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RACE AND FAITH RESOURCE

Scripture tells us that all people are made in God's image and likeness (Gen. 1:27), and that God sent Jesus out of love for the whole world (John 3:16). Yet our world does not treat everyone with the same respect, love, and grace. Over and over again, we see some races treated with disdain, distrust, and violence, simply because of the color of their skin. Through this resource on Race and Faith, our hope is that we will come closer to fulfilling God's desire for world: that all of us see each other as the beloved children of God that we are.

- President Asa Lee

DIFFICULT TEXTS: CONFRONTING WHAT THE BIBLE REALLY SAYS ABOUT POVERTY, AUTHORITY, AND THE STATUS QUO

From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible proclaims justice and prosperity for the poor. Nevertheless, the Bible is often interpreted in ways that justify inaction in the face of poverty, state that poverty is eternal, and claim that if God wanted to end poverty, God would do so. During the 2021 Kelso Community Conversation on Race and Faith, the Rev. Dr. Liz Theoharis, director of the Kairos Center for Religions, Rights, and Social Justice and co-chair of the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival, led the four-part Bible study "Difficult Texts: Confronting What the Bible Really Says About Poverty, Authority, and the Status Quo."

Week 1

Week 2

Week 3

Week 4

PTS RESPONDS: A WEEKLY CONVERSATION ON RACE

Another news cycle, another series of Black deaths—and millions of people around the world have responded, “No more!” to the sin of systemic racism. These are times that call for people of faith to lament, repent, learn, unlearn, and act—to name where the church has been complicit and unresponsive and to commit to the peace God promises. During this weekly series in Summer 2020, members of the PTS community discussed various issues of race and faith.

Week 1: "Dear White Church" - **Ralph Lowe** '21, PTS student and director of justice ministries, Pittsburgh Presbytery, and **Brian Wallace** '06, Associate Minister, Pittsburgh Presbytery [WATCH VIDEO](#)

Week 2: "Church Without Walls" - **Dorsey McConnell VIII**, Retired Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh and PTS Board Member, and **Darryl T. Canady**, Senior Pastor, Rodman Missionary Baptist Church [WATCH VIDEO](#)

Week 3: "Bible, Babel, and God's Desire for Diversity" - **Steven Tuell**, James A. Kelso Professor Emeritus of Hebrew and Old Testament, PTS [WATCH VIDEO](#)

Week 4: "Barmen, Belhar, and the Theology of Protest" - **Derek Woodard Lehman**, Lecturer in Theology and Ethics, PTS [WATCH VIDEO](#)

Week 5: "Stories from New Hope: Ministering with Black Youth" - **Allan Irizarry-Graves** '17, Youth and College Pastor at New Hope Baptist Church, North Little Rock and Conway, Ark. [WATCH VIDEO](#)

Week 6: "The Whitest Denomination: Antiracism Work in the ELCA" - **Kurt F. Kusserow**, Bishop and PTS Board Member, and **Melissa Stoller**, Director for Evangelical Mission and Assistant to the Bishop for New, Renewing and Collaborative Ministries, ELCA Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod [WATCH VIDEO](#)

Week 7: "Dismantling Racism: Pressing on to Freedom in the United Methodist Church" - **Cynthia Moore-Koikoi**, Bishop, Western Pennsylvania Conference of The United Methodist Church and PTS Board Member [WATCH VIDEO](#)

Week 8: "On Being Effective Allies" - **R. Drew Smith**, Professor of Urban Ministry and Director of the Metro-Urban Institute, PTS [WATCH VIDEO](#)

Week 9: "Preaching, Politics, and Deliberation" - **Angela Dienhart Hancock**, Associate Professor of Homiletics and Worship, PTS [WATCH VIDEO](#)

Week 10: "Racism and the Church: Decolonizing Mission" - **Hunter Farrell**, Director of the World Mission Initiative, PTS [WATCH VIDEO](#)

AWARENESS AND TRANSFORMATION: CONVERSATIONS ABOUT RACE, LIFE, AND FAITH

In this videoed conversation, current PTS student Ralph Lowe and PTS alumnus the Rev. Brian Wallace '06 talk about their life experiences as black (Ralph) and white (Brian) in America. These Pittsburgh Presbytery colleagues give examples from their personal and work lives in an effort to further racial understanding in the midst of the turbulent times the country is experiencing today.

RACISM AND THE CHURCH: A CONVERSATION WITH DANIEL HILL AND TODD ALLEN

Daniel Hill, author of "White Awake," and Todd Allen, special assistant to the president and provost for diversity affairs and professor of communication at Messiah College, discuss racism and the church.

BLACK BODIES AND THE JUSTICE OF GOD

During the 2018 Community Conversation on Race and Faith and Kelso Lecture, Kelly Brown Douglas, dean at Episcopal Divinity School at Union Theological Seminary, presented "Black Bodies and the Justice of God," based on her book *Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and the Justice of God*.

Consider using this video during Sunday School or other adult education gatherings. The lecture can be viewed in one setting or broken into three parts and used with the study / discussion guide, which provides three to four questions per section.

Part I: 0:00-14:32 The Historical Significance of Martin Luther King Jr.

Part II: 14:33-30:18 The Narratives of White Supremacy and Anti-Blackness

Part III: 30:19-49:03 Making Sense of the “Make America Great Reality”

Download the Study / Discussion Guide

For those who wish simply to listen to the lecture, [access the MP3](#).

You may also wish to read Douglas' book, *Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and the Justice of God*, as a group. Use the book discussion guide as a way to think through the major points Douglas makes about race and faith in modern culture.

Download the Book Discussion Guide

MATERIALS FOR PLANNING WORSHIP

Building the Intercultural Community of God Liturgy, Written by Kendra Smith, Coordinator of the Seminary's Worship Program

The beloved community for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is an achievable goal. It is a place where people of different races and cultures live together in community. Envision how you will commit today to build an intercultural community, with God's help, where racial equality prevails. This is a worship service of Scripture, readings, and songs of hope.

A Service for Reconciliation Liturgy, Written by Kendra Smith, Coordinator of the Seminary's Worship Program

In this service for reconciliation, we remember our covenant relationship with God and how that is connected with our relationships with our neighbors. We recommit ourselves to living as God would have us live.

To White Churches at the End of Black History Month: Begin Now! Blog Post, Written by L. Roger Owens, Associate Professor of Christian Spirituality and Ministry

This blog offers a few suggestions for white pastors and churches that might help us “do the politics” we need to do:

Learn to let issues of race and racism show up in your sermons throughout the year—not just in February or in response to a crisis.

Create spaces for the church to engage in self-examination.

Learn to engage in ministry “with” rather than “to” people of other races.

Right Where We Belong Blog Post, Written by Steven Tuell, James A. Kelso Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament
Professor Tuell looks at Amos 7:7-15, Mark 6:14-29, and the justice to which God calls us.

"I Am" Chapel Sermon, Written by John Welch '02

John Welch addresses the harsh realities of African-American history and reminds us that despite how others see us, God knows our worth.

ADDITIONAL RACE AND FAITH RESOURCES

Among Neighbors Podcast: "Why Is Sunday Morning the Most Segregated Hour in America?" Dr. Asa Lee appeared on this podcast on March 9, 2022. He explores the history behind the racial divide that exists in America's churches and offers guidance on fostering healthy relationships today across that divide.

Recommended Resources on Race and Faith, Prepared by R. Drew Smith, Professor of Urban Ministry and Director of the Metro-Urban Ministry

Praying with Others about Challenges Relating to Race and Faith, Written by John Welch '02; R. Drew Smith, Professor of Urban Ministry and Director of the Metro-Urban Institute; Scott Hagley, Associate Professor of Missiology; and David Esterline, President and Professor of Cross-cultural Theological Education

Expecting Civil Rights, Written by James Reese '49, PTS Distinguished Alumnus. The Rev. Reese describes his personal fight for civil rights and says, "The role of the African-American church in the civil rights struggle cannot be overstated. There could have been no victory without the black church."

"Finding Sabbath Rest in Race Relations," a video recorded conversation between Pittsburgh Seminary graduates Kimberly Gonxhe '07 and Michael Stanton '06 conducted at the Jubilee Professional Conference in 2018. **Read the summary of the Rev. Gonxhe's comments** regarding how black people can find rest in today's society and how white people can engage in meaningful race relations.

ADDITIONAL LECTURE VIDEOS

HOW TO DRAW LINES: THE CHRISTIAN ART OF FORMING ALLIANCES, WILLIE J. JENNINGS

Willie J. Jennings presented "Forming Faithful Places" during the annual Schaff Lectures in 2017 at Pittsburgh Seminary. During the lecture, "How to Draw Lines: The Christian Art of Forming Alliances," Jennings explored a theological vision for forming alliances as an art of Christian life. Why and how do we form alliances - social, cultural, political, and even economic? Too often many Christians, preferring to resist forming alliances with peoples who differ from them, have either given no answer to that question, or their basis for forming alliances has been shortsighted, superficial, and without any deep theological rationale. Jennings proposes a spirituality of collaboration that draws on a Christian vision of the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives and in the world. Watch the video below.

POVERTY, PRIVILEGE, AND PARTICIPATION IN THE HEALING RULE OF CHRIST, LUKE BRETHERTON

During the 2015 Schaff Lectures at Pittsburgh Seminary, Luke Bretherton presented two lectures on the theme "Healing Babylon: Hospitality, Common Life, and the Nature of Faithful Citizenship." Below he addresses "Poverty, Privilege, and Participation in the Healing Rule of Christ."

RACE, GENDER, AND THE IMAGO DEI, CHANEQUA WALKER-BARNES

Chanequa Walker-Barnes presented two lectures during the 2018 Schaff Lectures. "Until All of Us Are Free: How Racial Reconciliation Fails Black Women" explores how the Christian racial reconciliation movement has failed Black women and other women of color through its patriarchal bias and single-axis thinking about race. It demonstrates how intersectionality theory provides a fuller understanding of the dynamics of race and racism and how they intersect with gender to make an impact on the lives of Black women. Following Walker-Barnes' visit to campus, D.Min. student Oghene'tega (Tega) Swann blogged about her experience at the event. [**Read "Dark and Lovely: Is God In It?"**](#)

In "Tell the Storm I'm New: What Real Reconciliation Looks Like," Walker-Barnes draws upon Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* to articulate a womanist theory of racial justice and racial reconciliation.

Pittsburgh Theological Seminary
616 North Highland Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15206
Phone: 412-362-5610



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