: Rejoice & Proclaim

Step 11: . . . Now What?



Sacred RECKONINGS

PREPARATION & INFORMATION GATHERING

STEP 1: LEADING THE JOURNEY

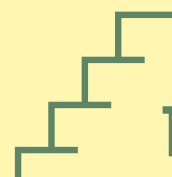
The first step in a congregational reparations process is to gather a group of five to ten people who share your passion for racial justice and liberation in the life of your congregation. These people will form your Racial Justice Team and will work together to advocate for, design, and shepherd the **SACRED RECKONINGS** journey.

To begin, use One-to-One Visits (see below) to meet with a few folx in your congregation who you believe might be interested in joining you in this work. Throughout these conversations, also keep in mind the principles of Liberation for All and OpenHeartedness. Both Tools follow this introduction to Step 1.

In your meetings, listen deeply, asking people about their passions, interests, and history and following the conversation where they lead. If you hear that reparations work fits with their passions, vocation, or sense of

3-12 MONTHS

If you need to build your Racial Justice Team, this will take closer to the year we have suggested. But even if you already have a reparations or racial justice team, grounding yourselves together in this process and the values and practices of Liberation for All and OpenHeartedness will take a few months. Don't skimp on the time you spend here.



discipleship, invite them to join you as part of your Racial Justice Team. Each person who is interested in joining your Racial Justice Team should read this guide before committing to join this journey.

Your Racial Justice Team is not only a smart and strategic way to move through the reparations process; it is also a space of deep joy and communion. Here is one member of a racial justice team reflecting on this joy.



Nancie Hamlett
Member, Lyndale UCC Reparations Task
Force

ENSURING BLACK & INDIGENOUS FOLX ARE PART OF THE PROCESS

A reparations process can be a difficult time for Black and Indigenous members of your congregation. They may not be supportive of the process at all, fearing that a negative outcome will mean a loss of their sense of community. They may be concerned that this process will put them under the spotlight. They may be supportive of the process but not feel called to a leadership role. They may also be excited about the process, awaiting an invitation to participate. As a Racial Justice Team, check in with the Indigenous and Black members of your congregation. Ask and honor their preferred role in the **SACRED RECKONINGS** process. Commit to checking in with them throughout the reparations process—whether or not they are formal leaders of the Racial Justice Team.



Alfred Walking Bull, a Sicangu Lakota elder who is both Catholic and in the recovery community, reflects on the importance of working together as a team and of having multiple voices in a reparations process, as well as the role of spiritual grounding.



Alfred Walking Bull (Sicangu Lakota, Rosebud Sioux Tribe)
Development Director, Tending The Soil

FOUNDATIONAL KNOWLEDGE FOR THE RACIAL JUSTICE TEAM

As your Team begins to dig into the **SACRED RECKONINGS** curriculum (and as your Team grows), certain shared concepts and language will help you gain the most from your work together. In addition to relying on One-to-One Visits to form your team and working from an orientation of Liberation for All & OpenHeartedness, the Racial Justice Team should also work through the White Supremacy Culture Exercise (Appendix 3) and the Doctrine of Discovery Exercise (Appendix 4) and begin relying on the Embodiment Practice Tool (Appendix 5). Use this learning in your work within your congregation and within your Racial Justice Team. How you work together will project itself into your work within your congregation, and with the world outside your church.



ONE-TO-ONE VISITS

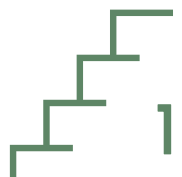
In the same way that Liberation for All and OpenHeartedness flow throughout the **SACRED RECKONINGS** process, relationship-building is another tool that you will return to often. We understand that the core of Jesus’s ministry was about gathering people and bringing people into relationship. He felt so strongly about this that he declared, “For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them” (Matthew 18:20 NRSV). We believe that a reparations process rooted in relationship-building is another act of faithful discipleship. To prepare for and to conduct these visits, read and follow Appendix 1.

Many find it to be a spiritual practice when they use this Tool within communities of faith. When you invite someone into a One-to-One Visit, think of that person as your guest (with you as the host), and seek to tap into the traditions surrounding hospitality as a faith practice.



Joel Miller
Lead Pastor, Columbus Mennonite Church

Here is a pastor’s perspective on the importance of building relationships and of One-to-One visits.



LIBERATION FOR ALL & OPENHEARTEDNESS

Once you have gathered your Racial Justice Team and they have looked over this **SACRED RECKONINGS** guide, complete the Liberation for All and OpenHeartedness Tool (Appendix 2) together. This will help ground you in a shared understanding of Liberation for All and OpenHeartedness and will build relationships among the members of the Racial Justice Team.

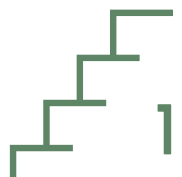
Here are four reflections on the importance of a Liberation for All and OpenHeartedness orientation and the joy that White settler-colonizers can find in this work of reparation and repair.



Wilber Miller
Columbus Mennonite Church Reparations
Task Force



Rev. Dr. Jennifer Harvey
Author, Dear White Christians





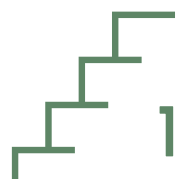
JoAnne Knap
Columbus Mennonite Church Reparations
Task Force



Macky Alston
Member of Judson Memorial Church and
documentary film co-director, Acts of
Reparation

WHITE SUPREMACY CULTURE & THE DOCTRINE OF DISCOVERY

One final piece of foundational work as you are gathering your Racial Justice Team. Much of the work of repair and reparation begins with engaging White supremacy and the ways in which it manifests in hidden and unknown ways, even and especially within our congregations. The culture of White supremacy exists all around us. Here are two speakers describing their experiences with the ubiquity and persistence of White supremacy culture.





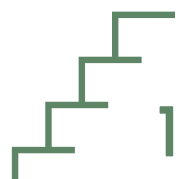
Sharon Day (Bois Forte Band of Ojibwe)
Executive Director, Indigenous Peoples
Task Force



Macky Alston
Member of Judson Memorial Church and
documentary film co-director, Acts of
Reparations

Inter-continental White supremacy arose in the context of Christian supremacy and of extractive capitalism. Each of these forces grew from and fed each other within the context of the Doctrine of Discovery. This legal principle dates to the Middle Ages but remains foundational to and alive within our legal systems today.

Complete the White Supremacy Culture (Appendix 3) and Doctrine of Discovery (Appendix 4) Exercises.



EMBODIMENT PRACTICE

You've heard it before. We encourage each other to put "mind over matter," and even as school children learned Descartes's "first principle" of "Enlightenment" philosophy: "I think, therefore I am."

A primary value of White supremacy culture separates the ethereal mind from the terrestrial body. To Descartes, "The difficulty is not merely that mind and body are different. It is that they are different in such a way that their interaction is impossible." Trust your thoughts, he said; senses are not reliable.

Over time, Christianity too, came to embrace Greek dualism and regard human bodies as sinful or polluted, elevating the spirit at the body's expense. There are many examples of this within Christianity, but perhaps none as important than Augustine. Utilizing the Greek philosophical tradition, particularly Neoplatonism, Augustine believed that there was an essential difference between spirit and flesh, that spirit was better than flesh, and therefore ought to subordinate flesh. Western Christian orthodoxy turned this hierarchical model of human nature into a patriarchal social model. Male, and men, go with spirit and reason, while menstruating, childbearing, lactating females are enmired in flesh and blood. What could be more natural than for males to subordinate females? The model has been generalized, with the powers-that-be identifying themselves with spirit and reason and defining oppressed classes as more governed by, or limited by, the flesh and thus sin-prone. Native peoples were identified by Christian, European colonizers as more defined by "the flesh" and, therefore, as savages.[3] The earth, first identified as female, was to be controlled, raped, and pillaged for its resources.[4]



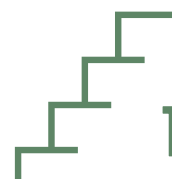
At the same time, our lives are filled with the reality of the mental-physical connection. We call difficult emotions and thoughts “heavy,” fear “chills” us, and happiness “lifts” us.

Somatics (literally, relating to the body) relies on the mind-body connection that we experience every day to survey our internal self and listen to signals our body sends about areas of pain, discomfort, or imbalance. Deepening the body-mind connection can help us regulate our nervous system’s response to stress and trauma. Often, White settler-colonizer culture conditions us to disconnect from our bodies. Reconnecting the body, mind, and spirit actively rejects this conditioning and helps bodies process stress. But it can also create the conditions for deeper connections with community and greater capacity for resilient change. Embodied wisdom is a gift that opens us up to possibilities and abundance.

In creating the conditions for deeper connection and resilient change, a somatic approach cannot ignore the social and institutional power differentials and violence that have led to the need for reparative action. We must be able to name the ways the logic of domination and oppression have created the current conditions and continue to impact our ability to be in right relationship with one another, creation, and God.

[3] Joey Mogul, Andrea Ritchie and Kay Whitlock, [Queer \(In\)justice: The Criminalization of LGBT in the United States](#) (Boston: Beacon Press, 2011).

[4] Rebecca Voelkel, [Carnal Knowledge of God: Embodied Love and the Movement for Justice](#) (Minneapolis: Fortress Press).



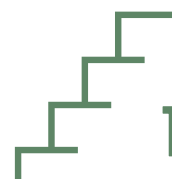
As we practice naming the trauma of domination and oppression and confessing our participation in this domination through Christian lineage, somatic practice can help us stay present. It keeps us focused on the work rather than getting derailed by our nervous system’s response to painful truths. In our individual and collective work toward reparatory action, connecting with our bodies and regulating our nervous systems become critical practices for our ability to be in right relationship with BIPOC folx.

Rev. Dr. Jennifer Harvey describes how White supremacy culture’s disconnection of mind from body hurts White settler colonizers and conditions them to unintentionally hurt others.



Rev. Dr. Jennifer Harvey
Author, *Dear White Christians*

Review the Embodiment Practice Tool (Appendix 5). At times in the **SACRED RECKONINGS**, we will specifically cue you to reengage this Tool by considering your physical reaction to the material. You can also draw on the breathing exercise in the Tool—individually or as a group—whenever you feel afraid, find yourself in an argument, or are unsure what to do next.



STEP 2: GATHERING INFORMATION

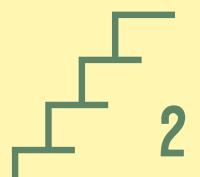
INTROSPECTION

Fear is really at the root of both of those things: White supremacy and racism. What am I fearing? What is it about racism, reparations, and White supremacy? What is it that I'm fearful of? And it usually boils down to fearful of losing identity and losing materialistic things that we've acquired. And the work of reparations does not require anyone to lose the material things that they've acquired. It's about reparations and restoration coming from entities such as cities, states, federal government, by however means they decide to do that. But it requires us, though, to have a heart change.

Rev. Pamela Ngunjiri

To begin the Racial Justice Team's work, it is helpful for the team to examine how your congregation handles change, how it talks about difficult topics, how it responds to social issues, and how it handles other justice issues. Step 2: Gathering Information is a key part of any **SACRED RECKONINGS** process. Through four data-collection Exercises, look squarely at the culture of your congregation and then apply the Framing Tool (Appendix 10) to identify the core values that motivate your congregation. These touchstones will be invaluable as you begin to craft your reparations process.

3-6 MONTHS



REPARATIONS CONGREGATIONAL ASSESSMENT

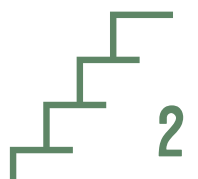
BEGIN

You can't get everybody educated before you start acting. You take those who are ready, and you move institutions along, even if everybody doesn't completely understand it, even if there is disagreement, and you begin doing the work, and you keep providing education and opportunities for learning and growth.

Rev. John Pegg

The Congregational Assessment Exercise (Appendix 6) helps you more clearly understand how your congregation operates and how ready it is to engage in this work. Have all the members of your Racial Justice Team individually complete the Congregational Assessment. You should also approach Black and Indigenous members of the congregation who are not on the Racial Justice Team and other “pillars” in the congregation to take the assessment.

Take the answers and wisdom you gained from the Congregational Assessment and choose a path (traditional, inclusive, or anti-racist). Use the Congregational Assessment to estimate the length of time you hope your first pass through **SACRED RECKONINGS** will take. Although those of us who want our congregation to take reparatory action want it to do so today, it is very important that we not rush the process. It is also very important that even if we are on a “traditional” congregation path, we keep moving and not allow the fears of some to freeze the reparations process. What are the next steps the Racial Justice Team might take to plan your congregation's reparations process?



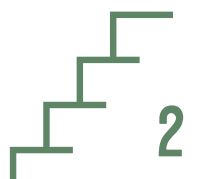
CONFLICT HISTORY

Next, have the Racial Justice Team talk about the history of conflict or splits in your congregation. What were the issues? Has your congregation ever had an experience of sexual misconduct by clergy or staff? How did the congregation deal with it at the time? How does it continue to deal with it? How does your congregation deal with conflict in general?

Read *Congregations and Conflict* (Appendix 7) and *How Does Change Happen in Churches or Any Organization* (Appendix 8) and determine your congregation's culture around conflict. Take the role of conflict seriously, and plan for how you will guide the congregation through conflict in the reparations process. For instance, will you explicitly do a session on conflict after you take the journey to the whole congregation in Step 5? Will you utilize the Tips for Handling Conflict and Communication Strategies (both in Appendix 7) as you start your Truth-Telling work in Step 6? How will you utilize this information?

TIP

If your congregation has a history of racial misunderstandings, it is important and useful to do the Congregational Assessment to assess the impact of that issue. However, we recommend that any congregation with such a history choose the “traditional” pace and path.

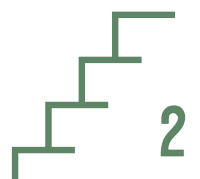


RISK DISCERNMENT

Your reparations journey will take you to new avenues and areas of solidarity. Even when a congregation is aligned in mission and tactics, it must understand its relationship to risk. Those who do not complete this step before stepping into solidarity can place the very people we seek solidarity with at risk. Complete the Risk Discernment materials and Exercise created by Side with Love for use in parallel work (Appendix 9) to assess your congregation’s risk tolerance and perception.

FRAMING

The tenor, spirit, and feel of a reparation process are key. Using the relational approach of Liberation for All and OpenHeartedness, the goal is to present your reparations process to the congregation in a way that resonates with their core values and faith, using language and images that call on the best in the church’s life. This is called “framing.” As a Racial Justice Team, spend at least one meeting going through the Framing Tool (Appendix 10). Call on this framing throughout your **SACRED RECKONINGS** journey to place material that is new to you and the congregation within a familiar context.

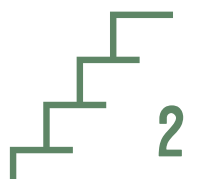


POWER ANALYSIS

Complete the Power Analysis Exercise (Appendix 11). Based on your power map, make a plan for members of the Racial Justice Team to meet with the leaders you identified. Using the One-to-One Visit Tool (Appendix 1), explore their concerns and potential sources of conflict and make a plan for relationship-building throughout the process. Use the Framing Tool (Appendix 10) in these One-to-One Visits.

TIP

If your clergy is against the reparations process, it is very difficult for it to proceed. They do not have to be ardent supporters, but active clergy opposition to reparations makes it very difficult for the **SACRED RECKONINGS** process to succeed. If you do have clergy opposition to a reparations process, stay in the “Racial Justice Team” phase of your work and focus on relationship-building with the clergy and informally work within the congregation. We recommend working only through Step 4 of this guide until the clergy are no longer opposed.



STEP 3: PLANNING YOUR PROCESS

When we, as Indigenous and Black leaders working with White congregations who want to do reparations, encounter people who want to just “do something” we often talk amongst ourselves about how unhelpful it is to have overly anxious and under-prepared White congregations do this work. That’s because they want to do something to make themselves feel better, not to actually change things. They almost never are able to stay the course.

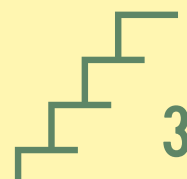
Rev. Jim Bear Jacobs

You can dive straight into a conversation about reparations. You can.

And you’re not going to be in that conversation for very long before you realize you really can’t even begin to do reparations until you’ve done a whole bunch of other stuff.

Dr. Jen Harvey

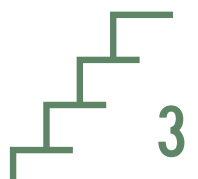
3-6 MONTHS



WEALTH ASSESSMENT AND REPARATORY MUSCLE

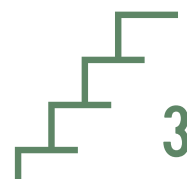
Too often, congregations underestimate the importance of a planful process that reflects the values, culture, and history of their congregation. We cannot overstate our experience and belief that intentionality in the reparations process increases its success and decreases the potential for problems. Balanced with this is that you are the experts on your congregation's culture. We urge you to consider our suggestions and weigh them with your knowledge of your congregation.

To begin, complete the Wealth Assessment Exercise (Appendix 12) and the Reparatory Muscle Exercise (Appendix 13). Then, meet as a Racial Justice Team to design a process that best fits your congregation. Using everything you've learned from all your information gathering and the suggested elements from Steps 4-11, plan your reparations journey.



Your process should include:

- Clarity about what your wealth return goal might be as a Racial Justice Team: reparations line-item in your congregational budget, congregational land-back efforts, individual member reparations payments, individual member land-back efforts, wealth surrender from your congregational endowment and value of your building and land, individual member wealth surrender, something else?
- An organizing plan including:
 - One-to-One visits: who needs to talk with whom, and when?
 - Your congregational frame
 - A timeline: when will each Step happen? How long will each Step take? Keep in mind that Step 6 will likely take the longest and require the most intentionality.
 - An organizing calendar that is rooted in the “path” the assessment indicated (traditional, aware, anti-racist) and the natural “seasons” of your congregation (When are the natural pauses and down time or rest? When are the times when the most work gets done?)
- A plan for your Racial Justice Team to meet regularly to assess your process and progress and to adjust accordingly.



STEP 4: BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

PROGRESS

I'm not Pollyanna about the ways in which steps are taken forward for justice. And then there's profound backlash that can even lead to regression that is worse than the progression that preceded it. But I love that vision that this is inevitable, that it's just the right thing to do and we're getting it. We're getting to get it.

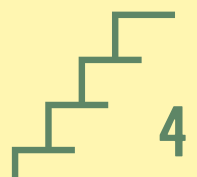
Macky Alston

For Steps 4-11, follow the calendar you set in Step 3. We include here sample traditional (white), inclusive (yellow), and anti-racist (green) timelines as a guide.

12 MONTHS

9 MONTHS

9 MONTHS



Your reparations journey can be a time of profound transformation for your church relationships and worship. Here, a pastor reflects on the depth and breadth of this change across a congregation.

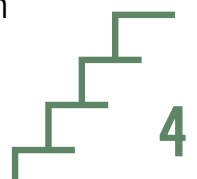


Joel Miller
Lead Pastor of Columbus Mennonite Church

Building and deepening relationships within your congregation—particularly across sub-groups and different ways of thinking—is vital throughout the entire **SACRED RECKONINGS** process. When people know they are being approached through Liberation for All and OpenHeartedness and being recognized and understood for who they are, they will be most likely to respond positively.

These heart connections allow people to move forward in support of the work of healing, repair, and reparation, and it is what makes a congregation stronger for having done the process.

Using One-to-One Visit techniques (Appendix 1), members of the Racial Justice Team should expand the scope of their visits. Listen and talk beyond the clergy and formal leadership to include the entire congregation. For smaller congregations, this may mean you speak with every member; for larger congregations, it may mean you speak with a selected sample of the membership. Because we're helping expand the congregation's imagination



of what is possible, it is important to get buy-in and official support for the **SACRED RECKONINGS** process from all segments of the congregation. If that seems unlikely in your congregation, particularly if you judged yourself a “traditional” congregation on the assessment, we recommend that you do the Fractal Exercise (Appendix 14) before beginning the One-to-One visits of this Step.

Grounding your reparations work in relationships will help your work reach further within and perhaps outside of your congregation.

TIP

Recognize that it will take time to schedule and complete these One-to-One visits. Don't get discouraged by that. Remember that this work is done most successfully at the speed of relationship and trust.



Tony De La Rosa
Transitional Synod Executive, Synod of Mid America

Here, a St. Louis group of churches moves from the truth of its own history to call for denominational repair.



PUBLIC STORYTELLING

The opportunity to listen deeply to one another through a **SACRED RECKONINGS** process is one of the characteristics that mark it as sacred and filled with Liberation for All and OpenHeartedness. Another practice that marks the process as sacred is Public Storytelling. Much like Liberation for All, OpenHeartedness, and the One-to-One Visit, this is a Tool that we recommend you use throughout the process, including as you build relationships within your congregation.

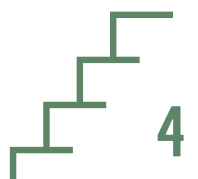
As Christians, we follow the life and ministry of Jesus as an example of what a faithful life looks like. And Jesus was a storyteller. Most of his preaching is encapsulated in stories or parables throughout the Gospels. Many times, when Jesus is asked a question or is challenged, he answers through a parable. One familiar example is the exchange between Jesus and “an expert in the law” that leads Jesus to tell the story of the “Good Samaritan” in Luke 10:25-36 (NRSV)

An expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he said, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him, “What is written in the law? What do you read there?” 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.” And he said to him, “You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.”



But wanting to vindicate himself, he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and took off, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came upon him, and when he saw him he was moved with compassion. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, treating them with oil and wine. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 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.’ Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

We know that we can open hearts by connecting the stories we hear from members of our congregation with the Gospel stories of Truth Telling, reckoning, justice, and healing. Our own stories of the transformation of historical reckoning and the liberation of transformation are important teachers.



As a Racial Justice Team, read *Telling Your Public Story: Self, Us, Now* (Appendix 15) and complete the *Public Storytelling Worksheet* (Appendix 16). Watch for opportunities in your reparations process to teach this Public Storytelling technique to others in the congregation, and note that your “us” may shift depending on your audience. For example, in Step 5, you may use this Tool to explain to decision-makers why it is important for the whole congregation to affirm its commitment to reparations work. As part of your Step 6 spiritual practice, your team may seek sermon time that uses this Tool to engage the congregation. And in Step 10, you may use public storytelling to celebrate and share the word of your Church’s reparations work.



Here, a clergy member describes the importance of story to the listener and the storyteller.

Rev. Pamela Ngunjiri
Co-Director of Racial Justice,
Minnesota Council of Churches



STEP 5: COMMUNITY RECOGNITION

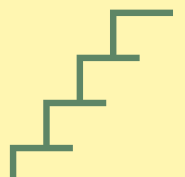
TRUST

The team is entrusted with something that the whole congregation agreed on, although maybe to varying degrees of passivity was agreed on. We have this in our budget and we all contribute to the budget and agreed on this. But I think the team has approached it as an opportunity, presenting it to the congregation continually as an opportunity to keep doing the work.

Pastor Joel Miller

Throughout **SACRED RECKONINGS**, we operate with the orientation that the Doctrine of Discovery (and the White supremacy, Christian supremacy, and extractive capitalism that undergird it and are the result of it) is both devastating to Black and Indigenous people and other peoples of color and to White settler-colonizer folk as well.

12-16 MONTHS 9-12 MONTHS 6 MONTHS

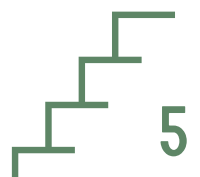


While the devastations are manifest completely differently, both require that White settler-colonizer individuals, families, and communities need to repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery and dismantle White supremacy, Christian supremacy, and extractive capitalism, because our very souls depend on it. Another way to say this is that the work of **SACRED RECKONINGS** isn't paternalistic work. It isn't charity work. The work of **SACRED RECKONINGS** is about creating collective liberation.

Our work, though, still occurs within the context of White-supremacy culture. One of the defining characteristics of the White supremacy that drives American culture is what author Edgar Villanueva calls a “separation worldview.” It goes like this:

The boundaries of my body separate me from the rest of the universe. I'm on my own against the world. This terrifies me, and so I try to control everything outside myself, also known as the Other. I fear the Other; I must compete with the Other in order to meet my needs. I always need to act in my self-interest, and I blame the Other for everything that goes wrong.

Villanueva explains that separation begets fear, scarcity, and blame in nearly every aspect of our lives. “In the separation worldview, humans are divided from and set above nature, mind is separated from and elevated above body, and some humans are considered distinct from and valued above others—us versus them—as opposed to seeing ourselves as part of the greater whole.” As a matter of resource allocation, “[t]he separation-based economy exploits natural resources and most of the planet's inhabitants for the profit of a few.”[5]



The climate change and wealth inequality that are defining features of the United States in the twenty-first century are both predictable outcomes of a country steeped in the separation worldview.

VIVIFYING THE DESCENDANTS

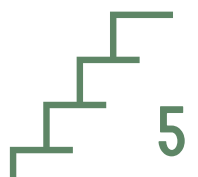
Worldviews, though, can be changed. We do not have to experience Creation as a hierarchy or divided between Us and Them. We can reimagine and create a world of connection. Use the Vivifying Descendants Tool (Appendix 17) to reconnect what the separation worldview has uncoupled and to create a thought bridge from the existing world to the one you want for your descendants.

Every time you gather in your small group or with any of your congregational colleagues, please complete this Exercise with them as an opening grounding.

RE-MEMBERING

Liberation for All means what it says—liberation for everyone. **SACRED RECKONINGS** is not ever about shaming. Shame is a tool of White supremacy culture, and, as the self-named “Black, lesbian, mother, warrior, poet” Audre Lorde so brilliantly reminds us, “The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.” That’s why we want to be clear that tactics of White supremacy culture like shame have no place in this process.

[5] Edgar Villanueva, [Decolonizing Wealth: Indigenous Wisdom to Heal Divides and Restore Balance](#), 2d ed. (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2021).



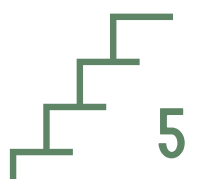
How then, do we reckon with the crimes of our forebearers? Use the Remembering Exercise (Appendix 18) to begin to shift your focus from shame (“we are bad”) to remorse (“we’ve done bad things and have the capacity to change”). This shift will help you empathize with members of the congregation who fear the truths this process will uncover and metabolize your own grief as you work through Step 6.

Up until now, the Racial Justice Team has been operating as an ad hoc body. In this Step in the **SACRED RECKONINGS** process, you approach your Council or Governing Board for their official blessing and support.

This Step draws heavily from the previous Steps. Review the information you gathered in Step 2 (especially the processes to introduce a resolution or proposal) to decide whom to approach and how. Revisit your One-to-One Visits with the congregational leadership to determine who has a strong interest in furthering the reparations journey and would be able and willing to bring a proposal before the governing body.

Also consider who within your One-to-One visits may be good additions to the Reparations Task Force. Use all of this information and your frame to build a plan to present your formalization request to your governing body in a strategic and thoughtful way.

Ask your Governing Body to take an official vote to recognize you as working on their behalf as a recognized body of the congregation. It can be helpful to take the name of the Reparations Task Force. How this looks within your church will vary, of course, depending upon your



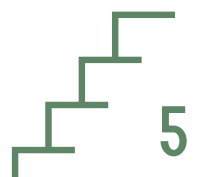
congregational and denominational culture and structure. The membership of the Reparations Task Force will most likely include the Racial Justice Team that has been shepherding the process thus far, but it should also have representatives from a wider variety of constituencies or “stakeholders” within the congregation. It is important to note, however, that these representatives should not be opponents of the reparations journey. They should be supporters and proponents who offer new viewpoints within the congregation.

This change in the labeling or identity of the Racial Justice Team to a Reparations Task Force helps the membership of the congregation see that the congregational leadership has sanctioned a process of study and discernment. It signals that the work of reparations is not just the action of a “fringe group” within the congregation.



Here is one clergy member describing the heart change that is necessary to any lasting reparations process.

Rev. Pamela Ngunjiri
Co-Director of Racial Justice,
Minnesota Council of Churches





Sacred RECKONINGS

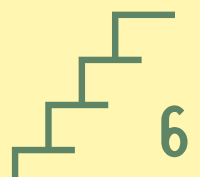
**TAKING THE JOURNEY
WITH YOUR COMMUNITY**

STEP 6: THE REPARATORY ECO MAP

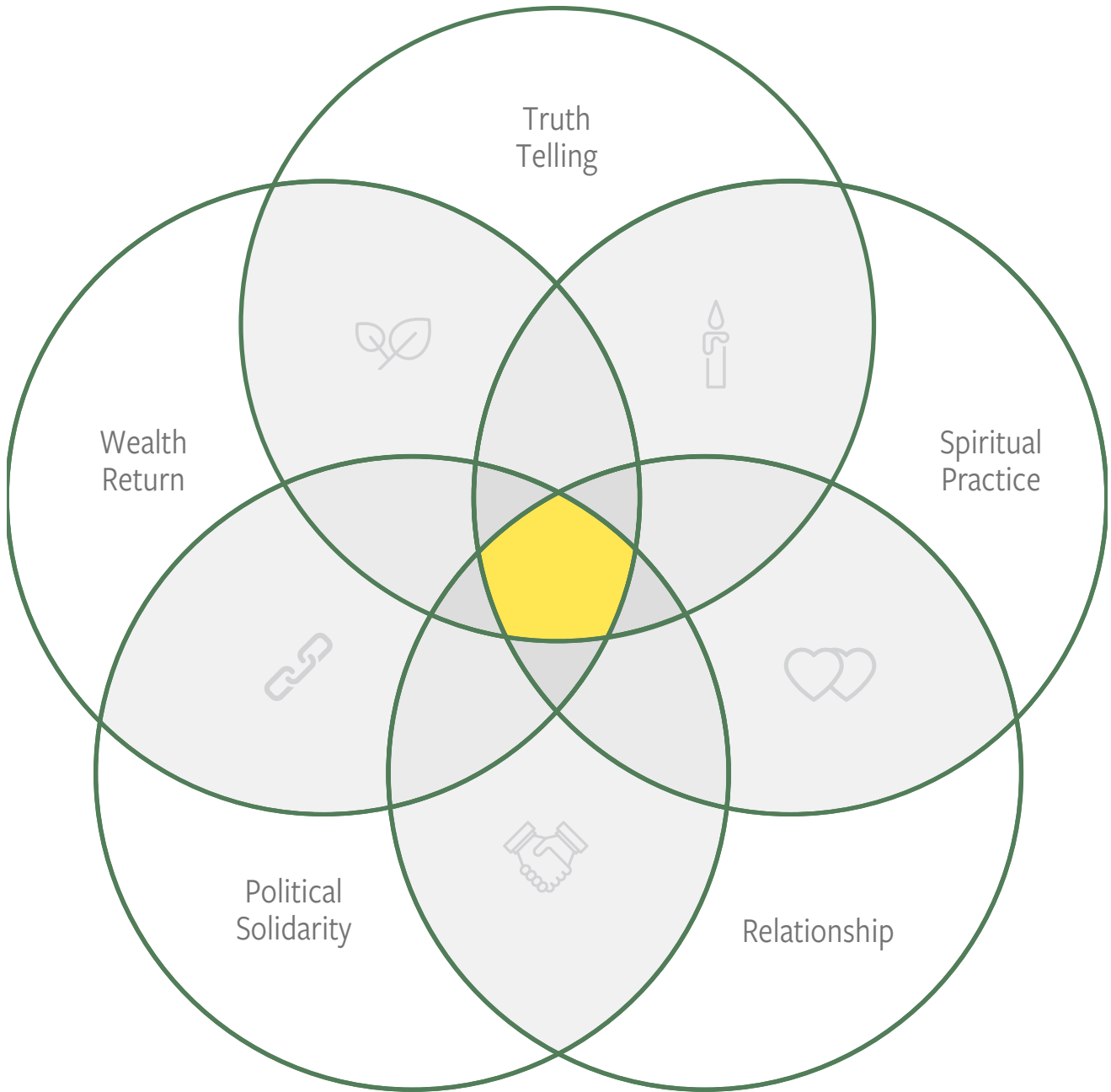
SACRED RECKONINGS emerged from deep listening to many Black and Indigenous leaders and groups. A lesson of that learning that is central to this curriculum is the understanding that the definition of reparations and reparatory action must be about money and land. But, paradoxically perhaps, it is also more than money and land. This Reparatory Eco Map sprung from this paradox. It teaches that reparation lies at the overlapping center of Truth Telling, Spiritual Practice, Relationship, Political Solidarity, and Wealth Return.

This Step is the heart of your work. This is where you will spend the bulk of your time as a congregation. It may take a year or several. Our time estimates assume that much of this work will run concurrently. For instance, you might participate in an action of political solidarity like attending an Indigenous-led protest and then do a worship service about the subject of the protest in which the sermon, while confession and/or prayer time focus on truth-telling. In this example, you would work on political solidarity, spiritual practice, and truth-telling at the same time.

12-24 MONTHS 12-18 MONTHS 12 MONTHS

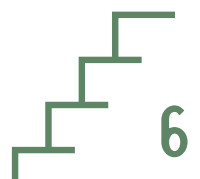


REPARATORY ECO MAP



Created by the MARCH (Multifatih Anti-Racism, Change & Healing) working group: Rev. Terri Burnor; Rev. Ashley Horan; Jessica Intermill, Esq.; Liz Loeb, Esq.; Rev. Dana Neuhauser; Rev. Jim Bear Jacobs (Stockbridge-Munsee Mohican Nation); Rev. Dr. Rebecca Voelkel

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DEEDS

We need the love and the word and the deed, but when the rubber meets the road, it's the deeds. And so reparations is a beginning point on that and it's going to be messy and difficult to figure out, but we need to start doing it.

Rev. John Pegg

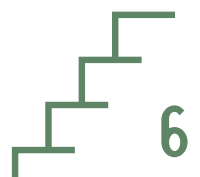
Because the Reparatory Eco Map places these focus areas in a group with no beginning or end, any can be an entry point to your journey. And no matter where you enter the journey, your journey will take you through each overlapping sector. Our experience, though, is that many congregations begin their work through Truth Telling. If no sector stands out to you as a starting point, begin there.

Throughout your journey, keep in mind that these overlapping sectors are never independent. For example, during Truth Telling Exercises, you may need to jog over to Spiritual Practices to ground your grief, and you may practice Relationship building through Political Solidarity. There is no “right” answer except to do the work with OpenHeartedness.



Here, an elder explains the spiritual importance of starting this journey, and of holding faith when you do not yet know where your journey will take you or when it will end.

Alfred Walking Bull (Sicangu Lakota, Rosebud Sioux Tribe)
Development Director, Tending The Soil



TRUTH TELLING

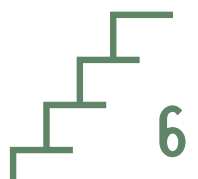
TRUTH

What if you and I had a fight and you hit me and you were like, "I didn't hit you." No. You hit me. We're not going to get anywhere until you say, "I hit you. I'm sorry." That's what we've got to do.

Coya White Hat-Artichoker

When we speak of Truth Telling as part of the work of repair and reparations in the United States, we begin first with the Doctrine of Discovery. That doctrine, rooted in the belief that only European Christians are human, legalized and moralized the trans-Atlantic slave trade and Indigenous genocide across the globe. Armed with this theological worldview, European colonizers raped, pillaged, enslaved, and killed people across West Africa and the Americas.

And, crucially for the work of **SACRED RECKONINGS**, the Doctrine of Discovery is no historic relic. The theological, legal, economic, somatic, and psychological impacts of the Doctrine of Discovery are alive and well today. But one of the ways that the interlocking cage of oppression created by the Doctrine of Discovery functions is to make us believe the "past is in the past" and that we need to always be looking toward the future which includes forgetting, "letting go of," or burying the past. There are two ways we must challenge this worldview.

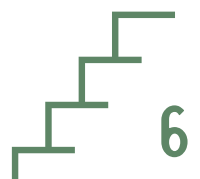


First, consider that history is “stacked.” Rather than relying solely on a linear, past-present-future understanding of time, see that time lives in place with the past, present, and future all at once. For example, flip to the Colophon at the end of this guide to learn about Bayard, the typeface we chose for some headings and accents. We made that decision in 2022 and it impacts the **SACRED RECKONINGS** materials that you view today.

The typeface is named for civil-rights leader Bayard Rustin (1912-1987), and inspired by signs from the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. Photos of those signs are included in the Colophon. That March was, in turn, part of a movement that responded to segregation and wealth disparities rooted in the racism of trans-Atlantic slavery (1550s-1860s), which itself rested on the fifteenth-century Doctrine of Discovery.

Centuries of injustice and resilience exist in the shapes of the letters you read today. And this curriculum plants and waters the seeds of possibilities. We share this time and space today to imagine and build the reality of tomorrow. As you practice Truth Telling, you will begin to see that every one of your days sits at the stacked intersection of past, present, and future.

Second, seeing the “stacks” of history require us to acknowledge the reality that White and Christian supremacy, the Doctrine of Discovery, and the extractive capitalism it perpetrated and spurred are alive and well today. To do the work of repairing and reparation, we must tell the truth: about this stacked history and about the injustice and inequity that continue to haunt us.



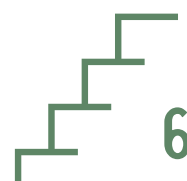
This Truth Telling is for individuals, congregations, and the larger society. It involves White folx listening deeply to stories of Indigenous and Black communities, families, and individuals. And it involves White folx telling the full truths of their families, congregations, and institutions. In other words, the Truth Telling part of the Reparatory Eco Map is rich with possibility and work, and it occurs on multiple levels.

SOCIETAL AND DENOMINATIONAL TRUTH TELLING

As you work the Reparatory Eco Map, make time and space for Truth Telling on the societal level, particularly the story of the Doctrine of Discovery and its ongoing impacts. Ensure that your congregation listens to Black and Indigenous historians and storytellers and make sure to include explicitly the role of our Christian forebears in the telling as well as the impact today.

An example of societal truth-telling linked to the role of Christian forebears is the formal confession, repentance, and reparation that the United Church of Christ practiced in 1993 on the 100th Anniversary of the overthrow of the Hawai’ian government perpetrated by the US, including the forebears to the United Church of Christ.

In 1993, the President of the UCC, Rev. Dr. Paul Sherry, travelled to Hawai’i and issued a formal apology in the midst of a sacred ritual by na Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawai’ian) leaders. His apology included truth telling about the Doctrine of Discovery and the role that UCC leaders played in the overthrow of Queen Liliokulani. A description of the context for the apology was written by UCC staff:



In 1820 the brig Thaddeus landed the first of 150 missionaries sent by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) to: “aim at nothing short of covering these islands with fruitful fields and pleasant dwellings, and schools and churches; of raising up the whole people to an elevated state of Christian civilization...to turn them from their barbarous courses and habits.”[6]

... the larger context for the overthrow [of Queen Lili‘uokalani] was the assumed superiority of the “elevated state of Christian civilization” as noted above in the ABCFM charge in 1819 and in the U. S. government’s ideology of “Manifest Destiny” that sought to justify its imperial expansion from Cuba to the Philippines.[7]

After the apology was delivered at an event in which 12,000 people attended, several reparatory actions were taken including a pledge of political solidarity in the struggle for na Kanaka Maoli sovereignty and an act of redress in the midst of “a service of worship at which time property from the former Chinese Christian Church at Waimea (7,377 square feet) and the sanctuary and facilities of the former First Hawaiian Church UCC of Waimea were transferred to the newly formed UCC congregation of Native Hawaiians from the island of Niihau, Hawaii.”

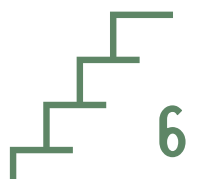
[6] “Instructions from the Prudential Committee of the ABCFM to members of the Mission to the Sandwich Islands” (Boston: Samuel Armstrong, 1819) in David Stowe, “Background for an Apology to Native Hawaiian People,” *New Conversation* (Spring 1993, vol. 15, #1).

[7] Charles McCollough, Why Our Church Apologized To Hawai‘i, available at https://www.hcucc.org/_files/ugd/1c51bo_8f3959479d74473cbe4449d9b362664d.pdf.

CONGREGATIONAL AND INDIVIDUAL TRUTH TELLING

As you are engaging the Reparatory Eco Map, also make time and space for the stories of how your congregation has acted vis a vis racial justice and the histories and actions of individual members.

Use the Public Storytelling Tool to introduce your congregation to the truths you are learning and invite them to engage their own learning and truth telling. Embed your learning into your own congregational practices, whether that practice is as mundane as a bulletin or as holy as Good Friday. We hope these examples will spur your creativity as you look to bring truth telling to your own congregation.





Joel Miller
Lead Pastor, Columbus Mennonite Church

Learn how Columbus Mennonite Church began to metabolize the truth of redlining as a full congregation.

This 40-minute virtual Good Friday Walk for Justice invited Christian congregations to consider the historic and present-day manifestations of crucifixion on a virtual journey to B'dote (this site of Dakota creation), Fort Snelling (the site of a Dakota concentration camp), and the Bishop Henry Whipple Federal Building (the site of Minnesota's Immigration Court and office of Immigration and Customs Enforcement offices).



In the unrest of 2020, Minneapolis clergy created a city-wide Advent Journey of Las Posadas that visited several sacred sites in the Twin Cities and practiced place-based story-telling. The Advent journey included stories of liberation amidst desperation, justice amidst oppression, and resistance and solidarity amidst seeming annihilation. Join them:

first candle



A candle of hope at the Four Oaks with the story of the four grandmothers

second candle



A candle of peace at the Survivors of Sexual Violence Memorial where we asked what makes for peace

third candle



A candle to claim the joy that comes from resistance and persistence at B'dote

fourth candle

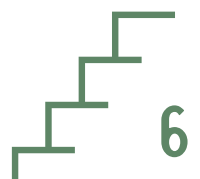


A candle of love at George Floyd Square

TRUTH TELLING EXERCISES

In your Reparations Task Force, complete Start Where You Are (Appendix 19) and Keep Going (Appendix 20). Then, move this truth-telling from your Task Force to the larger congregation. Use this chart to track your introduction of truth-telling content in each of these areas of congregational life. Use the last row for any important area that is not on the list:

	Societal Truth	Denominational Truth	Congregational Truth	Familial Truth
	What truths must we hear? What must we tell?			
Worship				
Adult Ed				
Children's Ed				
Finances				
What else?				



SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

The work of **SACRED RECKONINGS**, particularly the truth of what has been done in our names and what we have perpetuated as White folk, can be overwhelming. If White settler-colonizers are going to move past fight, flight, or freeze responses—if we are going to stay in the work and not betray our BIPOC friends, family, and colleagues—we must root ourselves in deep and genuine spiritual practices.

But spiritual practices aren't just to inoculate us against negative actions. Spiritual practices allow us to dream revelatory dreams. They can illuminate the world God dreams for us all: liberative, loving, and luscious. And spiritual practices can help us understand that the work of reparation allows us to participate in the redemption of our White ancestors.



Here, Macky Alston describes how learning about and engaging with his slave-holding ancestors helped him reckon with his heritage and connect with them as individuals.

Macky Alston
Member of Judson Memorial Church &
documentary film co-director, Acts of Reparations



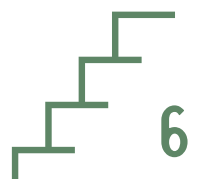
Macky's wisdom leads us to some big-picture suggestions as you are working in the Spiritual Practice portion of the Reparatory Eco Map. Indigenous genocide and land theft and race-based slavery began as a problem of bad theology and continued as the spiritual practices that emanate from it. Therefore, as we are doing the work of spiritual practice, we need to engage in both deconstructive and constructive practices.

First, we need to address the deconstruct the theologies that support the Doctrine of Discovery and White supremacy and deconstruct the spiritual practices that uphold and support this bad theology.

Second, we are invited to the constructive task of articulating theologies of healing and liberation and engaging in the spiritual practices that emanate from them. Like the gardener who tends a healthy plot, we must excise the buckthorn of White supremacy and replant non-invasive theologies and spiritual practice.

DECONSTRUCTING THEOLOGIES OF DOMINANCE AND EMPIRE

There are many models of deconstruction. But one that we've already named as part of the work of Truth Telling is confession and repentance. Confession and repentance can be, for Christians, the best framing for the work of Truth Telling. We are confessing and telling the real truth about the histories of our ancestors in the faith and we are repenting, turning away from White supremacy/Christian supremacy and re-orienting toward the work of healing, repair, and Liberation for All.



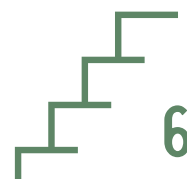
One of the ways to think about this work of confession and repentance is through the model of “kenosis” from Phillipians 2:7. The section of scripture is referred to as “the Kenosis of the Father” and it offers the model of a pouring out of power and privilege. Rev. Dr. Kelly Brown Douglas writes:

That Jesus was crucified, and refused to save himself from being crucified, reveals that he emptied himself of all privilege that might separate him from the victims of the deadly political, cultural, and religious realities of his day.

Through this shedding of power, Jesus at once denounced the crucifying privileges of Whiteness while affirming the crucified realities of blackness. Theologian Jon Sobrino put it this way: “The cross, for its part, tells of God’s affinity with victims.”

What is made clear, therefore, is that one cannot be at once White and Christian. To claim Whiteness is essentially to make peace with crucifying privilege—thus complying with the crucifying realities of White supremacy. Ecclesiastical institutions and faith communities must lead the way toward claiming a moral identity by naming and freeing themselves from their own institutional realities of White privilege.[8]

[8] Kelly Brown Douglas, “A Christian Call for Reparations,” *Sojourners* (July 2020) at <https://sojo.net/magazine/july-2020/christian-call-case-slavery-reparations-kelly-brown-douglas>.

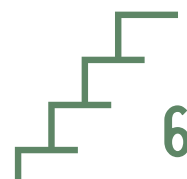


As we begin to deconstruct harmful theologies through confession and repentance, how do White settler-colonizer Christians deal spiritually with the realities of what “our people” have done? When we really allow ourselves to feel what our people have done, there can be an almost overwhelming experience of grief. As we are confessing and seeking repentance, how can our Christian spiritual traditions around grief and lament support our work? How can these practices help mitigate against fight, flight, or freeze and help us stay present to the truths we are confessing?

The answer to these questions and the spiritual practices you engage for your congregation should be connected to the work you’ve already done around framing and your congregation’s deepest values and culture. But a partial list includes:

- Psalms of lament
- Practices of lamentation
- Lachrymal of Healing ([this link](#) has a lovely article about this spiritual practice under the same name)
- Services of grieving (Blue Christmas)
- Services of Confession and Repentance
- Repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery
- Anointing with oil

As with everything in **SACRED RECKONINGS**, cultural competency within your congregation is key. You are the expert on your congregational culture. Use your Framing Tool (Appendix 10) and do deep listening for the theologies and spiritual practices that resonate most in your congregation and that are not appropriated from someone else’s tradition.



As a Reparations Task Force, work through the Psalm of Lament Exercise (Appendix 21). Explore these videos for examples of deconstructive theologies in reparations work.

confession



In this video, Alfred Walking Bull describes the importance of confession to the work of reparation.

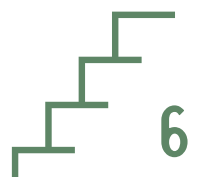
Alfred Walking Bull (Sicangu Lakota, Rosebud Sioux Tribe)
Development Director, Tending The Soil

lament



And here, Rev. Pamela Ngunjiri talks about how powerful lament can be to this work.

Rev. Pamela Ngunjiri
Co-Director of Racial Justice,
Minnesota Council of Churches



CONSTRUCTIVE THEOLOGICAL FRAMES

As with much of the **SACRED RECKONINGS** process, the deconstructive and constructive theological tasks are not necessarily linear. Don't expect an easy transition from deconstruction to construction. In fact, you may want to cast the dream and vision of a constructive theological frame first to inspire and support the work of deconstruction.

Black womanist theologian Rev. Dr. Kelly Brown Douglas offers one spiritual practice that supports both deconstruction and construction.

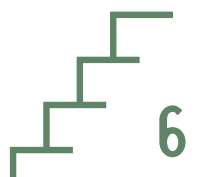
In faith communities, reparations must begin with anamnestic truth-telling. Anamnesis means “memorial sacrifice.” Its origins are in Jesus’ words, “Do this in memory of me” (Luke 22:19). This is not a passive process but one in which Christians enter into the sacrifice. It is about being accountable to the past in the very present.[9]

This example of this anamnestic truth-telling in the context of worship comes from Lyndale UCC's Communion Liturgy:

We remember that on the night before Jesus was killed by those who feared him...

On the night before he was gunned down in a school, or a grocery store, or a Walmart...

[9] Kelly Brown Douglas, “A Christian Call for Reparations,” *Sojourners* (July 2020) at <https://sojo.net/magazine/july-2020/christian-call-case-slavery-reparations-kelly-brown-douglas>.



On the night before he was suffocated by the knee of a policeman...

On the night before her trans* body was murdered...

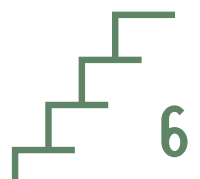
On the night before he was infected inside an ICE facility...

On the night before her body was destroyed by a pipeline...

On the night before he was arrested and crucified...

Jesus sat at table with those he loved. And as they gathered, they did so with laughter and love, they told stories and remembered all they had done together—healing and blessing, creatively resisting, worshiping and celebrating. And as they were celebrating, Jesus took some bread and blessed it and broke it. And to remind them of all that had been and to give them strength for what lay ahead, He said “this is my body, broken open and shared with you. Each time you eat this ordinary bread, remember the extraordinary, transformative power of our lives when they broken open for justice and love.”

Then he took the cup, the cup that had been raised in toasts and celebration of all the good and great they had done, or at least attempted, and he said, “this is the cup of blessing. Each time you drink of this cup you participate in the promise of new life, here and now, in communion with God.”



Other examples of constructive theological frames of repair and healing that are rooted biblically include:

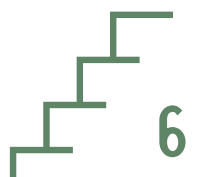
Repairers of the Breach ISAIAH 58:12

“Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;
you shall raise up the foundations of many generations;
you shall be called the repairer of the breach,
the restorer of streets to live in.”

This is the constructive theological framework that the Poor Peoples Campaign uses and they have a lot of wonderful resources available to support this work.

Jubilee LEVITICUS 25

This framework connects the work of Sabbath, which happens once a week, with sabbatical, which happens once every seven years, and Jubilee, which happens once every seven times seven years and is designed to reset, re-distribute, re-establish just economic equity. In this frame, there is a direct connection between our weekly communal spiritual practices of Sabbath (worship, shared meals, rest, renewal and other regular spiritual practices) with the rest of the land, which is the root of sabbatical and the re-setting of economic relationships, which is the root of jubilee.



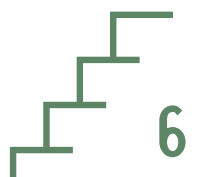
Sharing all things in common ACTS 4:32

“Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common.”

In this constructive framework, the practice of the early church is held up as a model of economic interdependence in small community. Many modern day intentional religious communities practice this ethic of pooling their resources. Examples are numerous including “New Monasticism” communities, many Anabaptist communities, many Catholic Worker communities and, historically, communities like the East Harlem Protestant Parish and the Inner City Protestant Parish in Cleveland, Ohio.

Jesus' & Zaccheus LUKE 19

On the 50th anniversary of James Forman’s interruption of the church service at Riverside Church in NYC to demand White churches and synagogues pay \$500 million in reparations to Black communities, Dr. Keri Day lectured at Riverside and suggested Zaccheus as a model of Jesus’ picture of reparations:



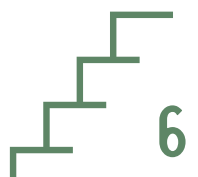
“When we turn to the Gospel, we see that Jesus is clear that reparations or restitution to those who have been exploited and rendered vulnerable is not optional but required. Consider Jesus’ encounter with Zaccheus in Luke 19,” Day said.

“Zaccheus is a tax collector who has participated in Roman imperial oppression against marginalized Jewish populations. Jesus sits with Zaccheus but is clear with Zaccheus on what his reparative response needed to be and that this reparative response as Zaccheus was tasked to do was not simply and only a political response but was more deeply a theological response,” she explained.

“In his encounter with Zaccheus, I want to suggest that Jesus sets forth a reparations ethic Zaccheus is expected to give back that which he has stolen so that he can be reconciled with others and God. Reconciliation cannot occur until he has given back what he has stolen.”[10]

As you will see later, **SACRED RECKONINGS** offers several concrete reparatory actions modeled after the Zaccheus story.

[10] Leonardo Blair, “Theologian makes biblical case for why white Christians need to support reparations for black Americans,” Christian Post (May 17, 2019) at <https://www.christianpost.com/news/theologian-makes-biblical-case-for-why-White-christians-need-to-support-reparations-for-black-americans.html>.



Here, several elders reflect on the constructive theological and spiritual practices that can support the work of reparations.

golden rule



Rev. Pamela Ngunjiri,
Co-Director of Racial Justice,
Minnesota Council of Churches

congregational care



Joel Miller
Lead Pastor, Columbus Mennonite Church

Christian ethics



Macky Alston
Member of Judson Memorial Church &
documentary film co-director, Acts of
Reparations

congregational learning



Joel Miller
Lead Pastor, Columbus Mennonite Church

community



Alfred Walking Bull (Sicangu Lakota, Rosebud Sioux Tribe)
Development Director, Tending The Soil

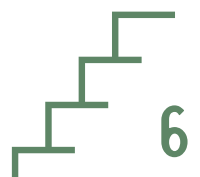
love



Louie Blue Coat (Standing Rock Lakota)
Acting Director, Dakota Association of the United Church of Christ

SMALL SPIRITUAL PRACTICE GROUPS

Small group work is one way to support the spiritual work of reparations. Try the Small Group Spiritual Practice Exercise (Appendix 22) with your Reparations Task Force. And offer small group opportunities for the whole congregation around story-telling, support, and accountability.



RELATIONSHIP

As we said in the Introduction, **SACRED RECKONINGS** is written from the understanding that, given the Doctrine of Discovery, any work of reparation by White settler-colonizers must be done following the leadership of Black and Indigenous communities and in solidarity with the teaching and wisdom of BIPOC communities.

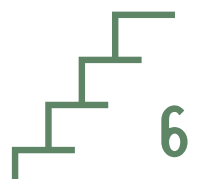
There are many reasons for this.

It is often in the context of genuine relationships with Black and Indigenous people that White folx are first exposed to the truth about the damages created by the Doctrine of Discovery and White supremacy, Christian supremacy, and extractive capitalism.

It is also often in the context of these relationships that White settler-colonizers can take the first steps toward uncovering the truths about their own families and congregations and how they benefit from and further these damages.

And, it is often in the context of relationship with Black and Indigenous folx, that White settler-colonizers begin to recognize that White supremacy, Christian supremacy, and extractive capitalism have deeply damaged them and their families.

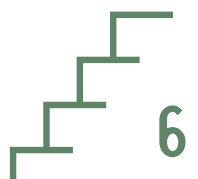
Yet it is also true that many, many White folx do not have genuine relationships with any BIPOC folx. The lack of genuine relationships is both a marker of White supremacy and exacerbates the impact of White supremacy. White settler-



colonizers often don't have relationships with Black and Indigenous folk because the design and theologies of the Doctrine of Discovery—and the law that implemented it—are all geared toward maintaining separation and domination between White settler-colonizers and Black and Indigenous folk. And the lasting impact of this separation and domination is felt in the reparations process when White settler-colonizers make attempts at reparations absent of the direction and asks of Black and Indigenous communities. The result can range from a perceived reparatory act that is not useful in the least to a perceived reparatory act that actually causes further oppression, damage, and abuse.

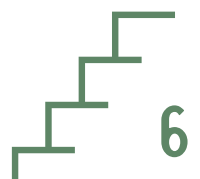
Against this backdrop, it is not enough to shrug that you live in a White suburb or town, and so don't have any BIPOC friends or colleagues in your life. Step out of your comfort zone to attend a BIPOC-led event. Shop at a BIPOC-owned store. Support a Black or Indigenous-led organization and attend their programming. Eat at a BIPOC-owned restaurant. And when you do each of these things, start authentic conversations with the people you encounter. We encourage you to act intentionally to create the relationship with your Black and Indigenous kin that White supremacy worked to destroy. But we offer this encouragement with three words of caution.

First, building relationships in service of the work of reparations means that the point and purpose of the work is to build relationship, not garner kudos for being good White people. Whether a person decides to accept your invitation to relationship or to recognize your reparatory work is up to them and is entirely separate from your work of reparations.



Second, part of the devastation wrought by the Doctrine of Discovery is that White supremacy so entangles our cross-race relationships that it can be deeply exhausting at best and traumatic at worst for BIPOC folx to be in close relationship with White folx. Recognize that the stacked history of the Doctrine of Discovery has resulted in layers upon layers of racialized trauma. This requires a high degree of commitment to learning, listening, and making amends when harm is caused interpersonally. It also means that many BIPOC folx do not want to form relationships with White settler-colonizer folx who are new in their lives. Even as the work of reparation is done with the anticipation of liberation for all of us, the present reality is that not all BIPOC folx are willing to enter into relationships of trust with White folx. If you encounter this, have a deep respect for consent and take no for an answer when it is given.

Last, even if you don't know a single Black or Indigenous person, you can still position yourself in relationship to Black and Indigenous thought leaders. Read books by Black authors. Binge watch *Reservation Dogs* and *Rutherford Falls*. Subscribe to the newsletters of Black and Indigenous organizations. Fill your social-media feed with Black and Indigenous leaders. As one Indigenous leader shared during the research process for **SACRED RECKONINGS**, “you didn't have to know a South African to know that Apartheid was wrong and to work to end it. Likewise, you don't have to form a new relationship with an Indigenous person to work to dismantle the Doctrine of Discovery.”



These Black and Indigenous leaders describe the importance of relationships and the need for White settler-colonizers to leave their comfort zones to create the relationships that White-supremacy culture discourages. We also include White reparations leaders who have experienced relationship in this process. Watch and then complete the Relationship Mapping Exercise (Appendix 23).



Rev. Pamela Ngunjiri
Co-Director of Racial Justice, Minnesota
Council of Churches



Sharon Day (Bois Forte Band of Ojibwe)
Executive Director, Indigenous Peoples Task
Force



Dr. Carolyn Pegg
Member, Lyndale UCC Reparations Task
Force



Rev. John Pegg
MMember of Lyndale UCC

POLITICAL SOLIDARITY

WHITENESS

We have needed for people to use their whiteness to its fullest advantage and power on our behalf, because we were not structurally able to do so. But more often than not—particularly among progressives—they abdicated their voice and their power, because they wanted to be our allies, and what ended up happening was that the moment was lost.

Rev. Dr. Stephen G. Ray Jr.

If the Relationship focus area of the Reparatory Eco Map is focused on followership and solidarity in which power is used more in line with the “Kenosis of the Father” model, this part of the Reparatory Eco-System is focused on leveraging our power, and using our leadership and access to dismantle White and Christian supremacy and extractive capitalism.

It is important to understand that this work may push you past your comfort zone, but it should not push you into conflict with your own values.



In every act of political solidarity, you must define the boundaries of your followership—preferably before you act.

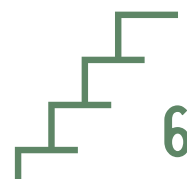
WHO ARE YOU FOLLOWING?

Is the group or action led by impacted communities or by White people? Does the leader or movement reinscribe oppression against other groups? For example, does the group marginalize or disrespect queer, disabled, or women’s voices? Do you share the values and objectives of the leader? Obviously, not every Black or Indigenous person has the same objective as every other; you choose who you follow.

HOW ARE YOU FOLLOWING?

Following does not mean lack of agency. You must decide what resources you are willing to share, how much time and energy you will devote, and (for example) whether you are willing to risk arrest. Use the Risk Discernment Tool (Appendix 9) to determine your own boundaries and risk tolerance before you are called to act.

At bottom, you are learning these boundaries so that you can effectively discern where your help is wanted and what help you want to give. It’s a matter of mutual consent. This is a continual process of self-discernment. And it’s for very practical reasons. If your “help” is unwanted, you become a burden.

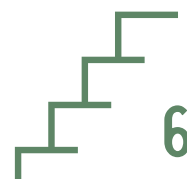


Rev. Korla Masters elaborated on this in a Facebook reflection on Epiphany:

Epiphany has me thinking about one of the early rules I learned about ministry [because] I went to school in [St. Louis] during the Ferguson uprising: clergy shouldn't take private meetings with public officials. We have too much capacity to get others hurt.

I promise I'm not trying to cancel the magi! And. I'm hearing in the story, for the first time this morning, the reality that the magi are the ones who alerted Herod to Jesus's birth and set the slaughter of the innocents into motion, because they trusted what their status would mean to him. Their (learned, inculcated, well-intended) assumption that king-meant-peer had a brutal outcome. So it is really often when clergy imagine (with learned, inculcated, well-intended guardrails on our imaginations) that we have some unique capacity to enter rooms of power and help—when we imagine that we couldn't possibly be used as tools of evil. If you say “yes” but you're not ready or able to follow through, you are a liability.

And throughout all of this, you will hit the edges of your comfort in and with your own Whiteness. Often, your role will be in the background—helping with setup or tear down or redirecting reporters to Black and Indigenous leaders. But that is not always true. One of the most unsettling realities of allyships is that following the leadership of others may—when asked—mean using your own voice and body to amplify their message. As Alfred Walking Bull teaches:



RIGHT-SIZED

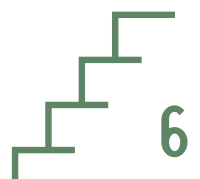
Think of yourselves right-sized. And so sometimes that means that you're big, sometimes that means that you take up space, sometimes that means that you yell at people, sometimes that means that you listen and you sit and you think about it or you act or you don't act, right? It's changeable, it's adaptable.

Alfred Walking Bull

Ultimately, what holds true is that political solidarity is an intentional betrayal of Whiteness. You are turning away from a power structure of supremacy to one of followership. This disloyalty is critical to remaking the structures that reinscribe White supremacy today and to the systems-transformation of repair. Complete the Political Solidarity Exercise (Appendix 24).

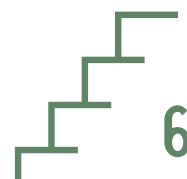
WEALTH RETURN

At the heart of White supremacy and extractive capitalism is the theft of land and labor and the violence necessary to accomplish the theft. For centuries, this theft has shifted wealth from Black and Indigenous people to White settlers and colonizers and their descendants. Today, White settler-colonizer churches and descendants “own” wealth that was never rightfully theirs. We cannot reckon with our legacy of White supremacy without reckoning with our literal inheritance.



Because the fundamental violence, oppression and disconnection of the Doctrine of Discovery was and is driven by theft, our reparatory actions require wealth return. As we have shared earlier, Indigenous and Black reparation leaders have shared that wealth return isn't the only necessary work of reparations, and it is an essential part. It is our hope that engaging in Truth Telling, Spiritual Practice, Relationship, and Political Solidarity will empower your congregation and its membership to make meaningful decisions about Wealth Return.

Complete the Physical Audit (Appendix 25), Land Back (Appendix 26), and Reparations Budgeting (Appendix 27) Exercises.



STEP 7: THE PROPOSAL

SEEN

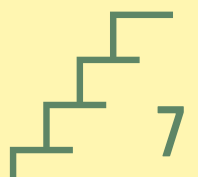
You have a debt that can never be repaid. You can approximate something, but it could never be repaid. And the question then becomes: how do you shape the way that the story is narrated in the work so that the black folk and the indigenous folk have a deep sense that their pain has been seen heard. At least in some way. People are trying to find an approximation for dealing with what is possible in light of it having truly been seen.

Rev. Dr. Stephan G. Ray Jr.

6 MONTHS

6 MONTHS

3 MONTHS



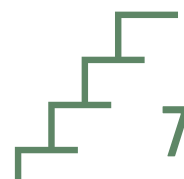
It is important to develop a clear and concrete proposal of how you are going to take monetary reparatory action as a congregation. As you are crafting that proposal, consider these points:

- Any wealth return proposal should connect to the framing work you've done and be rooted in cultural context of your congregation.
- It should be specific, clear, and concrete.
- It should be deeply connected to the work you've done around truth-telling, relationship, political solidarity and spiritual practices.

The proposal itself can reflect a variety of wealth-return mechanisms. We focus here on Budget Line-Items and Land Back proposals. Your congregation may use either, both in combination, or something else. As a Reparations Task Force, use the Framing Tool and the information you gathered in Step 2 and the Resource Return section of Step 6 to discuss what reparations you think will be best suited to your congregation and helpful to your Black and Indigenous neighbors. Then, create the proposal that captures this learning. We include Budgetary and Land Back examples here, but you may address whatever needs and resources your learning uncovered.

CRAFTING A BUDGET PROPOSAL

Take your learning from the Reparations Budgeting Exercise (Appendix 27), and draft it into a proposal for the congregational audience. Be specific. Decisionmakers should know: how much, from where, when, and why.



Here is an example of a reparation payments proposal from Lyndale United Church of Christ in Minneapolis. Note that it uses specific monetary language, hearkens to the congregation's mission statement, and has clarity about the process going forward.

The Racial Justice Task Force recommended to Council that Lyndale's first collective reparation payment be done as a budget line-item. The Task Force also recommends the amount of our line-item be based on the property tax that we would owe as a congregation if we were not tax-exempt, which is \$27,000. It is interesting to note that \$27,000/year is almost exactly a tithe (10%) of Lyndale's budget.

The Racial Justice Task Force proposes that Lyndale increase the amount of the budget line-item each year for five years to achieve our \$27,000/year goal. For the 2022-2023 fiscal year, our line-item would be one-fifth of \$27,000 or about \$5500. Going forward, our intention is to add an additional one-fifth each year (\$11,000 for fiscal year 2023-2024, \$16,500 for fiscal year 2024-2025, etc) until we get to the goal of \$27,000 annually. However, Stewardship Council will take seriously its fiduciary role and engage in an annual, honest assessment of where we are financially. We recognize that we must be economically sustainable in order to healthfully engage our collective liberation and "build the Realm of God, here and now."

LYNDALE UCC

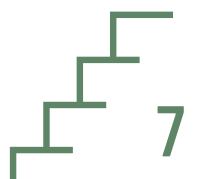


The Lyndale United Church of Christ reparation payments proposal continues:

This year the Racial Justice Task Force is proposing that our reparation payments go to CommunityWell, the reparations fund of MARCH (Multifaith Anti-Racism, Change & Healing).

MARCH is a Twin-Cities-based coalition committed to the work of dismantling white supremacy. Lyndale has been in deep relationship and partnership with MARCH for many years, and MARCH aligns with pro-LGBTQ values and works at the intersection of Indigenous and Black communities. CommunityWell has funded local Black and Indigenous organizers and organizations for over five years. The choice for CommunityWell to receive our reparations payment is made for this year only. Going forward, the Council and the Reparations Task Force will collaboratively choose the recipient of our reparations funds.

This proposal is created in response to direct asks to us from Black and indigenous colleagues because we live on Dakota land and this is a land-based calculation. Additionally, property taxes have a long history of being used as a tool to promote educational and housing disparities and to block intergenerational transfer of wealth for BIPOC families. This plan is born from close conversation and followership with Black and indigenous colleagues and this proposal is what we, as a white/settler congregation, are being asked to do.



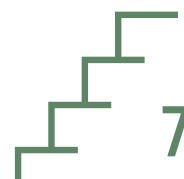
CRAFTING A LAND BACK PROPOSAL

Return to [this link](#) and review the Land Back examples. Compare these examples to notes and ideas you generated in the your Reparatory Thinking Muscle (Appendix 13) and Land Back Exercise (Appendix 26) and the information you gathered in the Wealth Assessment Exercise (Appendix 12) and Physical Audit (Appendix 25).

Which of these “How” methods are appropriate for your congregation and useful for your Indigenous neighbors? Draft a proposal that names what asset(s) the congregation will return, how it will do so, to whom, and on what timeline.

PROPOSAL PREVIEW

Once you have a draft prepared, it can be helpful to share it with key congregational leaders. Strong negative reactions can be a sign that additional relationship building through One-to-One Visits is needed to hear the concerns and fears within the congregation.



STEP 8: THE EXPLORATORY SURVEY

While you may be tempted to skip this Step, this is a vital one. Remember that one of the goals of the reparation process is to help people experience the liberation and depth of genuine community, not to divide us against one another. If you skip this Step and go directly to the formal vote, and if the results of that vote are close and people are divided, the Process will have failed even if the vote passes.

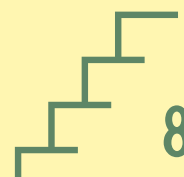
For smaller congregations, you may decide to hold small group meetings or have your Reparations Task Force do a series of One-to-One visits with most members of the congregation. These are also effective ways to ensure that you don't hold a vote too soon on your reparatory monetary action.

Conducting an Exploratory Survey is an important way of caring for the health of your congregation. Have you heard from all constituencies? Have you addressed people's fears and objections to the degree possible?

1-2 MONTHS

1 MONTH

1 MONTHS



Once you have completed the previous Steps and feel that you have done the relationship-building and educational work you need to, it's time to hear from the congregation. Send out an anonymous online survey (they are free and easy to create) or a postcard, including your proposed reparatory monetary action, and ask: "If the vote were held today, would you vote in favor or against this reparatory monetary action?"

If you receive less than 75-85% in favor, take this as a sign that a vote at this point will create division and not achieve the goal of a deeper and more authentic community.

We recommend going back to further the work of relationship-building through the Tools of Liberation for All, OpenHeartedness and One-to-One Visits. You may also need additional work on the Reparatory Eco Map, as well as more newsletter articles or other forms of communication.

If you receive 75-85% or higher, it is a sign that your **SACRED RECKONINGS** process has been successful and you are ready for the formal vote.



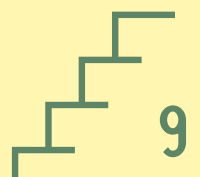
STEP 9: THE VOTE

The vote is the opportunity for your congregation to publicly affirm your commitment to live out your **SACRED RECKONINGS** process. How this vote actually happens will vary from church to church and from denomination to denomination.

Sometimes votes are held by the entire membership and sometimes by a governing body. Usually, they are tied closely to how your congregational budget is approved. Some congregations only require a simple majority for a motion to pass, others require two-thirds.

Consult with your church leadership and with your congregation's constitution or by-laws so that you are clear about how this culminating Step will occur.

DEPENDING ON THE STRUCTURE OF YOUR CONGREGATION (CONSENSUS MODEL, ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER, CONGREGATIONAL VOTE, BOARD DECIDES, ETC.) THIS STEP WILL TAKE 1-6 MONTHS

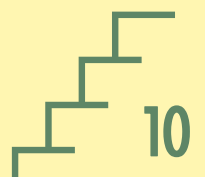


STEP 10: REJOICE & PROCLAIM

A successful reparatory monetary action vote represents hundreds of hours of work, deep spiritual engagement, powerful prayer, honest and authentic conversation and reckoning with truths that many choose not to engage. It is important that the congregation take the time to honor and celebrate all of this. We strongly encourage you to hold worship services, receptions, parties and invite all who have been involved in the reparatory process to participate.

Additionally, it is important to publicize your process and engage with other congregations to expand the movement of repair and reparation. Put a statement about your reparations process on your website, in your bulletins, and on your social media pages and platforms. Let your denominational offices know of your action and offer to be a resource for other congregations in your area.

**WE HOPE THAT YOU WILL REJOICE AND
PROCLAIM YOUR REPARATIONS WORK
CONTINUALLY, TAKING PRIDE IN YOUR WORK
WITHOUT ANY SPECIFIC TIMELINE**



STEP 11: . . . NOW WHAT?

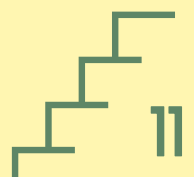
You may be energized to begin again. Or you may need to take some fallow, dormant time. Follow your own rhythms and seasons. But we invite you to not treat Step 11 as the end of your work or a box checked. The reparations process is life-long—one akin to working an addiction recovery process.



Alfred Walking Bull (Sicangu Lakota,
Rosebud Sioux Tribe)
Development Director, Tending The Soil

As you reach the end of this journey, you begin anew. Here Alfred Walking Bull (Sicangu Lakota) shares how the analogous recovery process overlaps with some features within Christian faith traditions, but also differs.

LIKE REJOICING AND CELEBRATING, THIS STEP IS THE POINT AT WHICH OUR LINEAR PROCESS BECOMES A SPIRAL AND YOU ARE INVITED TO RETURN TO THE BEGINNING.



Taking a vote on reparatory monetary action doesn't mean you can shelve the work and it is over. The work of repair and reparations is generational work. Taking one reparatory monetary action, while critically important, is only one step in the journey. We highly recommend that you return to Step 6 and re-engage the Reparatory Eco Map again, asking these questions:

What further truths need to be told? If we spent most of our first time through the Map asking questions of us as a congregation, are there Truth Telling Exercises that we can offer for our individual members to engage their familial history? Or, can we offer spaces for historical Truth Telling for our community?

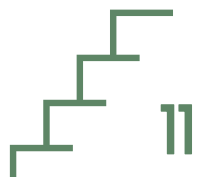
What deeper relationships do we need to build and nurture?

What spiritual practices are required of us as we engage more truths?

What political solidarity has been asked of us now that we have taken collective reparatory monetary action? Are there city, state, or national reparations actions that need our activism?

What more can we do to surrender ill-gotten wealth? If we have a line-item in our church's budget, can we work with our denominational offices to support reparatory monetary action there? How can we support our members in land-back efforts, particularly for any vacation properties they might own? Can we support Indigenous efforts at land-back of public lands?

What more is asked of us?





Sacred RECKONINGS

APPENDIX OF TOOLS & EXERCISES

100 one-to-one visits

SUSTAINABLE ACTION: PLANTING THE SEEDS OF RELATIONAL ORGANIZING

Rev. Louise Green

We owe it to our congregants and colleagues in social justice action to create a culture in the church or organization that is dynamic, life-giving, and fulfilling for all participants. Voluntary groups are an elective choice that people make in order to add something positive to their lives. Many people eventually elect out as they become tired and de-energized working in repetitive ways. This article is about another approach to organizational life, a way that seeks to find new leadership and encourage new campaigns: relational organizing.

Relational organizing is working with and beyond the bureaucratic culture of a congregation or organization. What is a bureau, literally? The word “bureaucracy” comes from a chest of drawers, where everybody has a proper compartment and place. This kind of organization is necessary for a large group, but it often works against close relationships between people. Sometimes there is very little communication between or within the drawers and no change in the overall structure for very long periods of time.



The idea of organizing relationally does not preclude the standard mechanisms we need to function in large groups. Rather, it adds a dimension that can transform the culture of bureaucracy. Instead of a bureaucratic culture dominated by fixed activities that endlessly repeat, a relational culture is flexible, dynamic, and responsive to growing or changing needs.

In most congregations, bureaucracy reigns. We are so accustomed to group meetings, collective agendas, and task-oriented activities that it is easy to perpetuate a system that creates only very minimal relationships between people. Communication happens via worship bulletins, newsletters, email and phone calls, and we rarely meet with someone individually unless we have a job to do or crisis to address. Talented leaders are recruited for many tasks, and attend multiple group meetings until they risk burnout and loss of interest. Congregants may meet for months or even years and never have a conversation about anything but what is on the agenda page for their committee night.

How can congregations and organizations break out of this constraining, de-energizing, and often depressing situation? The solution is to create a culture of relationships that is served by the bureaucratic apparatus rather than dominated by it.

The primary tool of relational organizing is the individual meeting, an encounter with a person that is rare in our culture. Individual or One-to-One Visits are critical to create bonds between existing teams, find new talent, identify new issues, or develop a new constituency. There is no short-cut around them, and they produce results that nothing else can.



Very simply, doing individual meetings is the strategy that is essential in order to create a relational culture over time.

What are the hazards of operating in a bureaucracy that has no relationship-building initiative? The same people do the same things in an unexamined way. New talent and energy are not discovered or engaged. Group meetings get certain tasks done, but only use the skills of folks which apply to the set agenda. Leaders and followers grow fatigued over time and echo the perennial complaint: why do the same people do everything around here?

Rev. Louise Green has been a minister and community organizer for over 35 years. She most is currently one of the ministers at All Souls Unitarian D.C. Louise is affiliated with the UCC and UUA, and is a consulting minister on social change and spiritual practice. Her expertise includes preaching, congregational organizing, work with IAF, organizational development retreats, spiritual direction, and teaching yoga. Used with permission of the author.



ONE-TO-ONE VISITS

are

- A 30-45 minute meeting of face-to-face conversation with one person.
- Getting to know the other person and being known
- An inquiry into what matters to a person and why.
- A chance to go outside of the repeating tasks and small group activities that dominate congregational and organizational life.
- An opportunity to know the private motivations each person has for doing public action such as congregational volunteerism or social justice work.
- A search for leaders and participants with the talent, motivation, initiative, energy, or anger to change a situation.
- A way to identify issues that need to be addressed and are not on the current action plan.

are not

- An interview of non-stop questions or survey.
- Going through the whole life story or resume of an individual.
- A recruitment device that fits someone into a set agenda or committee.
- An intellectual conversation about policy or strategy on issues in the congregation, neighborhood or city.
- Search for personal friendship or a social encounter.



WHAT DO YOU NEED FOR A ONE-TO-ONE VISIT?

- An intentional decision to make the time to engage in this important leadership task. You must invest time and energy for this to succeed. When scheduling your One-to-One, make sure it is arranged for a place that is safe and comfortable for the host and the guest.
- A clear context for your introduction on the phone and in person, and a reason for doing this you can simply explain to others.
- Regular phone call time set aside to ask for and schedule visits.
- Patience and persistence to work with people's availability and possible resistance. Hospitable curiosity about other people and an ability to listen.
- Willingness to practice this skill repeatedly in multiple settings.

HOW DO YOU DO A ONE-TO-ONE VISIT?

- A clear beginning and end: the middle is improvisation with the other person.
- Listen 70% of the time and speak 30% of the time.
- Practice hospitable curiosity by asking things like, "Tell me more about that," and, "Can you tell me who taught you about..." Avoid asking "Why" questions, because they tend to leave people feeling defensive.
- Talk deeply about a few things instead of covering 20 topics.
- Ask the person to tell stories and personal history, talk about important incidents, time periods, or mentors—not just recite facts and dates.
- Offer back conversation and dialogue: the conversation is not just for the other person answering your questions.



- Close by asking the person who else they think you should visit, what questions they have for you, and if they would like to meet again.
- End with a commitment you will keep. Do not say “let’s do this again soon” unless there is a firm plan and commitment to meet again. The commitment may simply be “I’ll see you in church on Sunday.” If the commitment is “I’ll call you with some answers to the questions you asked,” keep the commitment.

HOW DO YOU USE A ONE-TO-ONE VISIT?

When you decide to do a One-to-One Visit, it is important to establish a context: Are you the only one doing visits, and for what reason (e.g., committee chair, task force/study leader, new-project lead)? Is a team going to agree to do them based on a prepared list (i.e. new members, youth, seniors, religious education teachers)? Is the Racial Justice Team preparing to do them with a certain constituency (e.g., Black and Indigenous folx, LGBTQIA+ people, young adults, worship associates)?

Create a process for evaluating what you learn once you have a significant number accumulated. This may be your individual work or involve a meeting with the Racial Justice Team. It is important to go into the visits with an open mind, willing to see interests or roadblocks. Your goal is to ask questions and listen without fitting the interview into any fixed spot. Remember, this is about meeting someone where they are on their journey, not where you may want them to be. One-to-One Visits are an exchange about what is important to each of you, not a session where you work to get the person to do something.



After you have met your goal for a certain number of visits, either individually or as part of a team, evaluate what you learned. This may lead to various choices, like:

- Additional visits with new people.
- Different group action.
- Second visits with interesting, strong, or emerging leaders.
- A new project or event within the **SACRED RECKONINGS** process.
- Revising how you have been operating based on what you heard.
- Asking people to take some sort of new initiative based on what you discovered about them.

The entire journey is improvised and created out of what you hear and how you decide to respond. You cannot plan a response until you have several One-to-One Visits.

Building a relational culture of organizing will benefit your congregation by:

- Allowing leaders to know each other beyond a task-oriented agenda and can do new things in new ways.
- Encouraging new leaders who can engage around their own interests, not an existing plan. The lesson here is very important to highlight. Often there is more energy around participating in an organic interest, than for generating participants in an existing plan.



- Building the capability to do a new project or campaign based on people’s real energy and motivation, not an annual or monthly repetition of activity.
- Creating a network of people who know and trust each other, and can act in a variety of ways over time.
- Facilitating a stronger, more dynamic, more creative faith community or organizational life.

The point of these one-to-one conversations is not to get a specific set of answers from those in your faith community. Rather, it is about building relationships. It is a gift to create community and get to know the folk in your community. Enjoy these conversations, and ask yourself the way in which this time can enrich the life of your congregation. Use the One-to-One Reflection Form (next pages) as a place to write notes after visiting with someone. This will help you remember key details and stories.

TIP

For better One-to-One visits:

- Have a clear beginning and end: the middle is improvisation.
- Ask people to tell stories and history, not recite facts.
- Ask “why?” much more often than “what?”
- Talk more deeply about 4 things instead of covering 20 things.
- Offer back conversation and dialogue. It’s not just about the other person answering your questions.



APPENDIX 1

one-to-one reflection form

Guest _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Group or Community (including within Congregation) _____

CONSIDER

Relationship: What do we have in common? What might be the basis of a relationship? What is their relationship with Black and indigenous people and communities?

Self-Interest/Passion/Vocation: What does this person care most about? Why? What do they get excited talking about? How do they spend their time? What talents and abilities does this person have? How is racial justice part of their vocation/discipleship? What difference do they want to make given that vocation? How and where are they using them? What relationships does this person have? What specific concerns or ideas does this person have? Why? What is this person's story? Why is this person a member of this church? Is there a potential role in the church that would really get them excited?

Important things I learned about this person: _____

Adapted with permission from Rev. Louise Green for specific use in the Sacred reckonings process



APPENDIX 1

one-to-one reflection form continued

What talents, background, and gifts does this person have to offer? _____

What are this person's areas of passion and vocation? _____

REFLECT

As a host:

- What did I do well?
- What can I do differently next time?
- Did I establish a relationship?
- How courageous was I?
- Did I listen for the stories behind people's facts and opinions?
- What was the riskiest question I asked?
- Were there "leads" that they gave me that I didn't follow up? Why?

Adapted from Rev. Louise Green for specific use in the Sacred Reckonings process



APPENDIX 1

100 liberation for all & openheartedness

TOGETHER

If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. If you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.

Lilla Watson (Gangulu)

LIBERATION

I do of course believe that the work of repair is going to be engaged forever. But I will say that I believe that this work of repair, of healing is liberating for all involved. And while I don't want to center the liberation of the oppressors, I really do believe that the actual liberation on every level, economic and soul and body of all is what happens in this work, in the now, and is what we're working toward. We'll know we've achieved it when all are truly free to flourish.

Macky Alston



LIBERATION FOR ALL

You will see as we go through **SACRED RECKONINGS** that we believe that the Doctrine of Discovery and its poison of White supremacy, Christian supremacy, and extractive capitalism are devastating our world. Our particular focus is on the devastation wrought in Black and Indigenous communities through the horrors of chattel slavery and attempted Indigenous genocide to steal labor and land.

But we also believe that White supremacy devastates White settler-colonizer people. As Elaine Enns and Ched Myers suggest in their [Healing Haunted Histories: A Settler Discipleship of Decolonization](#), the Doctrine of Discovery (described in Step 1) creates and demands of White people a state of agnosia—a word similar to agnostic, rooted in “not knowing.”

By agnosia, they mean socialized ignorance: a state of denying and dissociating. In White settler-colonizer culture, we don't know, and we don't want to know. But when we live in a state of buried truth, of socialized ignorance, we are dissociated and haunted by the ghosts of that history. Everywhere we walk, there are layered stories of violence that we can't ignore.

Part of the way White supremacy works is to over-embodiment Black people: over-sexualizing Black bodies, minimizing Black intellectual abilities, and over-emphasizing Black physicality. At the same time, White supremacy under-embodies Indigenous people. It “disappears” Indigenous bodies by perpetrating the lie that there are no living Indigenous people today, by ignoring the epidemics of missing and murdered Indigenous women and gender-queer folx, and erasing tribal citizens with “blood-quantum” requirements.



All of this demands a kind of dis-embodiment—a dissociation—of White folk. This dis-embodiment and dissociation requires real work. Mab Segrest, in her book Born to Belonging, has a chapter entitled the “Souls of White Folks.”

In it, she tells the story of Mary Boykin Chesnut, the wife of a man who served in Confederate President Jefferson Davis’s cabinet, who was, herself, a passionate supporter of the Confederate cause. In her diaries, however, she articulates the psychological and spiritual impact of slavery on her.

Her testimony dramatically illustrates that colonization has soul-crushing implications for all—including those who hold racial power. Upon witnessing a slave auction, she reports the “tragedy” she observed.

A mad woman taken from her husband and children. Of course she was mad, or she would not have given her grief words in that public place. Her keepers were along. What she said was rational enough, pathetic at times, at times heart-rending. It excited me so I quietly took opium. It enabled me to retain every particle of mind or sense or brains I have, so quiets my nerves that I can calmly reason and take rational views of things otherwise maddening.

Mary Boykin Chesnut



Amid the brutality of chattel slavery in the United States, Chesnut chose not to respond with empathy for the woman who was being torn from her husband and children. Chesnut clearly understood the horror of the woman's agony, calling it "rational enough." And she felt the horror of bearing witness to such agony, calling it "heart-rending." But she chose to use opium to crush her empathy and her passion for connection and "calming" her in ways that restore "reason" and "rational views."

The promise, then, in which is rooted is the work of repair: the transformation, the healing, the hope, is for Liberation for All.

This means that White folx are not paternalistically "doing good" for Black and Indigenous folx. We are not their saviors in this process. Instead, the promise of salvation in reparations is that the soul we save is our own. We are offered in this process an opportunity to be liberated from the dis-embodiment, the state of dissociation. We are invited into a sacred embodiment and belonging in the healed and healing Body of Christ.

To be sure, this Liberation for All orientation doesn't pretend that white folx won't "lose" anything. The reparation process does require surrender and return of wealth. It also demands a relinquishing of power over others and over systems. There is a re-orientation to sharing, to collaboration, to collective connection, and to belonging as we move away from domination, power-over, and hoarding.

But the promise of Liberation for All is that the healing, the connection, the belonging to the world and to each other is an exponential gain.



OPENHEARTEDNESS

The re-embodiment that happens in the process of repair offers a particular invitation to OpenHeartedness. Part of the markers of dis-embodiment and dissociating is a kind of hard-heartedness, detachment, and inability to empathize. We note that in Exodus 9:7, we see that Pharaoh's heart was hardened as a mark of how colonized his life was.

As Moses is compelled by God to talk with Pharaoh to ask Pharaoh to let the enslaved Israelites go free, the text says that "Pharaoh's heart was hardened and he would not let the people go." Pharaoh was so rooted in the colonized mindset of enslavement, he refused to participate in the liberation about which Moses is prophesying.

A story told to the authors by Caitlin Breedlove further illustrates this point.

Caitlin Breedlove is a first-generation immigrant from Central Europe. When she was a teenager, she went back to Prague for an extended period of time. One day, she was out with her friends and they came upon someone asking for money. Caitlin didn't even stop, she just kept walking. After giving the person some money, her friends ran up to her and were very angry. They asked her what she had learned growing up in the United States that she would walk by someone asking for money and not stop or even acknowledge the person. They told her that they were very disappointed in her and that her heart had been hardened and that she had better pay attention to it or it would make her sick.



In this story, Caitlin’s friends highlight how colonization can harden our hearts so that we are unable to recognize a fellow human being or the sacredness of another living creature and, instead, perpetrate acts of dehumanization. They also highlight how that is both damaging to others and makes the hard-hearted one sick. Hardheartedness takes away our capacity to empathize, connect with, and form relationships beyond ourselves. Such decaying of empathy creates a kind of rot in our souls.

SACRED RECKONINGS suggests that one of the practices that can help us heal and claim the promise of Liberation for All is OpenHeartedness. The Embodiment Practice Tool (Appendix 5) is one concrete way to build the capacity to stay in our bodies and practice OpenHeartedness.

OpenHeartedness is an intentional orientation toward listening, toward empathy, toward connecting—with our Racial Justice Team, with our congregation, with our wider community, with Black and Indigenous communities around the world, and even with those whom we might consider our enemies.

As you begin your work with your Racial Justice Team colleagues and friends, we invite you to reflect together on the following questions:



liberation for all

- How is a reparation process an opportunity of surrender for me? How is it an opportunity of “gain”?
- What am I afraid of losing in this process? What new opportunities might I be gaining?
- How much do I and our community do things “to help others”? How is the ministry we engage as a congregation about “charity” or “helping those less fortunate”?
- How does the frame of Liberation for All challenge me? Us?
- How does agnosia function in my life? Our congregation’s life?
- How does the reparation process feel like liberation?

openheartedness

- How has my heart been hardened?
- How would it feel to open my heart? What fears does that invoke? What relief?
- What might it mean to be re-embodied and to belong to and be connected to the world?
- What dangers does OpenHeartedness involve? What promises?



LEARNING

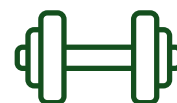
The question is how can you invite people into being able to see whiteness in their everyday mundane existence, because you'll never actually be able to get them to feel their whiteness, because everything in their lives from the moment they wake up in the morning until they go to bed that night erases their whiteness in the projection of simple humanity.

Rev. Dr. Stephen G. Ray Jr.

UNLEARNING

As a white person, I can move through the world mostly unaware of structures if I am not interested. I mean, I just don't have to think about them in order to navigate most of my daily life.

Yvonne Zimmerman



All culture is learned. It is the language we speak, the food we eat, and the holidays we celebrate. But it is much more than stories, art, and dress. It is assumptions, biases, values, manners, and roles that we learn without even knowing we're learning.

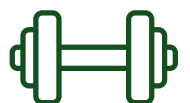
As author and activist Tema Okun writes in an online essay, “Culture is powerful precisely because it is so present and at the same time so very difficult to name or identify.”^[11]

In the world of behavior that is neither right nor wrong, cultural rules about what is socially acceptable are called folkways. Often, these cultural patterns and expectations can be so internalized that we don't even know we follow them until we encounter others who don't follow the pattern.

TIP

Find the White Supremacy Culture article and explore more of Okun's work online at www.whitesupremacyculture.info

[11] “Dismantling White Supremacy,” Tema Okun, available at https://www.whitesupremacyculture.info/uploads/4/3/5/7/43579015/okun_-_white_sup_culture_2020.pdf



In the United States, we've been raised in and learned the culture of White supremacy. This "Whiteness" is so fundamental to the American experience that many of us cannot identify a cultural trait that is "White," though we could readily begin naming "Black" cultural characteristics.

Learning the characteristics of White-supremacy culture and actively practicing antidotes to White-supremacy culture will help you to first recognize and name these cultural values when they occur, and then evaluate whether the folkway is helpful or hurtful to your work.

LEARN THE CULTURE

Before a meeting of the Racial Justice Team, read the article [White Supremacy Culture](#). Also review Sacred Solidarity Network 101 videos 4-9 [here](#). Consider:

- Which parts of these materials do you agree with? Identify examples of these cultural practices from your own life.
- Which parts of these materials do you disagree with? Identify examples from your own life that contradict these cultural practices.
- What about the materials surprised you?

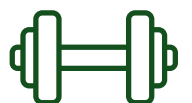


WORKSHOP THE TEXT

At your meeting, begin with each person offering a one- or two-minute reflection on the article. Now, divide the group in half. One half must argue that the author is incorrect in her premise, examples, conclusion, or all three. The other half must argue that the author correctly identifies, describes, and proposes “antidotes.” As the group debates the merits of the article from these assigned positions, consider these reflection questions on the next page.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Where your position differs from others, do you take it personally?
- Where your position differs from others, do you find others’ analysis inadequate or different?
- Is it more difficult to identify where you agree or disagree with the article?
- How many times during this discussion do you watch the clock or find your mind wandering to your to-do list or other parts of your day?
- How do you react to those in the group who agree with the author?
- How do you react to those in the group who disagree with the author?
- Who is making the best points?
- How does it feel to look squarely at these invisible values? Where do you feel this in your body?



REFLECTION QUESTIONS (CONT.)

- Who decides when it's time to transition between speakers?
- In what ways are the values of whiteness helpful? Hurtful?
- What value is there to naming the helpful and hurtful aspects of whiteness?
- How does the group include and encourage people who do not often contribute to this sort of conversation to participate?
- Did anyone raise their voice in this discussion? How did others respond?
- Did anyone come to tears during this discussion? How did others respond?
- How do participants change their views to account for how others experienced the article?
- If you have children or younger coworkers, what would they think of this conversation? How would they wish it had proceed differently?
- What did you do to stay neutral and unbiased while you read the article? While you participated in the conversation?
- What parts of the conversation did you try to mediate? How did you do that? Why did you feel like you needed to do that?
- Why doesn't the Exercise say how much time you should spend on this discussion?
- How many people wanted to be "right" at the end of this discussion?
- How does the group decide to end the Exercise?



UNLEARN THE CULTURE

Debrief from the debate. How did it feel to be placed in a situation of conflict? How did you feel when others disagreed with you? How did it change your experience of the article (or of Whiteness)? Where do you feel this in your body?

Either/or thinking and fear of open conflict are two of the greatest barriers to even beginning antiracist discussions. As a group, identify what (or who) you expect to be the strongest barriers to a congregational reparations conversation. Role play how the group can respond to that barrier and any resulting conflict. Similarly, what “either/ors” are likely to arise in a conversation about reparations? What budget line-items might some fear that this will detract from? What relationships might some say would be harmed? Role play how the group can respond to this thinking and any resulting conflict.

Before leaving the group meeting, identify the characteristic of White supremacy culture that is most salient in your daily life. Choose an “antidote” to that value to practice before the next meeting. Come to the next meeting prepared to give examples of when you tried to use the antidote and how others responded.



Finally, we must note that perfectionism—an aspect of White supremacy culture that plagues many of us—has a way of trying to creep into the **SACRED RECKONINGS** process. Listen to a White activist and an Indigenous leader share their thoughts on the intersection of the perfectionism and reparations.



Sharon Day (Bois Forte Band of Ojibwe),
Executive Director, Indigenous Peoples Task
Force)



Nancie Hamlett
Member, Lyndale UCC Reparations Task
Force



SUPREMACY

I know the Holy Rosary by heart. But not because I ever went to church—because I didn't have a choice.

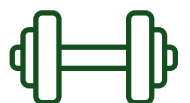
Coya White Hat-Artichoker

From its beginning, White supremacy was rooted in capitalism, religious intolerance, and law. Racialized slavery began when Europeans “discovered” cash crops in the Caribbean and needed labor to extract that wealth. The transatlantic slave trade was born, and its aim was profit. But the Roman Catholic Church, which then dominated the western world, quickly cloaked this greed in Christianity.

In 1455, Pope Nicholas V issued the papal bull *Romanus Pontifex* granting a Portuguese monopoly on African trade. The bull noted the need to “not only restrain the savage excesses of the Saracens [Muslims] and of other infidels, enemies of the Christian name, but also for the defense and increase of the faith vanquish them and their kingdoms and habitations[.]”

To support this goal, the Nicholas V authorized Portugal to “invade, search out, capture, vanquish, and subdue” non-Christians, “reduce their persons to perpetual slavery, and

[12] “*Romanus Pontifex*,” Pope Nicholas V (Jan. 8, 1455), at https://caid.ca/Bull_Romanus_Pontifex_1455.pdf.



to apply and appropriate to himself and his successors the kingdoms, dukedoms, counties, principalities, dominions, possessions, and goods, and to convert them to his and their use and profit[.]”

In 1493, ostensibly as a matter of global peace, Pope Alexander VI expanded the earlier bull’s reach. In caetera Divinae purported to divide the globe’s land masses, allowing Portugal to claim non-Christian territories in and off the coast of Africa, and allowing Spain to claim non-Christian territories in the western hemisphere.

Alexander VI sourced this power “Out of our own sole largess and certain knowledge and out of the fullness of our apostolic power, by the authority of Almighty God conferred upon us in blessed Peter and of the vicarship of Jesus Christ[.]” In this power, “we make, appoint, and depute you and your said heirs and successors lords of them with full and free power, authority, and jurisdiction of every kind....”[13]

Although other colonial powers doubted the authority of the Pope to claim the entire globe, they did not challenge the terra infidelibus (“unbelieving parts”) rationalization for the Doctrine of Discovery, and adopted the doctrine as their own law. As the doctrine aged, Christian countries’ reliance on this rationale grew, and soon, the widespread use of the doctrine became its own reason to continue to rely on it as law.

[13] “In caetera Divinae,” Pope Alexander VI (May 4, 1493), at <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/sites/default/files/inline-pdfs/T-04093.pdf>

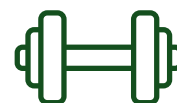


In the landmark 1823 U.S. Supreme Court case, *Johnson v. M’Intosh*, Chief Justice John Marshall announced the unanimous decision adopting the European Doctrine of Discovery as U.S. law. He wrote that when “the great nations of Europe” found this continent, “the character and religion of its inhabitants afforded an apology for considering them as a people over whom the superior genius of Europe might claim an ascendancy.” And he emphasized that “all the nations of Europe, who have acquired territory on this continent, have asserted in themselves, and have recognized [sic] in others, the exclusive right of the discoverer to appropriate the lands occupied by the Indians.” So, too, would the United States adopt this “right” of Christo-White supremacy as law. *Johnson v. M’Intosh* became—and remains—the foundation of U.S. property law.

Learn more about the Doctrine of Discovery by exploring [this curriculum developed by the Mennonite Church](#).

In your Racial Justice Team, discuss:

- What passages in the material surprised you (or didn’t surprise you), and why?
- How does this doctrine continue within our economies, religious experiences, and legal systems today?
- How is it present in your life?



embodiment practice

While you go about your day—inside and outside of this coursework—when you experience a strong emotion, pause to consider where you feel the emotion in your body. Does bad news land in tightened shoulders? A furrowed brow? A knot in your stomach? Does good news become a smile or laugh? Do your shoulders pull back? Does your stomach relax?

Practicing this sort of body scan can help deepen your enjoyment of positive feelings and “diagnose” your experience of negative feelings—even before you are aware of them. For example, if you feel your chest tighten in a conversation, that can cue you that you are distrustful of the speaker and may need to ask exploratory questions. Conversely, you can rely on your body to regulate your emotional reactions.

Use this soothing breath technique to calm your nervous system through grief, shame, or other stress.



soothing breath

1. Find a quiet space to sit or lie down.
2. Start by finding a comfortable position, either sitting on a chair or lying down.
3. Place one hand on top of the belly and the other on top of the chest.
4. While breathing normally, draw your attention to your breath.
5. Feel the hands resting on top of your torso and explore how they move, rising and falling as you breathe in and out.
6. Feel the warmth of your hands and explore what other sensations arise in your body.
7. Gently try to soften and deepen your breath, allowing your belly and chest to expand freely.
8. As you continue, pay attention to the emotional sensations that you might experience.
9. Open your eyes.

Adapted from <https://positive.b-cdn.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Soothing-Breath.pdf>

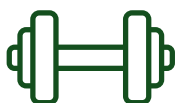


Mark the description in each row that is most like your congregation. If your congregation lies between or across two columns, mark the leftmost of the two columns. Ignore the last column for now.

PUBLIC WITNESS & PROPHETIC VOICE

Our congregation is consumed with its internal affairs and does not have a presence in the public square.	Small groups, usually comprised of the same people, represent the church in the public square.	Our congregation agrees about and values its role in the public square.	
We keep discussion of social and political issues to a minimum because we don't want to offend other congregants.	Small groups have leaders with "pet projects" and issues that they champion and invite others to support.	A large group of members regularly, boldly, and accountably uses our congregation's institutional capital to publicly proclaim its yearning for racial justice and equity as a natural outgrowth of its religious values.	
Our congregation does not engage in social justice efforts and has no presence in the public square.	Most of our congregation is not involved in social justice efforts.	Our congregation has a vital and healthy process that engages newcomers and invites them to contribute their perspective and energy to the collective project in the public square.	

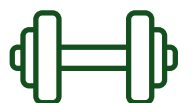
public witness & prophetic voice subtotal



MISSION

Our mission and vision do not mention racial justice.	We include racial justice in our mission, but do not reflect it consistently in practices.	Our mission and vision explicitly mention racial justice, and concrete practices are in place to support this work.	
We exist to provide services to and programs for its current members.	We are not yet practicing what we preach.	We engage in critical self-assessment and ensure that power structures and practices align with stated racial justice values and make space for diverse leadership and participation.	
Our congregation behaves like a clique or small club.	Our congregation behaves like a dysfunctional family. We love each other, and if we have disagreements, we don't talk about them.	We behave like a well-adjusted family. We love each other and expect to have disagreements, so we have processes to address and resolve them.	
In our congregation, leadership is coveted and tightly held by a few individuals.	Leadership is distributed, but an idolatry of the democratic process and making sure every voice is heard keeps the congregation mired in discussion and ineffective in its practices.	In our congregation, leadership is actively shared and is seen as a behavior rather than a role; it is leveraged effectively in the service of the agreed-upon mission and vision.	

mission subtotal



WORSHIP

Worship in our congregation privileges and centers the White Protestant tradition, both in its format and with the music and rituals it observes.

Worship in our congregation presumes a White Protestant knowledge base, even though it sometimes incorporates practices or music from other cultures.

Our congregation regularly expresses its commitment to building a racially just and loving world through communal worship, embodied ritual, and practices of joy and gratitude.

Our worship does not include practices or music from other cultures.

Our worship includes practices or music from other cultures, but it can fall into cultural misappropriation – using these resources thoughtlessly or without proper contextualization.

Multiple voices and cultures are carefully and thoughtfully incorporated in our worship, and the sources of this material are always attributed.

Our worship only occurs in the traditional Sunday morning format.

Our worship periodically occurs outside of the traditional Sunday morning format, but it doesn't happen often.

Our worship routinely occurs outside of the traditional Sunday morning format.

Our worship space is filled with images of Jesus and other biblical and historical figures who are all White.

Our worship space is filled with mostly White biblical figures and Jesuses.

Our worship space is filled with art that represents biblical figures and Jesus as having a variety of racial identities and cultures.

worship subtotal



THEOLOGY

Individual expression and freedom of belief are the most important values in our congregation.

Our congregation sometimes thinks of itself as a community with shared responsibility around our denominational history regarding White supremacy, but we also have members who say, “that isn’t my fault.”

We have a sense of individual members’ history and context and of our communal and denominational history, and we understand that even as White supremacy isn’t our “fault” it’s our shared responsibility.

In our congregation, theology is not public or shared.

We have a mix of people. Some regard our theologies as only pertaining to personal and private matters of individual morality, piety, and belief. Others believe that there is a shared and public theology that calls us to name who we are in the public square.

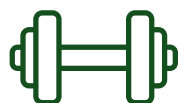
Our congregation has an understanding that theology is both a personal/individual matter and a matter for the public square; that theology pertains to how we live our lives as individuals and what our collective, public presence is.

In our congregation, racial justice and theology are unrelated.

In our congregation, the intersection between racial justice and theology is sometimes explored or shared in the context of individual members’ theologies.

Racial justice work is a natural expression our tradition’s values and beliefs. Members can articulate a communal theology of racial justice, and are able to evaluate issues and actions through the lens of their faith.

theology subtotal



PASTORAL CARE

Pastoral care providers in our congregation have no awareness of the impact race, ethnicity, and other social identities have on our daily experiences.

Pastoral care providers in our congregation have some awareness of the impact race, ethnicity, and other social identities have on our daily experiences.

In our congregation, multiculturally competent pastoral care acknowledges the various ways our social identities impact our daily lives.

Our pastoral care does not address White supremacy because there is no such thing.

We acknowledge that White supremacy exists, but that does not bear on our pastoral care because we are color blind.

Our pastoral care included an understanding of power dynamics and the consequences of White supremacy.

Our small group ministry does not address racial justice issues or the impact of social justice work.

Our success in addressing racial justice issues or the impact of social justice work in small group ministry is mixed and depends on the person providing the pastoral care.

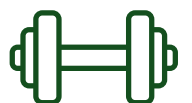
Our pastoral care providers are trained and are supported in this awareness and have tools and techniques that are effective in supporting those on the front lines of anti-racism and anti-oppression work.

Our pastoral care providers have no training in supporting activists or people of color with the specific challenges they encounter.

Our pastoral care providers have a new awareness that the work of social justice and anti-racism in our many roles is taxing and requires support.

We prioritize nurturing the spiritual and emotional health of our justice leaders and equipping them with the competencies to be faithful and effective.

pastoral care subtotal



APPENDIX 6

ADULT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Issues of racial justice are not included in our religious education.

Our congregation sometimes offers racial justice education as an “elective” option for interested members. Our focus is primarily on helping White congregants become more “woke” regarding racism.

Our congregation offers regular opportunities for members to learn about justice issues, gain concrete skills, and develop political analysis.

Our congregation does not recognize the impact that anti-oppressive learning has on our many roles as parents, managers, teachers, service providers, etc.

Our congregation offers some support for those who want to apply their anti-racism skills in other areas of their lives outside the congregation (work, school, other volunteer organizations).

Our congregation expects its members to be engaged in their own education and development around racial justice issues, and it recognizes that it has an active role in supporting people as they apply what they are learning to other areas in their lives.

Our congregation treats the spiritual needs of members of color in the congregation the same as White congregants.

Our congregation sometimes acknowledges that the spiritual needs of congregants of color can differ from White congregants, but takes few affirmative steps to address these needs.

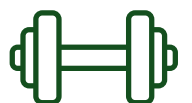
The spiritual needs of members of color in our congregation are acknowledged and addressed through educational programming.

adult religious education subtotal



YOUTH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

All our religious education is targeted toward and centers White children and youth.	Our religious education sometimes incorporates other cultures, but it can fall into cultural misappropriation—using these resources thoughtlessly or without proper contextualization.	Our religious teaching and learning occur with a complex understanding of both social identity and faith development stages.	
Our congregation does not include any discussion around racial justice in religious education.	Racial justice issues are sometimes brought up in our religious education, like when we study Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.	Our congregation offers regular opportunities for children and youth to learn about justice issues and gain concrete age-appropriate skills.	
Our congregation treats the spiritual needs of young members of color in the congregation the same as young White congregants.	Our congregation sometimes acknowledges that the spiritual needs of young congregants of color can differ from young White congregants, but takes few affirmative steps to address these needs.	Our congregation acknowledges and addresses the different needs of White youth and youth of color in religious education.	
<i>youth religious education subtotal</i>			



PARTNERSHIP & SOLIDARITY

Our congregation exists in a bubble, with no partnerships in the community.

Some congregants are building relationships with community members and organizations, and are getting involved in local issues, but our congregation mostly stays out of racial-justice work.

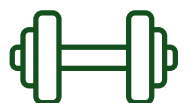
Our congregation cultivates cultural and spiritual humility, and develops deep and mutually-fulfilling partnerships with other faith communities and coalitions working for racial justice.

In our congregation, the weekdays and the weekend are separate and independent spheres.

Some activist work is shared with others in our congregation, but we do not actively discuss or negotiate the definition and scope of that work.

Our congregants understand that they have opportunities to influence systems in their work life and the communities they live in. They leverage resources and support in their congregation to make this work more effective.

partnership & solidarity subtotal



FINANCES

In our congregation, a small group of decision makers manage and control budget decisions for the congregation.

In our congregation, a medium-sized group has input into budget decisions, but money is still seen as a taboo topic for the most part.

In our congregation, congregants have tools to hold leaders accountable to ensure that our commitment to racial justice work is reflected in the budget on a consistent basis.

In our congregation, no money is allocated toward racial justice work.

In our congregation, racial justice work is on a shoestring budget. It is often one of the first things cut when money is tight.

Our congregation is self-aware of its financial resources and networks and is willing to leverage this power to channel money into movement building for racial justice beyond the congregation.

Our congregation has little to no awareness of socially responsible investing by it or its members.

Our congregation has some awareness of socially responsible investing, but it is not discussed openly and honestly in our congregation.

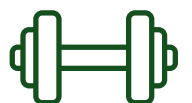
Our congregation engages in socially responsible investing, and our members' financial practices align with these principles.

Our congregation has little to no awareness of socially responsible purchasing by it or its members.

Our congregation has some awareness of socially responsible purchasing, but it is not a priority for our congregation.

Our congregation is aware of the importance of socially responsible purchasing and holds itself accountable for purchasing decisions.

finances subtotal



Now, return to the tables in this Exercise and enter a score in the far-right column for each row:

- For 1st-column selections, write 1 in the score column.
- For 2nd-column selections, write 2 in the score column.
- For 3rd-column selections, write 3 in the score column.

Add the numbers in the score column of each table and write that sum in the section subtotal. Transfer those subtotals to the table below. Finally, complete the equations to find your average section and overall average scores.

Section Name	Section Subtotal	Questions in Section	Average Score for Section
public witness & prophetic voice		3	
mission		4	
worship		4	
theology		3	
pastoral care		4	
adult religious education		3	
youth religious education		3	
partnership and solidarity		2	
finances		4	
total		30	



After all of your participants have completed their assessments, calculate across them all to get an overall average score for each section and an average total score.

As you are working through this assessment, either as an individual or doing composite scoring, always round down. It is better to underestimate your overall readiness than overestimate it.

Additionally, if a BIPOC member of your congregation scores either a subsection or a total score lower than the White members of the congregation, then instead of averaging, use the lower score.

Finally, compare your total average score to these tracks:

<i>traditional congregation</i>	30-45
<i>aware congregation</i>	46-75
<i>antiracist congregation</i>	76-90

This Reparations Congregational Assessment Exercise is based on a tool first created in 2017 by Julica Hermann de la Fuente as part of her thesis at Meadville Lombard Theological School. It was originally inspired and informed by the rubric in the Dismantling Racism Resource Book and uses descriptions in the rubric created by Rev. Ashley Horan at Minnesota Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Alliance, as well as materials taught by Rev. Leslie Takahashi at Meadville Lombard Theological School. In 2019, Christina Rivera improved and enhanced this rubric significantly, and is now the co-author along with Julica. Used with permission of the author.



Use these score guidelines, any other data you collected, and your conversations to determine the pace at which you will do your reparations work. Note that these tracks can indicate the areas where you might need to do deeper work, particularly in Step 6 of the curriculum. But they are NOT predictive of the success of your process. Please do not be discouraged if your congregation scores in the Traditional or Aware category.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Was anyone in the group surprised by your congregation's total average score? Were the results encouraging or discouraging? Why?
- Were there any questions that received a very low average score? A very high average score? What are the possible reasons that these conditions or measures are not in line with the overall assessment?
- Are there any questions for which the circumstances or conditions are likely to change in the next six months? One year?
- Are there any factors or indicators that might change because of proactive work or intervention on the part of a few interested persons?
- Did any individuals doing the assessment misunderstand any questions? If so, discuss the question and potential reasons for the misunderstanding. Feel free to re-score the worksheet(s) and re-tabulate results. Did it make a difference in the final score?



This Exercise includes text from two different authors. Review the materials and then meet to discuss your reaction to these concepts and how they could be useful on your journey.

CONGREGATIONS AND CONFLICT

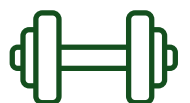
Rev. Dr. Anita Bradshaw

Though often spoken of in whispers, conflict is a common characteristic of congregations in every denomination throughout the United States. Rather than being hidden in the hushed tones of parking-lot planning and telephone gossip, if conflict is recognized as inevitable, and potentially even healthy, it can become an opportunity for focus, affirmation, and renewal.

Conflict expresses the human side of congregational life—that real people are different, and see the world differently. Conflict also reflects the religious challenge of voluntary communities of faith that are trying to understand, articulate, and live by their highest beliefs and ideals. Conflict can arise when there is a potential for change.

Certainly exploring work on reparations may cause conflict in a congregation.

- Acknowledge that conflict is a reality in the church and sometimes an overwhelming reality.



- Story: A congregation hired a consultant to deal with some terrible conflict. A quick review of the congregation's 90-year history revealed that pastors had been fired, chased off or quit every seven years. The latest pastoral departure was in the midst of extreme fighting over many issues but the most prominent was the decision to become welcoming of LGBTQ+ people prior to the most recent pastor's arrival. After individual interviews with over 50 members of this 120-member congregation, The Committee was charged with figuring out what definition of church had emerged from the interviews. On the poster board was written:

Happy + Nice = Church; therefore, Conflict ≠ Church

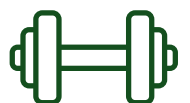
- What we often fear is not really the conflict itself, but the bad behavior that often accompanies it.

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

Invite participants into a time of Scripture reflection. Ask a participant to read the Philippians passages and ask participants to listen for a word or phrase that catches their attention or a question that is raised for them.

Conduct yourselves, then, in a way worthy of the Gospel of Christ. If you do, whether I come and see you myself or hear about your behavior from a distance, it will be clear that you're standing firm in unity of spirit, and exerting yourselves with one accord for the faith of the Gospel.

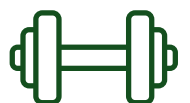
Philippians 1:27 (The Inclusive Bible)



Your attitude must be the same as that of Christ Jesus:
6 Christ, though in the image of God, didn't deem
equality with God something to be clung to – 7 but
instead became completely empty and took on the
image of oppressed humankind: born into the human
condition, found in the likeness of a human being. 8
Jesus was thus humbled – 9 obediently accepting death,
even death on a cross! Because of this, God highly
exalted Christ and gave to Jesus the name above every
other name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee
must bend in the heavens, on the earth and under the
earth, 11 and every tongue proclaim to the glory of God:
Jesus Christ reigns supreme!

Philippians 2:5-11 (The Inclusive Bible)

1. After the reading, invite people to turn to one other person and, in these diads, share the word, phrase or question that came up for each.
2. Invite participants back into the large group and ask for some participants to share their observations.
3. As the leader, share the following reflections, which are based on the passage from Philippians above:
 - The model for the church is the Greek polis or city-state.
 - At the heart of the polis was the debate of free persons to determine the future of the city.
 - Paul frequently uses this model for the church.
 - Not “Happy + Nice = Church”
 - Jesus as a model of self-emptying & humility
 - Did you notice what God is doing in the text?
 - Approving of Jesus opening the door for the whole world.



4. Invite participants to offer ideas about what conflict in the church is. Write: WHAT IS CONFLICT IN THE CHURCH? on a flipchart, and record participants' answers.

5. Then, write: WHAT ARE SOME POSITIVE ASPECTS OF CONFLICT? Point out that conflict could be other things that are more positive.

- Opportunity
- Leading of the Holy Spirit
- Key to discerning God's mission in your context

6. After you have discussed the possible positive aspects of conflict, discuss the following:

Speed Leas' Levels Of Conflict

- Level 0 We avoid conflict
- Level 1 Problem to solve
- Level 2 Some lack of agreement
- Level 3 Taking sides
- Level 4 Fight or leave
- Level 5 Call in the lawyers

Point out:

- Most people tend to think about conflict in either/or terms.
- From Level 3.5 on, the congregation needs outside intervention.
- Good strategies for a reparations process seek to keep the conflict level at the lower end.
- Science has shown us that all of life is part of a system.
- Two types of systems: open and closed.
- Churches often function as closed systems, but the Gospel calls for an open system.

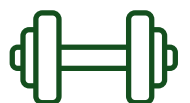


CHURCH AS A SYSTEM

- Conflict can occur in both closed and open systems, but there is a qualitative difference to the reasons for the conflict.
- Closed systems focus on belonging, loyalty, and “guarding” and “protecting” the system. Congregations often call themselves “families,” but families are, by nature, closed systems.
- Conflict in closed systems focuses on maintaining the status quo or keeping the system closed.
- Open systems are focused on bringing new members into the system. They are open to new people and to change. They value trust and are often willing to be more creative and imaginative.
- Conflict in open systems focuses more on discerning the future God is calling the congregation into and how to live into that future.

THINGS TO WATCH OUT FOR

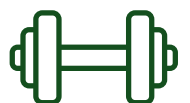
- Fear masquerading as love
- Recognize bullying as exactly that – bullying
- Name calling
- “Lots of people”
- “Your tolerance for rudeness is way too high”
- Often the average person in the pew deals with the issues at stake better than the pastor
- Silence is tacit approval



TIPS ON HANDLING CONFLICT

How do you solve such conflicts? Here are 10 suggestions:

1. Admit you need each other. Far too many congregations splinter when elders insist that their way is the only way. For congregations to grow, youth need the wisdom and stability of age, and age needs the energy—and future—of youth.
2. Face the conflict. Congregations often ignore conflicts, hoping they'll disappear. Even though conflict resolution is hard work, it must be done. Clarify the real problem, then resolve to work on it.
3. Listen to others. Allow people to express their opinions. Listen carefully to what they say, even if that runs counter to your own opinion.
4. Know your audience. Young adults who join churches today have the kind of consumer identity that asks, "How can this church help me?" If the church can't manage its own problems, much less help people with theirs, the young folks may leave. Do you want the future walking out the door?
5. Recognize the effect of change. Consider how your congregation will be affected before you try something new. If, for example, you want to start a program to bring in more young people, consider what changes they might request before their presence disrupts the rest of the congregation.
6. Be alert to emotional involvement. When people say, "It's only the principle of the thing," that's a tip that their ego is at stake. If you find that you are emotionally enmeshed in an issue, ask someone more detached from the issue to supervise.



7. Keep issues separate. When people are troubled by one thing, they can confuse it with something else. For example, you may be peeved by the new youth leader's failure to clean up after an event, but are you also bothered because of all of the new kids he's bringing in? Deal with one of those issues at a time.

8. Empower all parties in a conflict. If people are at odds with each other, they should all be part of the resolution process. It may be difficult to give each a say, but that's what's necessary for everyone to take ownership of the problem and its solution.

9. Stay objective. Undermining one side of a dispute and siding with another won't help matters. Manage the discussion wisely, remembering that this is your family of believers.

10. If necessary, bring in a mediator. Sometimes the only way out of a conflict is to bring in a neutral party. But mediation only works when both parties accept the process. If your church is part of a denomination, ask for help from a church official.

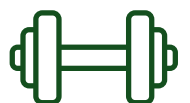
Rev. Dr. Anita L. Bradshaw is a consultant working with congregations, judicatories, denominations and non-profits. She is also a Minister-in-Covenant with Mayflower Community Congregational Church, UCC in Minneapolis, Minnesota. An ordained pastor in the United Church of Christ, she served previously as director of supervised ministries and adjunct faculty at Yale University's Divinity School. She also served as faculty for several universities, colleges and seminaries. She holds two advanced degrees from Yale University in theology and a Doctor of Philosophy degree from Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota. Used with permission of the author.



NOTES ON COMMUNICATION: STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING CONFLICT IN CONGREGATIONS

Dr. W. Craig Gilliam

- Listening authentically. Listening is an art and a sacred act. You can be taught what to say and how to say it and even how to sit when you're saying it, but the heart of good listening is authenticity. People read not only your words but what's going on inside you. If your stance isn't genuine, the words won't matter.
- Questioning. Questions are powerful communication tools. The way they are used can change both the direction and outcome of a leader. Therefore, questions should be used with intention. The questions we ask determine the information we get and the role we will play in the situation we are encountering—conflict or impasse.
- Summarizing. Summarizing what has been said can be very effective when used immediately after the parties have spoken. It can be used periodically throughout a conversation to clarify issues and help all parties know and feel they are heard.
- Acknowledging. Acknowledging is a skill in which the listener hears and feeds back the emotion and content of the speaker's message.



- Reframing. “Framing” is how one defines, describes, or conceptualizes a conflict. “Reframing” means taking the essence of what the other person says and translating it into concepts that are more helpful. It involves walking down a new path and inviting the other person or persons to join you—to look at and think differently about the subject at hand.
- Silence. Intentionally allow a moment of silence when emotions are high or someone says something that may require thought or a pause. Intentional silence is more powerful than just taking a breath or thinking about where to go next. Finally, as suggested above, communication, like community, cannot be faked. It’s not something you can do just because you are supposed to. When people are really communicating, they are listening and speaking because they are curious about what the other has to say. They genuinely want to know and, even more important, they care about the other’s perspective.

Dr. W. Craig Gilliam is director of The Center for Pastoral Effectiveness for the Louisiana Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. This article, which appeared in the Nov. 5 Leading Ideas e-newsletter, originally appeared in the September 2008 Sustaining Pastoral Excellence Newsletter. Used with permission of the author.



Review this essay and then meet to discuss how these concepts can support your congregational reparations work.

HOW DOES CHANGE HAPPEN IN CHURCHES OR ANY ORGANIZATION

Rev. Dr. Anita Bradshaw

Researcher, teacher, and author Everett Rogers' in his groundbreaking book, Diffusion of Innovation, argues that whenever human persons make changes or whenever an organization makes changes, it rarely follows the conventional wisdom about change. It is a process in which different people respond differently and at different speeds.

The conventional way people think change happens is to assume that one starts at Point A and makes a leap to Point B. Often referred to as the “gap model of change,” this is in fact nowhere close to how change truly comes about. People will see a change and assume that a person or an organization jumps across the gap; but, what they fail to see is all the steps and processes which people take in the organization or their personal lives to get from A to B.

In fact, change can be better viewed as the way one sails a boat. If one wants to go from the pier or the shore to a point on the horizon, one does not aim the boat at the far-distant point and just take off.



APPENDIX 8

change

EXERCISE

Such a strategy is sure to get the sailor off-course and even in danger if one is trying to sail into the wind. Rather, the sailor engages in what is known as tacking. One tacks to a nearer point and then tacks to another point and so forth. It is a zigzag course to be sure, but it gets you where you want to go.

Rogers identifies five stages people go through to make a change or an innovation, in his terminology. People must first become aware of the possibility of change through knowledge and then they must be persuaded to take an interest in even exploring this new possibility. People will then evaluate the old ways and the new possibility and decide whether they are interested in going further. If they are convinced to move forward, there is usually a trial period of implementation, which includes ongoing evaluation before acceptance or confirmation of the change comes about. Gap models of change say you go from awareness to acceptance and that is just not possible or wise.

It is important, Rogers says, to keep in mind that different people go through this process in different ways and at different rates. He lists five categories of persons and the usual percentage of the whole group, which each category encompasses. They are:

- Innovators or “The Brave” — These are the folks who are always out there with new ideas and they make up about 2.5% of the total group.
- Early Adopters or “The Respectable” — These are people who make change fairly quickly being able to assess possibilities and evaluate them in short order. They are also well respected in the organization and make up about 13.5% of the whole group.

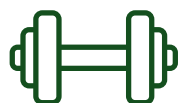


- Early Majority or “The Thoughtful” — These are individuals who listen carefully to the Early Adopters but take a bit more time to decide, but not a great deal and they make up about 34% of an organization.
- Late Majority or “The Skeptical” — These are people who are, as the name suggests, very skeptical of change. They will eventually go along, but not until it is proven to be a success. They make up about 34% of the organization, as well.
- Laggards or “The Traditional” — These are the people who are not going to change. Period. It is an unfortunate term, but it is accurate. They make up about 16% of the organization.

This is all very important when approaching the reparations process in a congregation.

Here are some tips:

- Don’t design for the Laggards or the Late Adopters, which is what is usually done. They are not going to change and focusing on convincing them will only slow the process down or end it all together.
- Recognize that you are looking for Innovators to get your process moving and to influence the Early Adopters.



- Once you have the Innovators and Early Adopters on board, change will happen if you attend to it. The tipping point for change is usually about 20%. Together these two groups make up 16% and all they need to do is move a few of the Early Majority and change is well on its way.
- The Early Adopters will sway the Middles and from there you are able to make change even against the resistance of the Laggards or even some of the Late Adopters. Laggards can be resilient but do not give them more energy than they deserve. They are a small percentage that will sound like they are the majority. They are not. You should hear them, but do not let them control the process.

Below is a rather tongue-in-cheek, but helpful chart of how this plays out in congregations discerning to engage a reparations process.

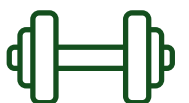
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CATEGORIES OF INNOVATION IN THE REPARATIONS MOVEMENT

Laggards	Traditional, predictability, constancy	Crawl	Mattress	"Let's go home"	Civility
Late Majority	Skeptical, proven support of majority	Very slow and careful	Certificates of Deposit	"Let's consult with the conference/region/etc."	Traditions of the church
Early Majority	Unity, willingness to listen	Deliberate	Balanced mutual funds	"Let's begin a process of study."	Fairness
Early Adopters	Open-minded, dialogue, info, respect	Quick	Individual stocks	"Let's talk about this and see how many of us agree."	Fairness
Innovators	Creativity, Novelty, Venturesome	Fast	Commodities	"Let's vote to pay reparations"	Imagination, "Rightness," Justice
	Values	Pace	Comfortable level of financial risk	After watching The Doctrine of Discovery	Appeal

Prepared by Rev. Carol Wise and Rev. Dr. Anita L. Bradshaw based on Everett M. Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations

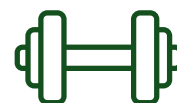


In moments of community stress, urgency, and transformation, congregations often ask, “What can we do to help?” This deeply rooted instinct toward loving response grounded in relationship and values is one of the hallmarks that differentiates spiritual communities from other organizations. As voluntary associations rooted in common principles of justice, equity, and compassion, congregations are in a unique position to offer both moral authority and critical assets to struggles for justice and liberation.

And yet. Fear of the unknown can also keep us from working toward Liberation for All with OpenHeartedness. This Exercise will help you assess your risk tolerance and become more intentional about considering risks and benefits in any congregational decision. But first, here a few definitions to shape your work:

RISK The potential negative consequences of an action or inaction. Risks may include things like financial loss or hardship; legal consequences; internal or external conflict; damage to reputation; physical damage or violence toward people or property; spiritual, emotional, or psychological harm.

Adapted from Unitarian Universalist Association Side With Love, Risk, Courage & Justice: Facilitating Congregational Risk Discernment Conversations. Used with permission.



PERCEIVED RISK The assessment of an individual or group of the likelihood and severity of consequences that may result from taking or not taking a particular action. The perception of risk is subjective and shaped by many factors, including the individual or organization’s culture, identities, past experience, history of trauma, and level of privilege.

RISK TOLERANCE The degree of risk an individual or organization is able to take on without experiencing significant discomfort, anxiety, or fear. Similarly to perceived risk, risk tolerance is shaped by a constellation of factors related to identity, experience, culture, and history.

RISK ASSESSMENT The process of identifying the range of potential risks inherent in a particular situation or action; evaluating the likelihood of these risks actually occurring; and thinking through what both immediate and ongoing consequences might be.

Everyone has a different risk tolerance shaped by their own experiences and values. Groups can have an even more flexible risk tolerance depending on who is acting and in what context. Because reparations work can often inspire fear in White settler-colonizers, it is important to assess how comfortable you are with different kinds of risk, and how that level of comfort is shaped by both who your members are and the history of your congregation.

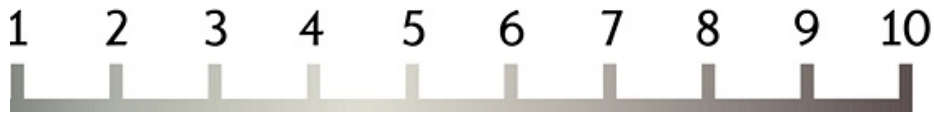


Each member of the Racial Justice Team should complete this Risk Tolerance Worksheet alone, then bring it to the Team to discuss the reflection questions. For each question, consider the level of risk that you are comfortable with on the 1-10 scale, and write your number in the last column. Then average your answers to the questions to find your individual score.

RISK TOLERANCE WORKSHEET

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Me
<p>Our congregation has a moral obligation to stay out of politics to create a “big tent” where all beliefs are welcome.</p>										
<p>Our congregation has a moral obligation to take bold public stances about current and political issues, such as racial justice and reparations.</p>										
<p>We should never draw from our endowment to fund justice work. The endowment is only to be used for dire emergencies related to the congregation.</p>										
<p>Current attacks on marginalized groups are an emergency, and we should tap into our reserves and/or endowment to meet the moment.</p>										
<p>Our congregation should avoid taking part in or supporting any actions that could get us in legal trouble because we have an obligation to continue operating in order to fulfill our mission.</p>										
<p>Our congregation should be willing to risk taking actions that could bring legal consequences to individual members or the institution itself because being a public moral voice for justice is a core part of our mission.</p>										





Me

Our congregation should never use its financial, infrastructural, or human resources in supporting people to seek economic, climate or racial justice in situations where doing so is illegal.

Our congregation should use its financial, infrastructural, and human resources to directly support people seeking economic, climate or racial justice, even when doing so may be against the law.

It is fine for individual members to decide to participate in actions that may result in civil or criminal charges as a way to protest or disobey unjust laws; however, the congregation should never encourage or directly support individuals in taking such actions.

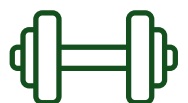
The congregations should be actively training and supporting individuals who want to take risky or potentially illegal actions as a way to protest unjust laws and live out their faith.

The congregation must prioritize care/resources for its own members, and should not become a source of funding, logistics coordination, or spiritual support for activism, organizing, or direct services for non-members.

The congregation should use any and all capacity and resources we have to support anyone engaging in activism, organizing, or direct service related to economic, climate or racial justice and other issues that are core to our values.

Decision-makers should seek to build the broadest possible buy-in from and consensus among our membership before taking any risky action, even when that means going very slowly and missing opportunities for timely action and partnership.

Decision-makers should move quickly to respond to the urgency of the moment, even when they know doing so might cause significant conflict within the congregation.



Bring your score to the Racial Justice Team and calculate your combined group total and mean risk tolerance. Consider:

- What patterns about your congregation's overall level of risk tolerance can you see from this Exercise?
- How might have the results of this Exercise been different if it had been the whole congregation participating? Is your level of risk tolerance as a leadership group in sync with the larger congregation? What examples in recent congregational history demonstrate this?
- Congregational culture is shaped by individual members and the way we carry our own and our congregation's histories. How is your collective level of risk tolerance influenced by the predominant social locations & life experiences of your members?

Overall collective risk perception and tolerance is also shaped by the history of a congregation and its experiences with risk and negative consequences in the past. What events in your congregational history might be shaping the way this congregational system perceives and tolerates risk now?



RISK ASSESSMENT

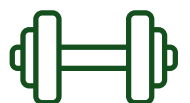
Whenever a congregation is faced with a decision about taking action for justice, often the first thing that comes up for decision makers are feelings: immediate reactions of excitement, fear, ambivalence, opposition, and curiosity. These feelings arise in large part from the almost-instantaneous mental assessments of the potential risks and benefits.

These “gut feelings” can be very important. And. They can also be problematic if we haven’t fully explored all the possible positive and negative consequences of an action. By slowing down and intentionally working together to complete a full risk and benefit assessment, we can both surface what lies beneath those instinctual reactions and generate a fuller and more accurate picture of the risks and benefits. Assemble your Racial Justice Team to work through the following questions. Please assign a note-taker who can capture your brainstorm.

IDENTIFYING RISK

Imagine that your congregation is considering contributing 10% of its budget to reparations, offering office space to a Black-led organization, participating in an act of political solidarity in followership of a Black or Indigenous leader or organization, or returning its land to Indigenous stewards. Brainstorm the varieties of risk – potential negative consequences – to consider when making the decision. What are the kinds of questions about risk you might ask? For example:

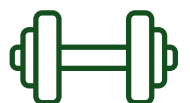
- Will anyone be in physical danger if we say yes/no?
- Will saying yes or no create or magnify conflict within the congregation?



- Is this action legal? If not, what laws/ordinances would be broken? What would the possible legal consequences be?
- What are the financial costs of this action, now and in the future? Where would we get this money?
- What would taking or not taking this action do to our reputation (in the broader community, with our adversaries, with our partners, among our members and friends)?
- Is there a possibility that our insurance could be impacted by doing this?
- How much staff capacity will this require? What will staff have to deprioritize if we choose to do this?
- How much volunteer capacity will this require? What will this draw attention away from?
- Is there a risk to our building, our property, or belongings?
- How will saying yes or no to this action impact our relationships with partner organizations and other congregations? With other congregations in our denomination?

IDENTIFYING BENEFITS

It's important to keep in mind that all of these kinds of risk can often have positive corollaries and benefits. For example, you might assess that if your congregation decided to return its land to a tribe, it might amplify divisions within the congregation and may require the congregation to find a new physical home. At the same time, the benefits might include deepening



relationships with other progressive congregations in town, attracting new members who are inspired by your public witness to your values, providing affirmation and spiritual support to Black and Indigenous people seeing reparations, etc. Return to your hypothetical reparations question and identify the benefits that could be associated with the choice.

WEIGHING RISKS

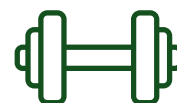
When doing a risk and benefit assessment, it's important not only to take time to imagine the range of negative and positive consequences that might result from taking (or not taking) an action, but to also ask:

- How LIKELY is it that this potential outcome will happen? and
- How much WEIGHT do we assign to this potential outcome?

Next, ask how much the risk or benefit should factor into the congregation's decision. In some scenarios, even if a negative consequence is likely, it doesn't matter that much because a.) you have the resources, resiliency, and reserves to deal with those consequences, or b.) your values compel you to act in a particular way because to not do so would incur worse consequences than the negative outcome you've identified.

For example, even though there are likely economic consequences of a reparations line item, that risk may be outweighed by other benefits or minimized by budgetary planning.

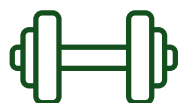
You may not make it through your entire list of risks and benefits. That's okay—this is just practice to help you be more intentional in the assessing risk questions that arise later in **SACRED RECKONINGS**.



REFLECTION

Set aside your lists. Consider:

- As your group talked about the likelihood of various positive and negative consequences actually happening, what did you notice about your level of risk tolerance/aversion? Do you think you have a tendency to over- or under-estimate risk?
- What was it like to weigh the potential risks and benefits against each other?
- Every community has a set of core values that they prioritize in their decision-making, even when those values aren't explicitly articulated. And sometimes, these values can be in conflict with one another. For example, maybe a congregation has core values of Unity, Democracy, Partnership, Solidarity, and Service. But as they consider whether or not to participate in a justice action that a frontline partner organization has asked them to support, they might discover that when there is serious disagreement about what to do, their values of Solidarity and Service in support of the partner organization are in tension with their values of Unity and Democracy because there is now a contentious congregational conflict about whether to say yes to the partner ask.
- As you talked about weighing the risks and benefits against each other, what core congregational values contributed to how you weighted things? Were any of these values in tension?



TOOL

framing

Spend a few minutes in prayer, asking for guidance and clarity as you embark on this important journey in the life of your community of faith. Then, use what you learn from these reflections to build the “frame” that you will use with your congregation on your reparations journey.

Think and write about what makes our congregation unique.

- What drew you in?
- What keeps you here?
- Why is this a special place?

After a few minutes for reflection, ask folx to look at what they have written and talk about what themes emerge. What rises to the top?

With that in mind, let’s begin to talk about framing. At its most basic, a frame is simply the way you think about something. Words matter, so the words we use to think about something—whatever that something is— affect our thoughts about it.



FIRST REFLECTION

Think about the way a state’s tourism slogan tells the story of a state in very few words. For example, Missouri is known as “The Show-Me State.” What different images come to mind with the state slogans “Close to Home. Far from ordinary.” or “Where the Rivers Run”? Similarly, how we think and talk about the **SACRED RECKONINGS** process will affect both how members of your congregation will view it, and their ability to join in the work.

In some ways, framing is harder to define and easier to experience. So, let’s begin with the world of art with none other than the Mona Lisa.

First, we see it as we rarely do, unadorned, simply the painting itself with no frame:



Now, if we were at the Louvre, this is how we would see it framed and hanging on display:



Look back to the original image. What is different? How does the frame (or the lack of one) affect how you see the painting itself?

And what if it was framed like this:



How do you see the painting now?

Of course, this is a literal presentation of what is really a concept, but it is a concrete illustration of our point. What surrounds the THING—whatever that THING is—affects how we see that THING. This is the power of a frame.

For our **SACRED RECKONINGS** process, a frame is made up of the words or concepts we use to talk about the process of reparation and repair. The words we place around the **SACRED RECKONINGS** process can change the “feel” of the process and its meaning to others.

WORDS AND CONCEPTS WE USE TO TALK ABOUT THE PROCESS OF REPARATION AND REPAIR. WORDS AND CONCEPTS WE USE TO

process of reparation and repair.

Sacred **RECKONINGS**

talk about the process of

reparation and repair. Words and concepts we use to talk about the

Context matters. The **SACRED RECKONINGS** process doesn't just happen in a vacuum. It happens within the context of your congregation's history and culture. A good frame takes that context into account. And if you have chosen well, a really good frame gives you a powerful way to talk about your reparations journey in a way that resonates with your congregation's history, culture, and its most deeply held Biblical and theological values.



SECOND REFLECTION

Now invite folks to think of themselves as a generic congregation (not yours). One by one, consider a few images—ways that the church has thought about itself in the past. Ask them to imagine how they would see themselves—their “congregation selves”—and their mission in the world with each of these images.

How does your view of the church change if you see that church as:

- A ship on a stormy sea?
- A fortress?
- A hospital for wounded souls?

Take time to reflect and talk about each image and about how what surrounds the thing affects how we see that thing.

Here is a concrete example of how a good frame can help move a process forward.

Climbing Up the Mountain

Growing up, David loved to go camping. His dad, a Lutheran pastor, got a month off every summer, and his family would spend that time camping in the wilds of northern Minnesota. Living on a pastor’s salary, they never ventured very far from home. But one year, his parents had saved up enough to take an epic road trip from the plains of Minnesota west to the mountains of western Canada.



However, his mom was afraid of heights, had never been in the mountains before, and was looking forward to this trip with a good deal of trepidation. So, to make this as painless as possible for her, his dad got ahold of topographical maps (decades, mind you, before Google Maps!) and spent hours plotting the most gradual route up the mountains. Once the family and all their camping gear was loaded into their '67 Chevy, they made their way west.

The route was rarely the most direct and never the quickest, but, bit by bit, they climbed. When they finally reached the first stunning scenic overlook, his mom cried out with dumbfounded delight. “Oh...! How did we...? This is beautiful! How did we get so high?!” For David’s Mom, fears conquered. And for his Dad, mission accomplished!

This is the kind of experience you are hoping for as you guide your congregation through a well-framed reparations process. You start them off on firm ground and guide them with care and patience. And when the time comes to bring reparations into the conversation, it will be understood as a natural extension to the mission of your church.

So, to summarize, framing is the spiritual practice in which we name succinctly in a word or phrase the values of the **SACRED RECKONINGS** process. Framing is the lens through which we look at every aspect of the reparations journey; framing is the vessel that holds every other part of the **SACRED RECKONINGS** process. Framing allows us to describe the WHY of our reparations work, but to do so in ways that could be written on a banner or the church’s sign.



Articulating a frame grounded in your deepest theological and Biblical values invites your congregation to experience the reparations process as an act of faithful discipleship. With a well-chosen frame, your **SACRED RECKONINGS** journey will give you a way to discuss why being a place of intentional repair and reparation is important to your congregation.

PUTTING YOUR FRAME INTO ACTION

The frame you choose for your **SACRED RECKONINGS** process should be used in all aspects of the work you do. For instance:

- When you do a worship service around your **SACRED RECKONINGS** journey, the frame you have chosen should be the theme of that service.
- It should be the language that is at the top of whatever publicity you do regarding educational programs.
- It should provide the focus for discussion and conversation in all aspects of your process.

THIRD REFLECTION

Now invite folx to reflect back on your own congregation. The first Exercise asked you to think about your personal relationship with the congregation. Now, reflect on your congregation as a whole, with particular attention to its history and culture.

- How does your congregation speak of itself?
- What images do members use to describe your church and its mission?
- How is it viewed in the wider community?



- How is it viewed in the wider community?
- What biblical and theological themes are most resonant?
- What scripture passages or Bible stories are most resonant?
- Does your congregation have a favorite hymn that it sings every Founder's Day?
- What phrase or image in these words might inspire a frame?

Talk about the history and context of these themes, passages, and hymns to explore whether they would be a good frame for the **SACRED RECKONINGS** process. As you think through these questions and build your frame, there are four more things you should keep in mind.

Finding the right frame for your congregation is a critical part of the journey because it shows how well the Racial Justice Team knows the congregation and that the process is rooted in the particular life of this church. Do not feel rushed to identify what will work best in your setting. For a few congregations, it will be pretty clear right away what your frame should be. But for most, the process will take time and be filled with deep conversation and prayer to arrive at your frame.



2 A word about aspirational values and White supremacy culture. We have intentionally placed this Framing Tool after the Exercise on White supremacy culture (Appendix 3). As you consider how you will frame your **SACRED RECKONINGS** process, keep checking back with the White Supremacy Culture Exercise to ensure that you are not re-inscribing or supporting White supremacy culture with your frame. In particular, take care to not use images or language that are rooted in paternalism, White saviorism, and perfectionism.

3 A **SACRED RECKONINGS** process that is rooted in both the dismantling of White supremacy and the transformation and constructive work of repair calls the Church back to its core values of healing, justice, and genuine love. It is, therefore, an opportunity for the Church to be the Church. The right frame is one way to support this claiming and reclamation in a way that can call us together as community.

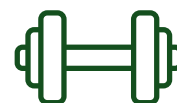
4 Any frame that makes some in the congregation feel defensive or puts the congregation in “debate mode” should be avoided.

David Lohman is a Progressive Christian Songwriter, Singer and Activist. He is currently serving as the Minister of Music at St. Luke Presbyterian Church, Minnetonka, MN. This Framing Tool is adapted with David’s permission.



Before meeting as a group, each member of your Racial Justice Team should write out their answers to these questions:

- What are the formal decision processes at your congregation?
- Who is on the church council, session, or governing body?
- Who is the moderator, council chair, or congregational president?
- Who writes the budget?
- Who signs the checks?
- Who is the treasurer?
- What are the procedures for introducing resolutions or proposals to the governing body?
- What are the informal decision processes?
- Who are the opinion leaders?
- Who are the “pillars” of the congregation?
- Who holds the long-term memory of the congregation?
Who are your storytellers?
- Who are the people whose opinions you need to know?
- What does your clergy think about reparations?



Now, gather as a group and use a whiteboard or other collaboration tool to map out the power structures—both formal and informal—within your congregation. Note where there are similarities and differences between team members' answers, and consider whether these nuances require further exploration.

For example, if one name comes up frequently in your discussions, that person is a likely power source. If Racial Justice Team members name different people, especially in informal decision-making, consider how these different peoples' power may work together or in opposition within the congregation.

After you've mapped these power structures, begin to make decisions about who on your racial justice task force is going to have one-to-one conversations with whom and in what order.

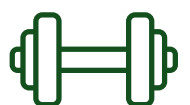


Create a roster of your congregational assets. You will use this information in later Exercises. Gathering as much information as you can for this Exercise will help you develop more robust reparations information for discussion later. Your treasurer should be able to help you gather much of this information. Even if you are unsure whether your congregation would be comfortable sharing the asset, list it so that it can be part of your imagining later.

On the next sheet (and additional pages, if needed), list all of your congregational real-estate assets (e.g. properties used for worship, summer camps, retreats, passive donation holdings) in the first column of the worksheet. Add to that column all other assets that are not real estate (e.g. church vans, intellectual property, other property, stocks, or other investment holdings). Complete the chart for each asset.

TIP

Although this curriculum focuses on land and cash resources because reparations are addressed to wealth return, the chances are that there are also many resources in your congregation that could be put to fuller use in your community. If you are interested in exploring what resources other than cash and land your congregation could share with community, complete this [asset-mapping tool from CommunityWell](#), a program of MARCH (Multifaith Anti-Racism, Change & Healing).



reparatory thinking muscle

IMAGINATION

We are in an imagination battle.

adrienne maree brown
Emergent Strategies



Rev. Dr. Stephen G. Ray Jr
Theologian & Leader in Theological
Education



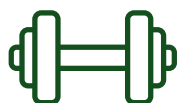
Jen Martel (Cheyenne River)
Sitting Bull College Visiting Center
Coordinator



Coya White Hat-Artichoker (Sicangu Lakota,
Ho-Chunk descendant)
Activist & Writer, Board member of
SisterSong and the American
LGBTQ+Museum



Rev. Dr. Jennifer Harvey
Author of Dear White Christians



APPENDIX 13

Reparations and reparative actions are as broad as the relationships we're willing to build. Use this Exercise to build the muscle to think creatively about what reparatory acts are available to you.

READ UP

This [webpage](#) catalogs stories of reparations and reparatory acts from across the country. The linked stories include actions taken by individuals, by congregations or other organizations, and by governments. The page is sorted by reparatory category to allow you to jump to what interests you, and is updated regularly. Each person in the Racial Justice Team should spend a half hour poking around the list. Notice what interests you, what surprises you, and what seems to lay past what is possible. Then choose two articles to bring to the group for discussion with your answers to these questions:

- Why did you select this article?
- In what ways do you think this action is or is not suited to your congregation?
- What questions does this story raise for you?
- How can you seek answers to these questions?



DIG IN

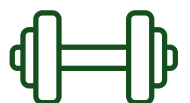
In the Racial Justice Team, each person should give a few-minute-per-article summary of the stories they selected. In your summary, include:

- Who took the reparative action
- Who they partnered with
- What action they took
- Why you selected this article to share

As participants are sharing, again take note of what interests you, what surprises you, and what seems to lay past what is possible.

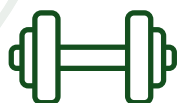
After each person has shared both of their stories, open the group to a broader discussion. Follow your curiosity as you discuss:

- Where do these ideas land in your body as you listen?
- What similarities did you see between the actions that folk shared?
- What differences did you hear?
- What ideas and themes recur as you discuss these stories?
- How does it feel to imagine your congregation taking on one of these actions?
- How does it feel to imagine your congregation a year or two after completing one of these actions?



EXPLORE

As this conversation progresses, be sure to gather everyone's thoughts. Know that it is entirely likely that some of these stories and ideas will not be comfortable. That's okay! This Exercise is not to reach a decision or even recommendation. It is to build the muscle to begin thinking about and tap into the energy of the reparatory actions that already exist around us. As you listen, make notes, doodle, or sketch what parts of these ideas excite you, what scares you, and what inspires you.



BRICKS

This is a decades long conversation, but if you put a brick in the road each step of the way and sort of lock it in, you can actually get somewhere.

Rev. Dr. Stephen G. Ray Jr.

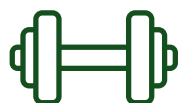
EDGES

There's a freedom. Pastoring has felt like an invitation from the congregation. "We want you to talk about this." Or, "we want to keep thinking about this." So, what initially felt like really kind of pushing the edges of, "oh, we haven't really talked this head on about this before," is now "is this how we talk about it?"

Pastor Joel Miller

"But the rest of our congregation will never agree to this," is one of the most oft-heard concerns in racial justice committees is: . It is also a cop out.

This self-imposed restraint shirks responsibility by trying to place blame at the feet of "the rest of" the people instead of accepting the need to teach the message of joint liberation. Certainly, the congregation won't agree to reparations if the idea dies in the racial justice committee for fear that the congregation won't agree to reparations.



APPENDIX 14

Build resilience against these self-defeating cycles by embracing a core teaching of organizer adrienne maree brown in [Emergent Strategies](#) that “Small is good, small is all.”

OBSERVE FRACTALS

In a meeting of the Racial Justice Team, spend five minutes of independent internet research searching for information about and images of fractals. As you work, do not speak to each other, but do play music softly in the background. You may notice that much of the images and information is about fractals that occur in nature. Follow whatever research lead feels intuitive and feel free to collect familiar fractals like pinecones and sea shells, not just mathematical abstraction.

TIP

Read more wisdom from adrienne maree brown in [Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds](#) (AK Books 2017)

Each time you find an item that grabs your attention or speaks to you, forward that item (by text or email) to one member of the team who you designate Collector for this Exercise. When the music ends, sit together in silence for 60 seconds (setting a timer on a phone is an easy trick) while each person thinks back over the images they saw and the thoughts and feelings those images inspired.



Share any initial observations that your research prompted. The Collector should project the shared information onto a screen for the group to see.

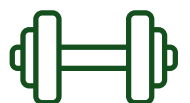
WORKSHOP THE FRACTALS

The Collector should project the shared information onto a screen for the group to see. Open the group up for discussion. Follow your curiosity as you talk about:

- What images did you see?
- What is the smallest fractal that a group member found? The largest?
- In what disciplines (e.g. music, architecture, etc.) do fractals occur?
- What fractals are present in our everyday lives?
- How many fractals do we take for granted each day?
- How do the fractals form? How do they scale?
- What is the limit of a fractal's scale?
- What is the largest fractal you found? The smallest?
- What strikes you the most about these images?
- What physical sensations and emotions did you feel as you explored these images?

Now, shift the conversation:

- How can your Racial Justice Team rely on fractals to introduce reparations to the rest of the congregation?
- What is the fractal relationship between your Racial Justice Team and members of your congregation? Your congregation? Your denomination? Your religion? Your community?

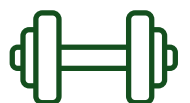


- If “small is good, small is all[,]” what is the “small” that could reach others who are less familiar with reparatory principles?
- How can the Racial Justice Team rely on the logic of fractals to reach others in the congregation?
- How can the Racial Justice Team rely on the beauty of fractals to reach others in the congregation?
- What do fractals teach the Racial Justice Team about its own progress?
- What does a reparatory fractal “look” like as it grows? What are its components?

As this conversation progresses, be sure to gather everyone’s thoughts. Some may already be familiar with fractals as a mathematical or organizing principle, but many will not be. If you begin this Exercise with familiarity about fractals, relax what you already know about them and experience the concept anew as you see others encounter them.

End this Exercise by replaying the music as the participants look back at their research and the images they shared. Reflect silently on the conversation. Consider journaling or doodling as you reflect.

Each participant should commit to one idea or principle from the conversation that they will carry forward and look for in their lives. State the principles aloud and allow the Collector to capture these ideas as well. At your next meeting, spend one to two minutes per person sharing what they observed about this principle at work in their lives.



100 your public story

TELLING YOUR PUBLIC STORY: SELF, US, NOW

Marshall Ganz

Stories not only teach us how to act—they inspire us to act. Stories communicate our values through the language of the heart, our emotions. And it is what we feel—our hopes, our cares, our obligations—not simply what we know that can inspire us with the courage to act.

A plot is structured with:

- a beginning,
- movement toward a desired goal,
- an unexpected event,
- a crisis that engages our curiosity,
- choices made in response to the crisis,
- and an outcome.

Our ability to empathetically identify with a protagonist allows us to enter into the story, feel what they feel, see things through their eyes. And the moral, revealed through the resolution, brings understanding. From stories, we learn how to manage ourselves, how to face difficult choices, unfamiliar situations, and uncertain outcomes because each of us is the protagonist in our own life story, facing everyday challenges, authoring our own choices, and learning from the outcomes.



By telling our personal stories of challenges we have faced, choices we have made, and what we learned from the outcomes we can inspire others and share our own wisdom about how they can face their challenges as well. Because we can express our values through stories not as abstract principles, but as lived experience, they have the power to move others.

Stories are specific—they evoke a very particular time, place, setting, mood, color, sound, texture, taste. The better able to communicate this specificity, the more power your story will have to engage others. This may seem like a paradox, but like a poem or a painting or a piece of music, it is the specificity of the experience that can give us access to the universal sentiment or insight they contain.

You may think that your story doesn't matter, that people aren't interested, that you shouldn't be talking about yourself. But when you do public work, you have a responsibility to offer a public account of who you are, why you do what you do, and where you hope to lead. The thing about it is that if you don't author your public story, others will, and they may not tell it in the way that you like—as many recent examples show.

A good public story is drawn from the series of choice points that have structured the “plot” of your life—the challenges you have faced, the choices you made, and the outcomes you experienced.

CHALLENGE: Why did you feel it was a challenge? What was so challenging about it? Why was it your challenge?



CHOICE: Why did you make the choice you did? Where did you get the courage—or not? Where did you get the hope—or not? How did it feel?

OUTCOME: How did the outcome feel? Why did it feel that way? What did it teach you? What do you want to teach us? How do you want us to feel?

The story you tell of how you came to serve as a leader offers others insight into your values, why you have chosen to act on them in this way, what they can expect from you, what they can learn from you, and what you might expect of them as well.

A public story consists of three parts:

- **A STORY OF SELF:** how you came to be the person you are.
- **A STORY OF US:** how your constituency, community, or organization, came to be the people they are; and
- **A STORY OF NOW:** the challenge this community now faces, the choices it must make, and the outcomes to which “we” can aspire.

In this worksheet, we focus primarily on the “story of self,” the place to begin, but we also offer some suggestions on getting to a story of us and a story of now. Remember the art of storytelling is in the telling, not in the writing. In other words, storytelling is interactive, a form of social transaction, and can therefore only be learned by telling, and listening, and telling and listening.



STORY OF SELF

Take time to reflect on your own public story, beginning with your story of self. Grab a notebook, your phone or other digital recorder, or a friend who will listen, and describe the milestones and experiences that have brought you to this moment. Go back as far as you can remember. Focus on the challenges you had to face, the choices you made about how to deal with them, and the satisfactions or frustrations you experienced.

What did you learn from the outcomes and how you feel about them today? What did they teach you about yourself, your family, your peers, your community, your nation, the world around you, and what really matters to you? What about these stories was so intriguing? Which elements offered real perspective into your own life?

If you're having trouble, here are some questions to get you started. These questions are NOT meant to be answered individually. They are intended to help to inspire you and get your memory gears rolling so you can reflect on your public story and tell it with brevity and intentionality. Don't expect to include the answers to all these questions each time you tell your story. They are the building blocks of many potential stories, and the object right now is to lay them out in a row and see what inspires you.

What memories do you have as a child that link to the people, places, and events that you value? What are your favorite memories?

What images, sounds, or smells, in particular, come up for you when you recall these memories?



List every job or project that you have ever been involved with connected with these values, or not. Be expansive; include things like camping in the wild, serving in a youth group, going to a political rally, organizing a cultural club, experiencing a moment of transcendence. List classes you have taken that connect with your values. Name the last five books or articles that you have read (by choice). What do you see as a connection or theme that you can see in all of the selections? What did you enjoy about these articles? What does your reading say about you?

Some of the moments you recall may be painful as well as hopeful. You may have felt excluded, put down or powerless, as well as courageous, recognized, and inspired. Be sure to attend to these moments of “challenge” as well as to your moments of “hope”—and to learn to be able to articulate these moments in ways that can enable others to understand who you are. It is the combination of “criticality” and “hopefulness” that creates energy for change.

What was the last time you spent a day doing what you love doing? What in particular made you want to use that day in that way? What was memorable about the day? Is there a specific sight, sound, or smell that you think of when you recall this day?

What factors were behind your decision to pursue a career in public work?

Was there pressure to make different choices? How did you deal with conflicting influences?



Who in your life was the person to introduced you to your “calling” or who encouraged you to become active? Why do you think that they did this?

What did your parents model? What was the role, if any, of a community of faith? Who did you admire?

Whom do you credit the most with your involvement now in work for your cause? What about their involvement in your life made a difference? Why do you think it was important to then to do so?

STORY OF US

What community, organization, movement, culture, nation, or other constituency do you consider yourself to be part of, connected with? Do you share a common past? Do you share a common future? Do you participate in this community as a result of “fate,” “choice,” or both? How like or unlike the experience of others do you believe your own experience to be?

What do you know about the origins of this community? What stories are connected with it? Do you know what challenges the “founders” were responding to, what went into the choices that they made, how they felt about the outcomes? Do any of these stories inspire or challenge you?



What do you know about the critical challenges it faced as a community? What choices did it make at the time? Who were some of the key people involved? What challenges were they responding to? What were the outcomes? What were the lessons? Do any of these stories inspire or challenge you?

What celebrations, rituals, holidays, songs, poems, symbols, prayers, sayings, colors, sounds or smells are associated with these critical moments in the life of this community? What does it mean if there are none? What does it mean if people are “just going through the motions?”

What was the most significant decision you have made relating to your role as a participant, activist, or leader of this community?

What was at stake for you and for others? Was there a lot of deliberation? If so, what influenced you to make the choice you made?

What are you working to achieve? What are the specific goals you have for your work? What barriers have you faced in trying to attain them? Were there ever moments of desperation? What have you done to overcome these difficult times?

When was the last time you felt very proud of your work? If you were to receive an award for your accomplishment, what values and virtues would you attribute it to? Who would you thank?



STORY OF NOW

What is the biggest challenge this community faces now? Why is this a challenge? What is at stake? Why should anyone care? Why do you care? Can you tell a personal story about why you care about this challenge now, at this moment, in this place?

What are the choices that this community faces now? Why is it a choice? What if they don't choose? What if they do? How can they make a choice? What's your role in this? What's at stake for you?

What can they hope for? If the challenge is so great, why is there hope of success? And even if hope of success is remote, why is action still required?

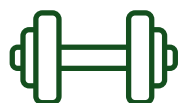
Copyrighted in 2006 by Marshall Ganz who teaches at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. It draws on his experience working in several different movements for justice. Used here with permission of the author. The original article is available at <https://philstesthomepage.files.wordpress.com/2014/05/public-story-worksheeto7ganz.pdf>.



While Marshall Ganz’s article (Appendix 15) on Public Storytelling is not solely focused on leading within churches, its message is one that resonates strongly within church settings. Jesus was first and foremost a storyteller. As the Gospel of Matthew says in chapter thirteen, “Jesus told the crowds all these things in parables; without a parable, he told them nothing.” And Jesus’ stories are ones that are woven into our bones as Christians.

The Christian Church is also knit together by stories. Every Sunday morning (and perhaps Wednesday night and Sunday evening), we hear the stories from the Older Testament, we hear sermons filled with narratives, we hear songs that tell stories. We ask each other to share testimony about why we give to the church during stewardship season. We testify about the lives of our loved ones during funerals. We read our children Biblical and other stories during children’s time and in Sunday School. Stories form us as people of faith because they teach us about the values of our community. Stories help us know how to apply those values in the actions we take.

As you will see in the rest of this guide, we have grounded the entire **SACRED RECKONINGS** process in the biblical witness. The reason we do the work of reparation is because Jesus told stories about justice, healing, transformation, and hope. And he rooted all his work in the justice, healing, transformation, and hope of his Jewish tradition. Just as Jesus told stories to teach us gospel values, we need to tell stories about how our lives and the ministry of reparation are rooted in the life and ministry of Jesus.



But, as Marshall Ganz points out, we need to learn how to do this in effective ways. One of those ways is through the technique called Public Storytelling that Ganz has written about and taught in many contexts. Many of our religiously rooted justice colleagues have found that Public Storytelling is a very effective tool as part of congregationally-based justice work and so we share it with you here.

GUIDELINES FOR TELLING OUR STORIES

Stories should...

- Be under 2 minutes: Effective organizing stories are focused and well-structured. Remember you are telling the story of one moment in time. Focus on one challenge, one choice, and one outcome.
- Be specific—use details: Take the listener to the moment you are describing. What are the sights, sounds, smells, and emotions of that moment? Use the present tense. Try telling the story without using the word “and.”
- Tap into emotion: Stories should pull at the heartstrings of the listener. Help the listener understand the values you are describing through the language of emotion.
- Include a challenge, a choice, and an outcome: Make sure these three points are clear and well-articulated.



- Offer hope: Stories should be inspirational. End on a positive note. Offer the good news through your story.
- Communicate values: Stories have a point, and that point is a value that you want to inspire and cultivate in the listener.

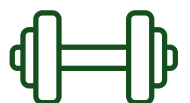
Remembering these guidelines, take a few minutes and write some notes about your reparations work. Use these notes to build your Public Reparations Story.

STORYTELLING STRUCTURE

Story of Self
CHALLENGE + CHOICE + OUTCOME = 2 MINUTES

Why are you part of your congregational reparations efforts?

- This is the story of who you are and why you are called to do what you are called to do.
- Think about a specific moment in time that embodies your call.
- Make sure your story is in the first person.



Story of Us

CHALLENGE + CHOICE + OUTCOME = 2 MINUTES

Who are we together as we do reparations?

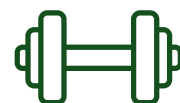
- This is the story of your congregation.
- Who are we together as we do reparations?
- Think about a specific moment that embodies the identity of your own congregation.
- What does it mean to be part of your denomination's or wider Christian reparations work, or what does it mean that your congregation is not part of these movements in your denomination?

Story of Now

CHALLENGE + CHOICE + OUTCOME = 2 MINUTES

The current challenge to your denomination or congregation.

- This is the story of the Church as it is and the Church as it could be.
- Paint the picture of the vision of a liberated and a liberating church and lead your listener to take action.... "We need you to...."
- What is the challenge we face together as First Baptist Church or as Presbyterians, etc.?



As you craft your stories, here are examples from the Welcoming Church Movement and from our shared work around reparations.

Gloria was in her eighties and was asked to speak at a church meeting as they considered whether to become a Welcoming Congregation.

“When I was eight years old, I was helping my mom, who served on the Altar Guild. One of her roles was to clean the sanctuary every week. This day, she had taken the Communion cup and plate off the Table and placed them on the front pew. Now the church where I grew up didn’t allow lay people – let alone women – to serve Communion. But despite that, I was pretending to be the minister with the elements. Just as I raised up the cup and was whispering the words I’d heard so many times, I felt two strong hands on my shoulders. It was the pastor, and I had been caught. I froze. As he leaned down to speak in my ear, I knew that I was in deep trouble. But what he said to me was this: ‘It’s a joy, isn’t it, to invite people to Christ’s table? I hope you’ll remember that everyone is always welcome.’ I’m eighty-two years old and I don’t completely understand what lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people experience. But I do know that my church is a church where everyone is welcome at the communion table and in the pulpit and in every aspect of church life. So I’m voting in favor of becoming a welcoming congregation.

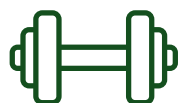


In this example, the person facing the challenge, choice, and outcome is actually the pastor, not the storyteller.

- Challenge: Finding someone who was not allowed to serve Communion pretending to do so.
- Choice: He could either chastise her or affirm her instincts.
- Outcome: He taught a life-long lesson that everyone is welcome at the table.

Macky Alston tells the next story from his experience with personal reparations.

“My family and I inherited our family plantation. It’s a modest farmhouse, so it wasn’t a ton of money. But when my cousins bought me out, I received \$27,500 and donated it to Southerners On New Ground (SONG) as an act of reparations for myself. And when I contributed it to SONG, they said, this is interesting, and it’s a good start for you, Macky. Would you be interested in going and finding other folks like you with the same history and set of identities who might come into the work through this pathway? So I set out and found three other folks, and we began a little circle of practice to try to support one another’s work in our families and communities. That led me to start spending regular time in the town of Penfield, Georgia, where my family were enslavers and colonizers. There, I met a woman named Mamie Hillman, who has been working for decades to open an African American history museum and truth telling center in this very rural, poor county in Georgia that was one of the richest counties in the United States before the Civil War, a cotton economy.

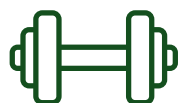


And when Mamie and I met, we discovered there was a sense that we were both really excited by the opportunity that the other was providing or inviting the other into. She had experienced initial support and then a kind of polite resistance to the opening of this truth telling center by everybody. She just wanted people who said, this is amazing what you're doing, and how can I help? And I, of course, was so excited to find somebody to be in support of and in relationship with. We started meeting weekly, and some other folks who were interested began to join. And that was a long time ago.

Look again at the story pattern:

- Challenge: Being asked to not stop with a reparations payment but, instead, working to inspire other White settler-colonizer folx to engage the reparations process
- Choice: He could either let his reparatory action be the end of it or keep engaged in the work
- Outcome: deeper relationships: with Mamie, with his accountability circle and with his family.

Use this structure in your and your congregation's **SACRED RECKONINGS** public storytelling.



100 vivifying descendants

The work of **SACRED RECKONINGS** invites us to place ourselves in relationship with our ancestors and our descendants (of all kinds: biological, cultural, movement, religious, etc.). This Tool helps us in our relationship with our descendants. As you work through the curriculum, engage in this spiritual exercise regularly.

Speak aloud:

To begin, close your eyes. Ground yourself. Feel where your body has landed in your chair. Feel it support you as you begin to slow your breath. Feel the solidity of the ground under your feet.

Begin to direct your breath into your body. Inhale and send your breath to any part of your body that is tense or anxious or experiencing pain. Picture your breath surrounding the discomfort, warming it, and easing it.

Exhale and release the discomfort, sending it out of your body with your breath.

Breathe in; breathe out. [Repeat five times.]

Now, begin to picture your descendants. [Chose one indented prompt.]



DESCENDANTS

Picture your grandchildren, their children, and their grandchildren.

Know that your descendants are not just your children and their children because we are all related to each other. Picture all those people who will inherit the world that you leave.

Know that your descendants are not just other humans because we are all related to each other. Picture all the animals who will inherit the world that you leave.

Know that your descendants are not just other humans because we are all related to each other. Picture all the plants and trees that will inherit the world that you leave.

Know that your descendants include the children of those who are today's villains because we are all related to each other. Picture the people who are obstacles to your work today, and then picture the children and grandchildren they raise.

Let your descendants come gently into focus as you walk toward them. What do they look like? What details do you see?

Where are they? What do they look like in their surroundings? Are they in the city? In a forest? At a body of water? What colors do you see? What textures?



What does their world smell like? Is the air warm or cool? Dry or humid? What color is the sky?

Move toward your descendants. What world do you want to pass on to them? What legacy will you leave them? What kind of ancestor do you want to be for them?

Move closer. Your descendants lean toward you. What do they say to you? Perhaps they speak in words or an image or a song. What message do they ask you to carry? What do they want you to take with you when you return from your visit? Feel their message flood you as you accept their gift.

[pause]

Begin to bring your attention back to the present. Feel your chest rise as you inhale. Feel your belly fall as you exhale. Feel the ground underneath your feet. Open your eyes.

[Invite anyone who would like to share to do so. If anyone feels that it is not the right time to share their gift, they may keep it private.]



ACCOUNTABILITY

What would happen if the obligation was to our descendants? What would happen if our obligation was to say this is what we want and this is the world that we want for all of them, not just some ones, not just the ones with privilege, not just the ones with social location, but for all of them, and then raise the question of what do we need to get there, because at that point you have to talk about the structure inequities that were created by history. You have to talk about the dislocation that's been created by history. You have to talk about all these things that have created the world that has been deformed and distorted if your point of accountability is your descendants.

Rev. Dr. Stephen G. Ray Jr.





Great-Grandmother Mary Lyons
Ojibwe Elder

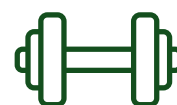
ANCESTORS

The work of **SACRED RECKONINGS** invites us to place ourselves in relationship with our ancestors and our descendants of all kinds: biological, cultural, movement, religious, etc. This Exercise helps us in our relationship with our ancestors.

When we remember a person, we call them to mind. But what if that memory could re-member a person, metaphorically restoring them to limb and body? Can we re-member our ancestors, restore them to their full humanity and enliven our relationships to them? How can allowing them their full humanity help us see and live in our own?

re-membering

EXERCISE



Think of one or two ancestors—preferably at least two generations before you—whom you would like to learn more about. These ancestors may be your biological or adoptive ancestors, or may not be related to you at all. You could undertake this Exercise with a spiritual or cultural ancestor. The point is to explore your cultural inheritance and the stories we tell (and don't) about each other.

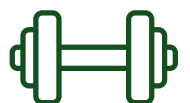
First, learn about their lives:

- Who were their parents and grandparents?
- Where did they live? Did they own their land? Rent? Something else?
- How did they arrive at that location?
- How did they spend their days? What was their work? What was their play? What was their worship?
- Where is their “home country”? Why did they leave? Were they pulled to the United States or pushed to it or both?
- What are the stories that you were told about them?

Now, look back at your profile of this ancestor. What stories seem to be untold? There are many online genealogy sites that can help you explore this question.

TIP

There are many online genealogy sites that can help you explore your ancestors' lives. [This site](#) has a list of low- and no-cost resources.



- How do these stories—told and untold—fit within the larger historical forces you are learning about?
- How do you imagine they would want to be remembered?
- How do you imagine they would want to be celebrated?
- What do you imagine they would want to do differently if they know what you know?
- How does re-remembering the full humanity of this ancestor affect your approach to truth telling and reparations?

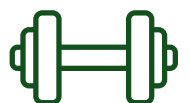
Close encounters with ancestors are often one of the most powerful parts of the reparations process. Here, several people share stories of ancestors and re-remembering.



Dr. Carolyn Pegg
Member, Lyndale UCC Reparations Task
Force



Macky Alston
Member of Judson Memorial Church &
documentary film co-director, [Acts of
Reparations](#)





Wilber Miller
Columbus Mennonite Church Reparations
Task Force



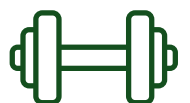
Yvonne Zimmerman
Columbus Mennonite Church Reparations
Task Force



Adam Glass
Columbus Mennonite Church Reparations
Task Force



Joel Miller
Lead Pastor, Columbus Mennonite Church





Macky Alston
Member of Judson Memorial Church and
documentary film co-director, Acts of
Reparations



Wilber Miller
Columbus Mennonite Church Reparations
Task Force



Coya White Hat-Artichoker (Sicangu Lakota,
Ho-Chunk descendant)
Activist & Writer, Board Member of
SisterSong and the American
LGBTQ+Museum



Start where you are

EXERCISE

START

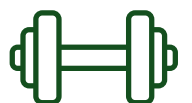
I think that one of the beautiful things about doing this repair work is that you start where you are and the specificity of one's history, either institutional history or individual history or regional, state, national. I think that there's a pathway that opens up when you begin to get real.

Macky Alston

INWARD

First, use church records and oral histories to determine the answers to the research questions below. Important information sources can be charter membership rolls, baptism and cemetery records, capital campaign records, named donations and memorials, and oral histories of significant features of the church building like stained-glass panels and other art.

- For each material assets that you identified in the Wealth Assessment Exercise, determine the donor or other origin of that asset.
- Identify the charter, founding, multi-generational, and prominent families of your church. For example,



APPENDIX 19

- check charter membership rolls, and baptism and cemetery records.
- Identify your church’s significant donors since its founding. For example, look for plaques on pews and walls, ask elder members about significant past projects, scholarships, or bequests

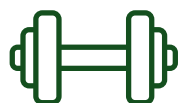
OUTWARD

Next, look beyond the church to answer the following research questions about the families and individuals you identified in the first part of this Exercise. Important information sources can be county history museums, state historical societies, historic newspapers, and oral histories of church members.

whose labor?

For each of the individual donors and families that you identified, determine:

- When they arrived in your state.
- What industries they were in before and after they arrived.
- Where their work was located.
- Whether their work relied on slave labor.
- Whether their work relied on wage labor that was artificially depressed because of slave labor. For example, as the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. explained in *Why We Can’t Wait*, the availability of slave labor (and then sharecropping labor) depressed the wages of nearby white farmers by flooding the “market” with no- and low-cost labor.
- How their work impacted the land and the environment.



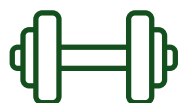
whose land?

For your church and the locations that you identified in connection with individual donors and families, determine:

- What indigenous people(s) lived on the land.
- Whether the area was the homeland of only one tribe or whether various tribes occupied the area at different times.
- Where those tribes reside now.
- How those tribes' historic territories compare to their current territories.
- Why and how, if they are not still in the area, they came to their current territories.
- What each of those tribes was promised in exchange for their homeland.
- Whether the United States fulfilled those promises.
- How the church and individual donors and families came to own the land.

With the results from these research questions, gather as a Reparations Task Force to explore:

- Where is your congregation's wealth from?
- Where does this information land in your body?
- How does it feel to learn this information?
- How does this answer compare to the origin stories we tell?
- How does it affect whether you view reparations as charity or as return?
- How can you rely on your Tools to metabolize your feelings about this information?





Rev. Pamela Ngunjiri
Co-Director of Racial Justice, Minnesota
Council of Churches

Here, clergy and leaders describe the importance and power of rooting your reparations truth-telling journey in your own congregational and personal history.



(Coya White Hat-Artichoker (Sicangu Lakota, Ho-Chunk descendant)
Activist & Writer, Board Member of SisterSong and the American LGBTQ+Museum)



Joel Miller
Lead Pastor, Columbus Mennonite Church



Jen Martel (Cheyenne River)
Sitting Bull College Visiting Center
Coordinator



Adam Glass
Columbus Mennonite Church Reparations
Task Force



Each of us carries unique stories of past people and past place. The previous Exercise helped you learn the details of those stories for your congregation (and perhaps, for yourself).

And. Each of those stories piles up.

Here is a description of how our Black and Indigenous relatives do not just carry their own stories. They carry the cumulative weight of all our stories of White supremacy.



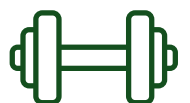
Rev. Dr. Stephen G. Ray Jr.
Theologian and Leader in
Theological Education



Widen your research to place your story within the context of your city, state, and nation. Explore questions like:

- What industries built your city? Your region?
- Whose labor did those industries use, and on whose land?
- Who paid for your city's libraries and museums? Where did that wealth come from?
- What land-grant universities are near you? How were they funded?
- Are there redlining maps of your city? How does that segregation persist today?
- What is the relationship between pollution and health outcomes and redlining?
- What state policies enabled and supported these stories?
- What federal policies enabled and supported these stories?

As the Reparations Task Force explores these questions, a truth-telling topic or two will land with particular force. Perhaps it is the story of a founding family's industry or its relationship to a nearby university. When you reach a particularly impactful topic, plan to bring that information to the congregation to push the learning outside of the Reparations Task Force.



We need to allow ourselves to feel but it can open us to an avalanche of difficult emotions. Some people have a deep need to NOT feel. Sometimes we want to turn away or zone out but our feelings can invite us deeper into transformation. Behind White reactivity and lack of resilience is a deep well of grief we must learn to metabolize.

LAMENT OF REPENTANCE FROM CONGREGANT IN LOS ANGELES

A group of clergy and lay people took toured the Los Angeles neighborhood of Watts. That neighborhood is an example of how systemic racism creates the conditions of despair and anger. That despair and anger exploded in 1965 with an uprising in response to police brutality against a young Black man. And the same neighborhood exploded in 1992 after the acquittal of the police officers who beat Rodney King. One of the tour participants wrote a penitential lament to confess complicity in the racist system.

Oh God, my Redeemer and Restorer of Life, even though my ancestors walked roads filled with evil, I ask that you would deliver me and my children from the legacy of lies and wickedness. Sever the ties that bind to the old way full of hate. Flood us with cleansing waters that wash over and erase any remnant. We praise you and will be your love as a sign of your goodness and change.[11]



psalms of lament

YOUR LAMENT

Spend five minutes alone in reflection:

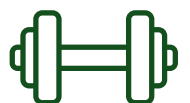
- What do you need to lament?
- What is causing you pain as you consider the harm of White supremacy?
- What pain might you be complicit in causing?
- What are you grieving?

Write a Psalm of Lament following this structure:

- Protest: Tell God what is wrong.
- Petition: Name your deepest desire from God in healing from racism.
- Praise: Express trust in God today, based on God's character and action in the past, even if you can't yet see the outcome.

If you are comfortable doing so, share your Psalm of Lament with your Reparations Task Force.

[11] "The theological work of antiracism needs to include lament," Rob Muthiah | The Christian Century (Jan. 12, 2021) at <https://www.christiancentury.org/article/critical-essay/theological-work-antiracism-needs-include-lament>.



In groups of three, make the commitment to these agreements and to meet four times for about an hour and 15 minutes over the course of about four to six weeks. At your meetings, follow these prompts.

GROUP AGREEMENTS

- Speak from the “I” and from personal experience
- Model imperfection, mistake-making and growth; release perfectionism
- Model vulnerability and responsibility; notice the urge to perform or to assuage guilt
- Share to inspire and build community; not to shame or punish
- Listen with the intention of understanding

SMALL GROUP SESSIONS 1 AND 2 GUIDE

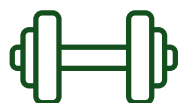
- Use this guide for meetings one and two.
- Choose two people who will share at the first meeting; the third will share at the second meeting. Key the timed agenda at the end of this Exercise to your start time.
- Come prepared to discuss:
 - What is your class/money story?
 - What is your ancestry? Where does it intersect with racism and reparations?
 - What is the cost of your Whiteness? To yourself? To others? To society?



SMALL GROUP SESSIONS 3 AND 4 GUIDE

- Use this guide for meetings three and four.
- Choose two people who will share at the third meeting; the third will share at the fourth meeting. Key the timed agenda at the end of this Exercise to your start time.
- Come prepared to discuss:
 - What do reparations mean to you?
 - What could reparations look like in your community(ies)—in your family, on your block, in your institutions, in your town/city, in your country?
 - Think about your own personal commitment to reparations: “I am a commitment to _____ for the sake of _____.” (This is a practice from Generative Somatics) if it feels useful for you, you can reflect on how you would complete this phrase in this moment) OR if you are involved in a reparations-related project and would like to share about it, you could also share questions or struggles you’re encountering or what you are learning or thinking about.

Designed by Macky Alston, Elspeth Gilmore, Carol Hart, and Julia Rhodes Davis for the Acts of Reparations Accountability Circle.



agenda

0:00 ARRIVAL (5 minutes)

Is there a volunteer to timekeep and “hold the agenda” for the day? The first day you also might want to check in on the Group Agreements.

0:05 CHECK-IN (10 minutes, 2-3 minutes each)

Each person shares a highlight from the past week, and anything else about how you are arriving today, maybe related to the topic of reparations or maybe not.

0:15 PERSON A SHARES (15 minutes)

0:30 GROUP QUESTIONS & REFLECTIONS FOR PERSON A (5 minutes)

This is a time for the rest of the group to ask any clarifying questions, or reflect back something you heard that struck you, or that you think would be meaningful for the person sharing to hear.

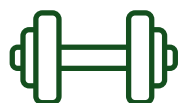
0:35 PAUSE POINT (5 minutes)

5 minute buffer to catch up if you are “over time” on the agenda or take a grounding breath

0:40 PERSON B SHARES (15 minutes)

In the second and fourth group meetings, you can use this time to talk as a group about anything that anyone has shared so far, commonalities, a question or struggle someone wants to raise.

0:55 GROUP QUESTIONS & REFLECTIONS FOR PERSON B (5 minutes)



1:00 LOGISTICS (5 minutes)

Confirm time for next week & details of how you're going to meet (Zoom, in-person, etc.).

1:05 CLOSING (10 minutes, 2-3 minutes each)

Each person shares a question or insight from the day, and one thing you'd like to do related to reparations before the next gathering (it can be small).

1:15 END SESSION

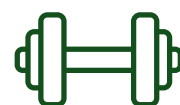


Indigenous leaders and organizations is a critical part of the Reparatory Eco Map. The work of reparations is that of White settler-colonizers, but ultimately, our work must hew to the direction that BIPOC leaders set. This is rooted in the understanding that “those closest to the pain ought to be closest to the power.”

Importantly, this Exercise (and the section of the Eco Map that it supports) does not ask you to increase the BIPOC membership of your congregation. Rather, you are looking to map and invest in the relationships that already grow within and from your congregation. And in areas of the country with few Black or Indigenous folx, your relationships may not be one-to-one. Rather, your goal is to stand in relationship with frontline communities.

First, within the Reparations Task Force, brainstorm your existing relationships with BIPOC leaders and organizations generally, and Black and Indigenous leaders and organizations in particular:

- Who are your congregational members of color?
- What relationships do your clergy have with leaders of color? Consider “leaders” broadly to include anyone who can informally guide or provide feedback about your reparations work, or whom you think of as a person you learn from.



- What relationships do your clergy have with organizations of color? This does not include White-led organizations—even if they provide services to communities of color. Instead, it includes organizations led by people of color, regardless of what services the organization provides. But do consider “relationships” broadly to include groups you have partnered with, fundraised for, met in political actions with, who are in your geographic neighborhood, and who may be denominationally affiliated.
- Has your congregation ever had a “sister congregation” relationship that included leaders of color?
- What relationships do your Task Force members have with leaders and organizations of color?
- What relationships do other congregational teams have with leaders and organizations of color? Consider both direct (church-to-BIPOC organization) relationships and indirect (church-to-intermediate organization-to-BIPOC organization) relationships. For example, do you have a climate team that works with climate organizations with a racial justice component that partners with Black or Indigenous organizations? Or does your racial justice team partner with interfaith teams who work more directly with Black and Indigenous leaders?

When considering these questions, don’t forget to list the relationships that exist virtually or are connected to your regional or nationally denominational life. These may not be as strong as those that are “in real



life.” But if your congregation, or members within it, participate in your denominational Native Alaskan and American Indian Ministries organization through financial support and advocacy, note this on your map. Also consider relationships that are online, especially in social media. Even if you do not personally know someone, you stand in relationship with them if you have come to know them as a person, through whatever medium.

After your Reparations Task Force has engaged in this mapping, consider the questions you ask during One-to-One visits with congregants. Be curious about the relationships with BIPOC communities and leaders that exist in your congregation.

One way to discover more about the web of relationships with BIPOC organizations and leaders is by holding a congregational event that is geared toward the relationship circle in the Reparatory Eco Map. You could do a “Museum Walk” or break folx into small groups to have conversation around these discussion prompts:

Share a story about....

- A deep and meaningful relationship and/or experience with at least one person of a different race or ethnicity.
- A deep and meaningful experience with an organization or group led by BIPOC people who are advocating for racial justice or reparations.
- A leadership role you hold in an organization or group that is led primarily by BIPOC people and advocates for racial justice or reparations (eg staff member, Board member, etc).



- One action of political solidarity for racial justice or reparations that was led by BIPOC people in which you have taken part (protest, redistributing resources, door knock, calling a legislator, signing a petition...).
- Volunteering with your congregation’s justice team(s) at an event led by BIPOC people.

Your Reparations Task Force should add these responses to your Congregational Relationship Map.

Last, reach out to the leaders and organizations you prioritized. Let them know that you are in this process, and ask them to consider how the congregation could engage in “followership” of their work. Do not expect an answer right away. Rather, leave it as an open invitation. Then, when you are asked for help, follow through. If you are asked to set up chairs, set up chairs. If you’re asked to share an event in your newsletter, do that. And if you’re asked to help fundraise, do what you’re called on to do.

The surest way to build roles of followership is to ask to follow and then do so. This is not an easy process. A long history of unreliability surrounds White colonizers’ offers of “help.” But placing yourself within communities of color and consistently “showing up,” whether to the direct action in the street or as a customer at the Indigenous-owned coffee shop, demonstrates reliability that can defeat historical misgivings.

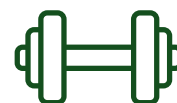


Political solidarity is the act of putting your Whiteness on the line to support the work of Black and Indigenous leaders to change the systems of oppression that persist today. On the one hand, this is a pretty easy Exercise:

- 1 Seek out a Black- or Indigenous-led movement or action that aligns with your values.
- 2 Attend the movement or action, listen, and do what is asked of you.
- 3 Share your reactions and experiences with your Reparations Task Force.

But that is often easier said than done. The trick is consent. First, the impacted person, organization, or community must consent to the support. If they don't want your help, that "help" does more harm than good. Second, you must values-check yourself to confirm that you agree with the help that is asked of you. Put differently, just because a Black leader asks for it doesn't mean you should say yes. Certainly, we always need to push past our comfort zones, but if we truly disagree with the ask, or do not feel safe fulfilling the request, it is best to decline.

We each offer an example of political solidarity to demonstrate these steps.



THE 4TH PRECINCT OCCUPATION

When the Minneapolis Police killed Jamar Clark, an unarmed Black man, in 2015, Black Lives Matter (BLM) Minneapolis led an occupation of the 4th Police Precinct. Early on in the occupation, BLM Minneapolis leaders called a press conference and asked that a dozen or so White clergy people be present. Rebecca answered the call. Before the press conference began, BLM Minneapolis leaders met with the clergy to reiterate their request and make specific asks: namely that the White clergy be physically present, but that if any press approached them for comment, the clergy respectfully redirect the press to the BLM Minneapolis spokesperson.

The White clergy attended the press conference and were, indeed, approached and ask for comment. Each clergyperson directed the reporters to the BLM Minneapolis spokesperson.

Rebecca sought out the Black-led occupation, betrayed her Whiteness by lending her embodied support to BLM Minneapolis, and built trust by doing what was specifically asked of her—and not doing what she was asked not to do. The moment was an important part of the movement that continues to be built for racial justice in the Twin Cities.

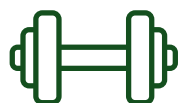
THE INDIAN LAW MOOT COURT

Jessica was attending a fundraiser for an Indigenous-led organization when she met the then-Director of Minneapolis Public Schools' Indian Education Department. The two exchanged pleasantries and Jessica offered to deepen the relationship by lending her law firm's financial support to any moot court teams in the Department.



Several years later, the Director called Jessica and said “we’re ready for that Moot Court curriculum now.” Jessica had never participated in a moot court before (and had no desire to return to high school) but garnered resources and expertise to partner with the district to create an Indian Law Moot Court class that satisfied the sophomore English and Social Studies requirement.

Jessica betrayed her Whiteness by spending her lawyer time building the program instead of billing clients and doing what was asked of her even though it was uncomfortable and entirely different from the help that she offered. The program—now in its eighth year—introduces students to Indigenous attorneys and federal Indian law, and is a right of passage for students in the district’s All Nations program.



POLITE

I had to give myself permission to not worry about being polite. Not even politically correct. We're not being politically correct. We're not being Christian polite. I just need to be me.

Rev. Pamela Ngunjiri

ROADS

As soon as you bring out the acoustic guitar, you've immediately predetermined what road you're going down.

Rev. Dr. Stephen G. Ray Jr.

It's not that acoustic guitar is a problem. It is a mainstay of White faith communities, and for many, it is a medicine that nourishes. But for many others? It's not.

For example, White folx may hear a call for unity in Woodie Guthrie's "This Land Is Your Land." An Indigenous ear, though, may hear unspoken colonization under the lyrics. And others socialized outside of Whiteness may just want a stronger beat.



After Minneapolis police murdered George Floyd Jr., signs of inclusion sprouted up across the city. One sign that appeared on household lawns, in the windows of businesses, and near the doors of churches read simply, “All Are Welcome Here.” Certainly, the intent of welcoming inclusion is important. But how welcoming a place is depends on more than a yard sign or even the people. It depends on the place itself.

For example, the first time Jessica visited a large progressive congregation, she spent 15 minutes walking the perimeter of the building on a hot summer day, finding each successive door locked. Undoubtedly, the congregation meant to welcome her. The physical experience, though, signaled significant barriers.

Even if every door is unlocked, a building itself can be a barrier to inclusion. As Edgar Villanueva writes,

Professional buildings intentionally feel different from spaces where people live. The cold, hard style and feel of these spaces allows the decisions made there to be impersonal and rigid, following rules rather than flexibly adapting to the complexity of human situations. Their location, architecture, and design support colonizing tactics of division, control, and exploitation....

Edgar Villanueva, Decolonizing Wealth



For congregants, a historic church designed in an English Gothic style like Westminster Abbey, Canterbury Cathedral, and Salisbury Cathedral is inspiring. Vaulted ceilings, pointed arches, and multiple large-format stained-glass windows can signal reverence and awe for a glorious God. But people outside of this faith tradition can find these same features intimidating, ostentatious, and exclusive. This reaction can be particularly strong for people who are part of groups who have been traumatized by Christianity.

Whether you are inviting speakers for the day or are considering inviting organizations to share space, conduct this physical audit to identify potential physical and psychological barriers within your space.

Draw on your relationships in the Racial Justice Team and, if needed, the broader congregation to invite two or three guests of different backgrounds to help you audit your space. If you do not have established relationships with people of other races, faiths, or orientations, ask nearby organizations for referrals. If you live in a predominantly White community, search for people outside your faith tradition. Invite people of different ages and genders.



ONSITE TOURS

Ask your guests to help you identify unknown barriers within your space. Let them know that you hope they will share how they experience the space as a person from outside the congregation who brings different identities to the space. Confirm whether they are comfortable with you taking notes as you talk. Budget at least \$50/hour for these guests' time and let them know that you will compensate them for their labor on your behalf. Schedule separate walk-throughs with each guest.

Two or three Racial Justice Team members should take the guest on a tour of the space and the surrounding campus. As you move through the space, ask questions and follow-up questions like:

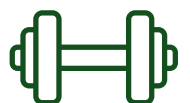
ARRIVAL

- How did you arrive at the building?
- How difficult was it to find the building?
- How difficult was it to find the entrance?



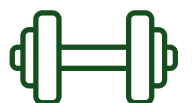
INSIDE

- What parts of the building are physically difficult to navigate (e.g. staircases, narrow hallways)?
- What is your reaction to this built space?
- What catches your attention visually?
- What sounds catch your attention?
- What smells catch your attention?
- How do these sensory details make you feel?
- What is your reaction to these sensory details? How do they make you feel?
- What catches your attention visually?
- What sounds catch your attention?
- What smells catch your attention?
- What is your reaction to these sensory details? How do they make you feel?
- What is your reaction to the décor?
- What objects displayed in the building catch your attention? Why? What is your reaction to that art?
- Do you feel comfortable using this furniture? Why or why not?
- What changes do you think would make this space more welcoming?
- What do you think is important to keep about this space?
- What else do you think I should know about this space?



OUTSIDE

- What parts of the campus are physically difficult to navigate (e.g. stairs, handrails, and places where sidewalks would be helpful)?
- What is your reaction to this built space?
- What catches your attention visually?
- What sounds catch your attention?
- What smells catch your attention?
- What is your reaction to these sensory details? How do they make you feel?
- Do you feel comfortable in this landscape? Why or why not?
- Do you feel safe in this landscape? Why or why not?
- What parts of the architecture of the building catch your attention from the outside?
- What is your reaction to those features?
- Does it make you feel welcome or unwelcome? Why?
- What art (benches, sculptures, plaques, etc.) displayed outside the building catches your attention? Why?
- What is your reaction to that art?
- Does it make you feel welcome or unwelcome? Why?
- What changes do you think would make this landscape more welcoming?
- What do you think is important to keep about this campus?
- What else do you think I should know about this landscape?

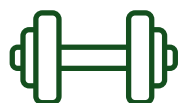


DEPARTURE

- What changes do you think would make this landscape more welcoming?
- What do you think is important to keep about this campus?
- What else do you think I should know about this landscape?

Feel free to answer questions about your space, but do not explain design decisions if there is no question asked. Instead, throughout this audit, your role is to listen and take notes.

Bring this information back to the Reparations Task Force to look for patterns, cautions, and suggestions that you should keep in mind as you consider whether and how to invite others into your space.





Sharon Day (Bois Forte Band of Ojibwe)
Executive Director, Indigenous Peoples Task
Force

In conversations about reparations, return of land can be even harder for congregations to consider than return of funds. But both are integral to breaking the wealth-spirals that stolen land and stolen labor began centuries ago. And congregations are often uniquely situated to consider land return.

Learn from these indigenous leaders about the importance of land return. When you are finished with these videos, use this Exercise to evaluate your congregation's land resources and evaluate land-back possibilities.

land back

EXERCISE





Coya White Hat-Artichoker (Sicangu Lakota, Ho-Chunk descendant)
Activist & Writer, Board member of SisterSong and the American LGBTQ+Museum



Jen Martel (Cheyenne River)
Sitting Bull College Visiting Center Coordinator

WHERE: THE LAND

Often, the first step toward congregational land-back is to list your congregation's real estate resources. Think broadly. In addition to your worship space, do you have camp or retreat properties? Historical properties that used to serve other purposes? Bequests or donations from members? Talk with your council, board, and congregational leadership to identify the full portfolio of properties that your church has access to regardless of whether the properties are central to your worship or ministry.



But don't stop there. Also consider the properties that your members own. Do any have recreational or farm properties? Are any congregants interested in donating their land to the congregation while they are living or upon their death? Educating your congregation about land-back possibilities will grow the conversation about what is possible.

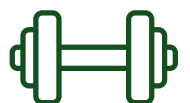
WHAT: THE TRANSFER

Now that you know what properties can be part of a land-return conversation, brainstorm what land back can look like. This is a flexible conversation that holds whom to return the land to and how to structure the transaction at the same time. Different Indigenous tribes and organizations will have different land needs, and a meaningful land return must follow the needs of the group you return the land to. Put differently, if that group has no interest in or need for the land, the transfer is not reparative.

Although it is critical to center the who in this brainstorm, this is not a linear conversation. Changing the who can change the how, and vice versa. Use the examples below to stretch your creativity to meet your congregational situation.

WHO: THE PARTNER

If you already have a strong relationship that you would like to support, start there. Use One-to-One Visit to and listening Tools to learn about the person or group's land needs. Then, in your Reparations Task Force, explore whether these land goals and needs align with your congregation's values.



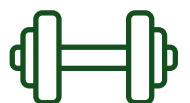
If you do not yet have strong followership relationships, now is the time to start building them. Look at your land portfolio and the consider:

- What tribe(s) historically occupied the land?
- What tribe(s) are near the land now?
- What Indigenous organizations are located near the parcels?
- What tribes or Indigenous organizations operate near the parcels?

Take this list, look at the programs and services that these organizations offer, and then seek out one-to-one visits to learn about the tribes' and organizations' land needs. Consider these needs as you consider the how.

HOW: THE MECHANICS

Land return can take many forms. Here are a few formats to consider in your conversation. Please note that this is not tax or legal advice. These options may apply differently in different situations, and before your congregation moves forward, it should consult with its accountant and attorney.



LAND TRANSFER

The most comprehensive land-back transaction is for the church to transfer its ownership of the land to a tribe or Indigenous organization. Think of this as a land sale but for “nominal consideration” like a \$1 sale price. Once the land is transferred, the church does not retain any control over the land. This may be appropriate for parcels that the church has carried but not used, like donated farmland located far from the church.

Congregants may also be interested in this option if they want to reduce their eventual estate. For example, a person who wants to reduce their estate could donate their land to the church on the condition that the church returns the land to a tribe. The congregant could receive a tax deduction and reduce their taxable estate without incurring capital-gains tax; the church would advance its land-back goals, and the tribe would regain control of ancestral land.



SALE-LEASEBACK

In a sale-leaseback, the church sells its land to the tribe or organization (again for a nominal amount) and then leases the space back from the buyer. This two-step transaction allows a church to change its spiritual relationship with the land while continuing certain land uses. It also allows the congregation to transition away from land ownership in steps.

The details of the lease will all be open for negotiation. How long should the church continue to use the property? What uses does it need to protect during that period? What will it pay the new landowner for those uses? Are there any uses that the new owner wants to prohibit? For the lease term, the church only retains the uses that it bargains for in the lease. At the end of the lease term, if it has not negotiated an additional lease, the church will not have any remaining interest in the land.

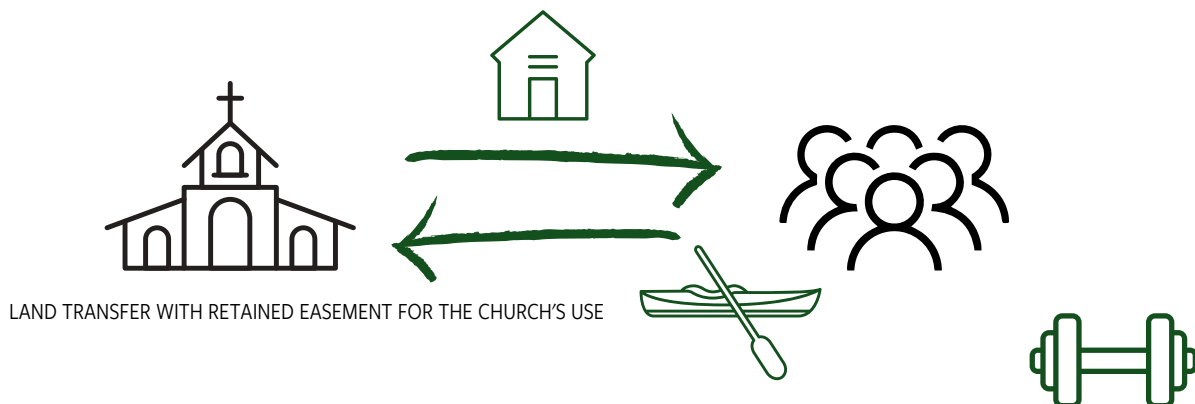


EASEMENT

An easement is a right to use (but not possess) another person’s property for a specific purpose. It can be an affirmative easement—a right for the nonowner to do something without being blocked. For example, a utility with an easement can run its lines across your property without your stopping them. Or it can be a negative easement—a right for the nonowner to block the owner’s use. For example, your easement can stop your neighbor from building their house so tall that it blocks your view. Easements “run with the land,” so they do not ever cancel—even if the owner sells their property to someone else.

If your congregation would like to sell its property but retain a perpetual and specific use (for example, cutting across a former camp property to launch canoes into the river) or forever prohibit a specific use (like disturbing a known cemetery), then you can consider offering to sell the property while retaining an easement.

Conversely, if you are not ready to sell the property but want to grant a limited use to an organization or tribe, you could grant them an easement for a nominal price. For example, you could grant tribes the right to cross your property to access a lake within their historic fishing territory. Or you could use the easement to promise a tribe that you will not disturb known burial mounds on your property.

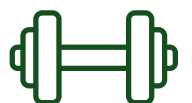
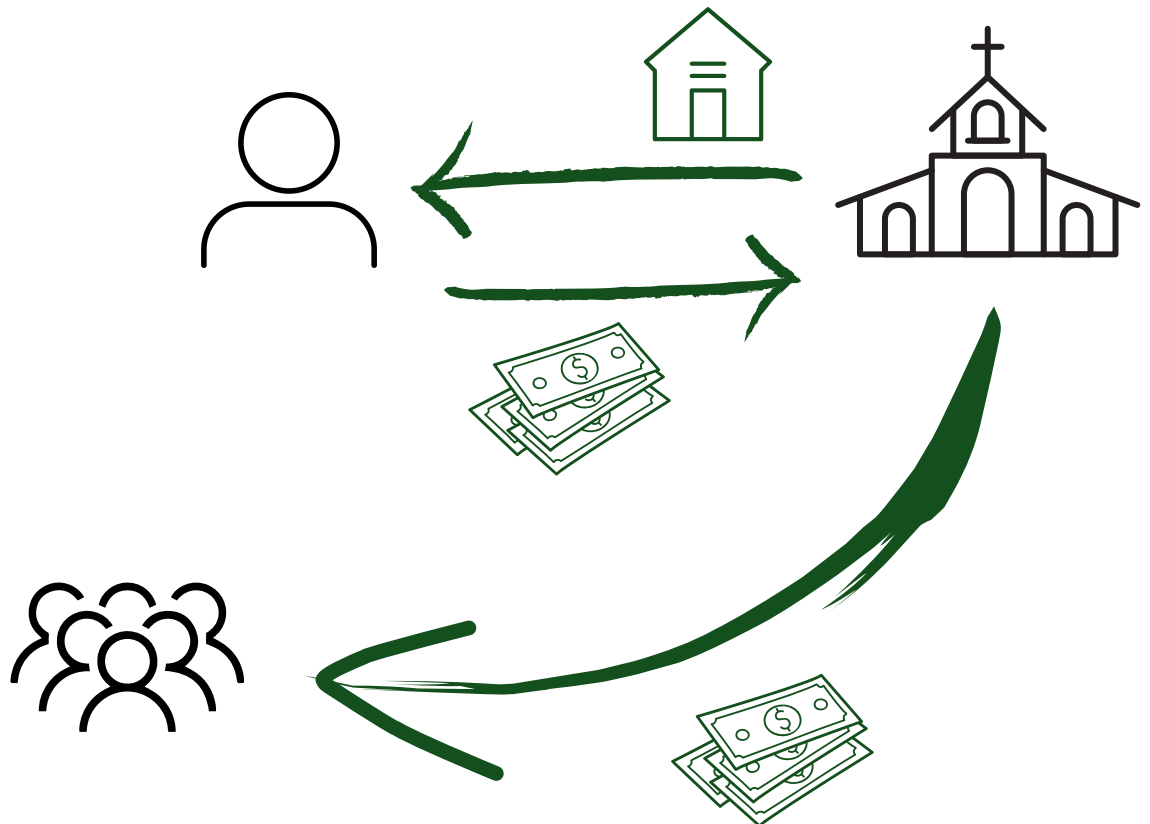




CHURCH-GRANTED EASEMENT WITH RETAINED OWNERSHIP RETAINED

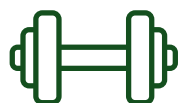
SALE PROCEEDS

Finally, though it is not a return of land, congregations and their members should consider that each time they sell a piece of land, they are directly benefitting from the immoral Doctrine of Discovery and from federal policies that intentionally divested wealth from Indigenous communities. Depending on the circumstances of the sale, it is appropriate to donate some or all the sale proceeds to a tribe or Indigenous organization.



These examples can be combined between and across parcels and in different transactions and will shift depending on what tribe or organization you're working with. Some congregations may even reconsider their "where" as conversations develop. For example, a congregation that has significant monetary resources but does not have land that the congregation is willing to return may work with a tribe to purchase a parcel that will advance tribal services.

If you need to think creatively beyond these options, a real-estate or land-use attorney can be helpful.



HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?

That's the question underneath much congregational resistance to reparations. You've learned that reparatory action isn't just about cash and that your congregation has many kinds of resources to draw on. Jesus condemned the hypocrisy of those who tithed but "neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith" (Matthew 23:23 NRSV). There is moral danger in writing a check and walking away. And, yet, reparatory action must also include resource return.

In the context of Liberation for All, resource return isn't about charity. It's about returning what is not ours—historically or spiritually—to keep. Measuring this while also watching congregational budgets can be difficult. But it is a crucial step that the gospel requires of us.

This Exercise will lead you through the theological calculations for several measures of monetary reparations. It is conceptually separate from (but adjacent to) the equally important Land Back concept (Exercise 26). Bringing calculations with concrete rationales to your reparations discussions can help ground the congregation and stretch your imagination of what is possible. All of these models can also be used by individuals.

THE TAX

In the United States, federal law prohibits taxation of land owned by churches. This law is typically explained as a brick in the wall separating Church from State. But it nevertheless affords churches a benefit not enjoyed by the general population.

Calculating the amount of property tax that your congregation would pay if it were not tax-exempt is one measure of unearned benefit that can be returned. For example, the Columbus Mennonite Church in Columbus, Ohio makes a reparations payment in lieu of taxes. Learn more about their journey in this video.

Although individuals are not tax-exempt, they can similarly budget an amount equal to what they would pay in occupancy or income tax. Businesspeople can consider using sales tax to measure their reparation payment.

Reparations Task Force
Columbus Mennonite Church
Columbus, Ohio



THE TITHE

Historically, Christian lay people donated a tenth of their income to the church. This tithe (from the Old English word *teogothian*, or “tenth”) was used to support clergy, build and maintain churches and cathedrals, and assist “the poor.” The practice dates to the First Testament/Hebrew Scriptures. Leviticus 27:30 calls for a tithe “of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the trees,” and in Genesis 14:19-20, after success in battle, Abraham gave the priest-king Melchizedek “a tenth of everything.”

Although tithing generally is no longer required by spiritual or secular authorities, it remains a spiritually grounded measure of a holy resource return—both for congregations and congregants. For example, one of the authors of this curriculum returns 10% of all her consulting income (before expenses) as reparations payments each quarter.

FIRST FRUITS

In Deuteronomy 14:22 and Proverbs 3:9 we learn to share the first of each blessing that we receive in a new year. Scripture does not say what to give the fruits of or in what proportion. This leaves considerable flexibility in this measure because you can choose both multipliers.

For example, you could share the first 5% of a fundraising campaign. Your congregation could set aside the first 25% of all donation-plate collections. Or if it is selling a property, your church could set apart the first 50% of the sale proceeds for reparations.

Be creative. Sharing the first of each blessing (for example, the first paycheck of a new job, the increase of a new raise, or the value of the first month in a new home) demonstrates gratitude to God.

Budgeting Advice



Pastor Joel Miller
Columbus Mennonite Church
Columbus, Ohio

ZACCHAEUS RETURN

In Luke 19:1-10, we learn the story of Zacchaeus, who earned his wealth collecting unjust taxes. His actions were legal, but they were not moral. Neighbors called him a sinner, but face-to-face with Jesus, Zacchaeus stood up and said, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor[.]” By surrendering one-half of his wealth—including wealth he earned lawfully—Zacchaeus earned salvation.

Restorative Actions applies this story to the economic reality of White privilege. It estimates that “if it were not for system-wide inequities that have long favored white Americans (not all, but in aggregate and on average), their annual earnings would be 5% less and the wealth they hold would be 16% less[.]” and asks individuals and organizations to surrender these ill-gotten gains.

ZACCHAEUS REPENTANCE

But Zacchaeus did not stop at wealth surrender. He continued, “and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.” Taken together, Zacchaeus pledged two different reparations. First, he halved his legal but immoral wealth. Then, for what he had cheated, he repaid outright with 400% interest.

Sometimes we are passive beneficiaries of an immoral system, but sometimes we are ourselves culpable, and our atonement must recognize this.

THE TAX

$$\boxed{} \times \boxed{} = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$$

Real Estate Assets Unimposed Tax Rate

THE LAND TITHE

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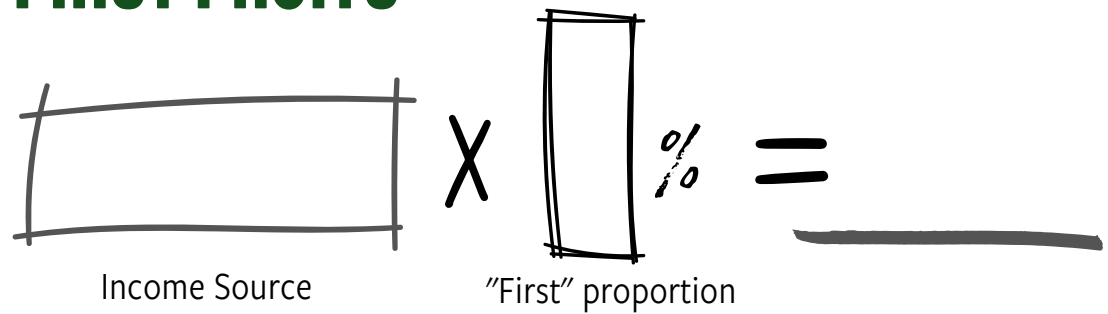
Real Estate Assets

THE TOTAL TITHE

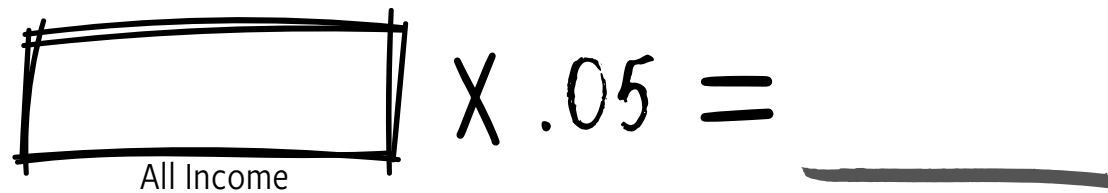
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All Assets

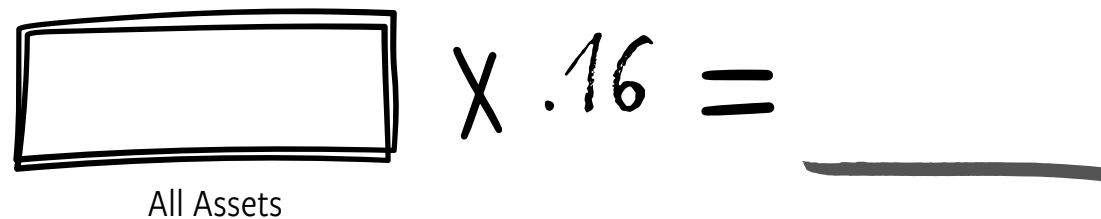
FIRST FRUITS


$$\text{Income Source} \times \text{"First" proportion} \% = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$$

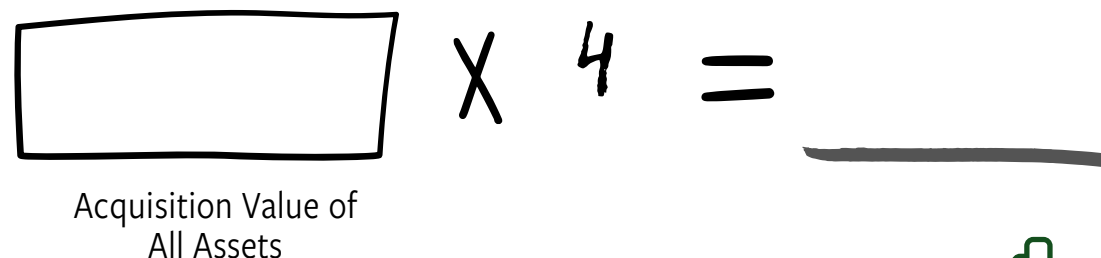
ZACCHEAUS INCOME RETURN


$$\text{All Income} \times .05 = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$$

ZACCHEAUS ASSETS RETURN


$$\text{All Assets} \times .16 = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$$

ZACCHEAUS REPENTANCE


$$\text{Acquisition Value of All Assets} \times 4 = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$$

COLOPHON



TYPEFACES

This body copy is Freight Sans Book Condensed, designed by [Joshua Darden](#), the first known African-American font designer.

The primary display font is **BAYARD**, designed by [VOCAL](#), named for Bayard Rustin, and inspired by signs from the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.

The script font is *Lemon Tuesday*. We couldn't find a script font by a Black or Indigenous artist, but if you can, let us know!