

**RACIAL HEALING AND RECONCILIATION**  
**A Reference Guide for Local Churches**  
**August 2022**

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## **Purpose Statement**

In 2021, under the leadership of Rev. Dr. Bill White, Jr., WNCC Equity and Justice Ministries launched a Racial Healing and Reconciliation Learning Cohort in partnership with Mrs. Cindy Thompson of Boundless Impact and Rev. Dr. Vincent Howell of Partners in Ministry Leadership. The pilot Racial Healing and Reconciliation Learning Cohort was designed and delivered by a diverse Guide Team who facilitated monthly sessions, as well as coached and journeyed with the church teams throughout the program. After completing the pilot cohort, the Guide Team prepared A Reference Guide for Local Churches interested in pursuing racial healing and reconciliation, which includes information from the program, lessons learned from the pilot program and support resources for moving forward in action.

## **United Methodist Church on Racial Healing and Reconciliation**

This section includes helpful language for churches who are forming new teams and seek Administrative Council action to approve the formation of a local Justice and Reconciliation Team. Sections also provide guidance on the purpose and activities of Race and Religion committees.

## **Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church**

- Social Principles, The Social Community ¶162: The rights and privileges a society bestows upon or withholds from those who comprise it indicate the relative esteem in which that society holds particular persons and groups of persons. We affirm all persons as equally valuable in the sight of God. We therefore work toward societies in which each person's value is recognized, maintained, and strengthened. We support the basic rights of all persons to equal access to housing, education, communication, employment, medical care, legal redress for grievances, and physical protection. We deplore acts of hate or violence against groups or persons based on race, color, national origin, ethnicity, age, gender, disability, status, economic condition, sexual orientation, gender identity, or religious affiliation. Our respect for the inherent dignity of all persons leads us to call for the recognition, protection, and implementation of the principles of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights so that communities and individuals may claim and enjoy their universal, indivisible, and inalienable rights.
  - A) Rights of Racial and Ethnic Persons: Racism is the combination of the power to dominate by one race over other races and a value system that assumes that the dominant race is innately superior to the others. Racism includes both personal and institutional racism. Personal racism is manifested through the individual expressions, attitudes, and/or behaviors that accept the assumptions of a racist value system and that maintain the benefits of this system. Institutional racism is the established social pattern that supports implicitly or explicitly the racist value system. Racism, manifested as sin, plagues and hinders our relationship with

Christ, inasmuch as it is antithetical to the gospel itself. In many cultures white persons are granted unearned privileges and benefits that are denied to persons of color. We oppose the creation of a racial hierarchy in any culture. Racism breeds racial discrimination. We define racial discrimination as the disparate treatment and lack of full access and equity in resources, opportunities, and participation in the Church and in society based on race or ethnicity.

Therefore, we recognize racism as sin and affirm the ultimate and temporal worth of all persons. We rejoice in the gifts that particular ethnic histories and cultures bring to our total life. We commit as the Church to move beyond symbolic expressions and representative models that do not challenge unjust systems of power and access.

We commend and encourage the self-awareness of all racial and ethnic groups and oppressed people that leads them to demand their just and equal rights as members of society. We assert the obligation of society and people within the society to implement compensatory programs that redress long-standing, systemic social deprivation of racial and ethnic persons. We further assert the right of members of historically underrepresented racial and ethnic persons to equal and equitable opportunities in employment and promotion; to education and training of the highest quality; to nondiscrimination in voting, access to public accommodations, and housing purchase or rental; to credit, financial loans, venture capital, and insurance policies; to positions of leadership and power in all elements of our life together; and to full participation in the Church and society. We support affirmative action as one method of addressing the inequalities and discriminatory practices within the Church and society.

- Social Principles ¶164.A Basic Freedoms and Human Rights: We hold governments responsible for the protection of the rights of the people to free and fair elections and to the freedoms of speech, religion, assembly, communications media, and petition for redress of grievances without fear of reprisal; to the right to privacy; and to the guarantee of the rights to adequate food, clothing, shelter, education, and health care.
- Social Principles ¶164.B Political Responsibility—The strength of a political system depends upon the full and willing participation of its citizens. The church should continually exert a strong ethical influence upon the state, supporting policies and programs deemed to be just and opposing policies and programs that are unjust.
- Membership vows: ¶217.2: When persons unite as professing members with a local United Methodist church, they profess their faith in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth; in Jesus Christ his only Son; and in the Holy Spirit. Thus, they

make known their desire to live their daily lives as disciples of Jesus Christ. They covenant together with God and with the members of the local church to keep the vows which are a part of the order of confirmation and reception into the Church:

- To renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of the world, and repent of their sin;
  - To accept the freedom and power God gives them to resist evil, injustice, and oppression;
- Local Church Council ¶252. Purpose - The church council shall provide for planning and implementing a program of nurture, outreach, witness, and resources in the local church. It shall also provide for the administration of its organization and temporal life. It shall envision, plan, implement, and annually evaluate the mission and ministry of the church.
    - 2. Mission and Ministry - Nurture, outreach, and witness ministries and their accompanying responsibilities include:
    - b) The outreach ministries of the church shall give attention to local and larger community ministries of compassion, justice, and advocacy. These ministries include church and society, global ministries, higher education and campus ministry, health and welfare, Christian unity and interreligious concerns, religion and race, and the status and role of women.
  - Annual Conference Commission on Race and Religion (GCORR) Requirement and Guidelines - ¶643

### Baptismal Covenant Vows:

#### RENUNCIATION OF SIN AND PROFESSION OF FAITH

Since the earliest times, the vows of Christian baptism have consisted first of the renunciation of all that is evil and then the profession of faith and loyalty to Christ. Parents or other sponsors reaffirm these vows for themselves while taking the responsibilities of sponsorship. Candidates for confirmation profess for themselves the solemn vows that were made at their baptism.

On behalf of the whole Church, I ask you:

Do you renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness,  
reject the evil powers of this world,  
and repent of your sin?

Do you accept the freedom and power God gives you  
to resist evil, injustice, and oppression  
in whatever forms they present themselves?

Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Savior,  
put your whole trust in his grace,  
and promise to serve him as your Lord,

in union with the Church which Christ has opened  
to people of all ages, nations, and races?

### Communion Liturgy

Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ.  
Your Spirit anointed him  
to preach good news to the poor,  
to proclaim release to the captives  
and recovering of sight to the blind,  
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,  
and to announce that the time had come  
when you would save your people.  
He healed the sick, fed the hungry, and ate with sinners.  
By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection  
you gave birth to your Church,  
delivered us from slavery to sin and death,  
and made with us a new covenant  
by water and the Spirit.  
When the Lord Jesus ascended,  
he promised to be with us always,  
in the power of your Word and Holy Spirit.

### **Forming Racial Justice and Reconciliation Teams**

This section contains some helpful Do's and Don'ts about Justice and Reconciliation Team formation at local churches.

DO:

- Pray about starting this journey and ask God to lead you in the direction you need to start and to bring others alongside you who will support, encourage and walk beside you on this journey.
- Talk with your pastor about your desire to form a team, and the goals and outcomes you hope to achieve. Get the pastor's input on your ideas.
- Invite 2-3 others in the congregation to help you in the team formation process, including a clergy or staff member.
- Get Administrative Council approval to form the team, and seek to have an initial budget for team ministry initiatives.
- Give the team a name so it will be recognizable to the congregation and transparent about intentions.
- Invite between 5 - 15 people with diverse perspectives to comprise your team. If your church does not have any racial or ethnic diversity, invite at least 2 people of a different race or ethnicity to join your team. Consider members of another church that your church has an existing relationship with, staff at organizations your church has existing ministry partnerships with, or community leaders known by members of your team.

- Appoint co-leaders of the team with diverse identity and leadership styles - an example is a white female who is action-oriented with a black male who is relationship-oriented.
- Agree on team norms and create a space for continuous learning and discovery. This must include honest and open communication about assumptions, blindspots and triggers in your team's work.
- Consider developing a covenant that details how you will work together and support, challenge and encourage each other as you do the work of this journey together. Read and share this covenant with each other each time you meet in order to keep you focused and grounded.
- Start with education on doing anti-racist work - every team member will be at a different place on their equity journey. Examples are attending a workshop together, participating in a book study together, watching a movie together, and attending a community event together.
- Embrace the flow of the 6-Step Framework for Racial Healing and Reconciliation below - your team and church cannot skip repent and repair and expect to be effective in reconciliation efforts.
- Realize that this is deeply spiritual and complex work that will not get quick results or have simple answers.
- Start where you are, and be comfortable taking small steps.
- Understand you will have setbacks and obstacles...it's ok. Progress is always more important than perfection!
- Understand that racial healing and reconciliation is an iterative process, and never "done".
- Cultivate partnerships with other churches and organizations to sustain and expand your ministry.
- Practice self-care by taking seasonal breaks from your work to recognize progress and re-energize for next steps.
- Ensure you have team succession plans to bring new diverse perspectives to your work and give leaders needed rest after their service.

#### DON'T:

- Spend too much time on the name: there are conference and district "Justice and Reconciliation" teams, so you may want to keep in alignment with that name if your team is unsure what to name itself.
- Expect the pastor or staff to lead the team.
- Spend too much time on mission/vision/strategy language - keep it simple and utilize language from the section on the United Methodist Church on Racial Healing and Reconciliation.
- Expect grace for yourself and not extend it to others.
- Be silent when you don't understand something, recognize a blindspot in someone else, or experience a triggering event.
- Shy away from difficult and uncomfortable conversations.
- Do this work in a silo at your church, particularly if you are an all-white church.
- Get discouraged if the process takes longer than you think it should.
- Don't Give UP!! The important thing is to continue taking steps (no matter how small they may seem) to keep you moving toward your goals and outcomes.

## **Leadership Tools**

This section emphasizes the importance of each of us as followers of Christ, both as individuals and as the church body, to understand that we are called to take a stand in the ministry of reconciliation. As such, we are to be leaders in this critical ministry. This leadership model is founded on Jesus speaking to us in John 13:34-35: “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” Leaders are action oriented. Jesus calls us - every church - to take action in the face of racism and injustice. Scripture says in Luke 19:40: “And He said unto them, “I tell you that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.” How shall we lead? Here are some considerations:

### **1. Mission**

Leaders lead with mission. Mission-driven leadership is the key driver of your project or team execution. Understanding and embracing the mission of your ministry of reconciliation drives faithfulness and commitment throughout the church, fosters engagement, and improves strategic alignment and clarity of purpose. Lastly, connecting behaviors to the church’s ultimate mission is measurable in both ministry activity (including reconciliation work) and the level of congregational engagement. Below is an example of a mission statement for a ministry of reconciliation (from Trinity Baptist Church):

*The mission of the Racial Reconciliation Task Force (RRTF) is to speak out against all forms of racism. We prayerfully help lead our congregation on a journey of awareness, repentance, relationship, prayer, and commitment to action, helping us to grow together and reconcile with one another.*

### **2. Vision**

As we consider God’s vision for our work as a team, Proverbs 29:18 is our starting point - “Where there is no vision, the people perish.”. Whatever church leaders are hoping to achieve through their ministry of reconciliation, they need the power of a vision to make it possible in the imagination of the rest of the church. Three points to consider:

- Faith-Based Hope – as based on the above scripture
- God-Given Passion / Shared Vision - when a congregation has found a shared vision through its leadership (lay and clergy) whom they trust, they will make great personal sacrifices to support the leadership team in making the vision a reality. It is the responsibility of leaders to see the possibilities of the future through the eyes that God has given.
- Bold leadership – this means that we as leaders must have courage to challenge the status quo and traditions.

Here is an example of a vision statement adapted from the South Orange/Maplewood (NJ) Community Coalition on Race (they are a nationally recognized non-profit organization committed to building a unique, suburban community that is free of racial segregation in housing patterns and community involvement):

*Vision: We aspire to be a church that is a model for our community in which people of different races, ethnic groups and backgrounds can interact, form friendships and participate fully in the life of the church, community's economic, political, civic, educational and cultural life.*

### **3. Values**

Lifeway Research reminds us that clear core values help us as a team state with honesty and authenticity the principles that provide a clear and complete picture of the everyday behaviors essential to your church's identity in regards to the ministry of reconciliation.

Here is an example of core values (based on scripture) from a ministry of reconciliation called "A Time to Reconcile":

- God has given us the ministry and gospel of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18-19).
- God has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth (Acts 17:26).
- "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me to preach the gospel to the poor: He has sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed" (Luke 4:18).
- "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ" (Galatians 3:28).
- "Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes or daily food. If one of you says to him, 'Go, I wish you well, keep warm and well fed but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? (James 2:16). To show love by doing.

As a final point, the importance of outcomes is critical to achieving your desired vision. Defined outcomes and SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-based) help teams remain committed to the vision. As leaders, we seek to achieve the goals the Lord has put on our hearts. Strategic planning is critical for execution and achieving results. In [MBA Quick Book for Ministers](#) by Rev. Dr. Vincent Howell, there is a section on strategic planning that contains more information to support your team's strategic planning. Here is a link to the book: <https://www.amazon.com/Quick-Ministers-Vincent-Howell-Wyatt/dp/0817018077>

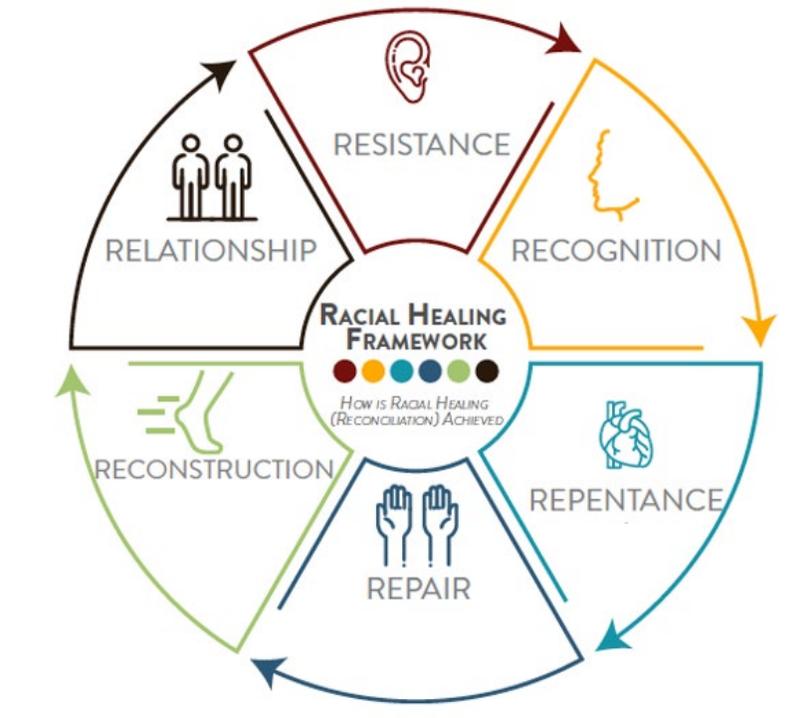
As you lead, be encouraged. God has promised to always be with you and to be your guide. If we take note from the life of Moses, we know that God also will be your voice when you do not feel up to the task. Here are words of encouragement from [The Substance of Things Hoped for - A Memoir of African-American Faith](#) by Rev. Dr. Samuel DeWitt Proctor, a pastor, educator, leader and past president of Virginia Union University and North Carolina A&T State University::

*"Believing that change is possible causes one to act in harmony with such faith. As you live it out, unseen evidence begins to appear. Because you believe, the very believing makes it so. This is the substance of things hoped for. And when faith is operational, strange things happen."*

### **6-step Framework for Racial Healing and Reconciliation**

Rev. Brian A. Tillman, Director of Inclusion and Advocacy in the North Georgia Conference, has written and taught extensively about racial justice and healing, provides the following definition of reconciliation: a spiritual process that seeks to restore broken relationships after any form of injustice. It is a process by which the participants with injustice and the endurers of injustice come together to do the work of bringing about restoration of their relationship with God and with one another.

Following is the 6-Step Framework that Rev. Tillman developed for racial healing and reconciliation:



Step 1: **Resist** the evil powers of injustice and oppression that work against God’s Kingdom. We must refuse to participate in racist systems without working to change them.

Step 2: **Recognize** white privilege, acknowledge injustice and oppression, as well as our complicity in maintaining oppressive systems. We must educate ourselves to see and better understand how systemic racism is rooted and impacts people.

Step 3: **Repent** and confess complicity to racism. We must own how we have benefited from the racist systems and commit to changing.

Step 4: **Repair** damage, repay what was lost, replace what was taken, restitution for harms committed. Repentance is not genuine if it is not followed by reparations.

Step 5: **Reconstruct** by dismantling power structures and rebuilding systems that are more just and equitable.

Step 6: **Repeat** the steps over and over again to prevent the racial injustice from returning and stifling the goal of becoming beloved community. **Restoring relationships** result from consistent attention to the wounds of our sisters and brothers. We must **Resolve** never to allow injustice or oppression to return.

## **Partnerships**

Developing community partnerships is crucial to growing the impact and sustainability of your team's racial equity and justice ministry. We encourage teams to start with relationships and organizations you are already familiar with and have experience with. As you continue to develop partnerships, your circle of influence will expand to include more and more people and organizations.

Considerations while forming partnerships:

- Shared values and goals - develop agenda and outcomes together
- Complimentary organizations: offering different strengths and assets
- Expanding diverse perspectives of the team
- Building competencies: skills, program offering

Ideas for potential local partners:

- Churches of different ethnicity in proximity to your church
- NAACP
- Racial equity organizations
- Nonprofits
- Schools
- Foundations and businesses
- Government agencies (DHHS, housing, seniors, arts, entrepreneurship, etc.)

UMC Connection:

- District Equity and Justice Committees (Yadkin Valley, Smoky Mountain)
- Conference: WNCC Equity and Justice Ministries
- UMC Agencies: GCORR, GBGM, GBCS, Discipleship Ministries, UMW

## **Sustainability**

Start where you are...but don't stay there - continue to learn and grow as individuals and as a team. Growth only happens when we intentionally put ourselves in uncomfortable conversations and situations, opening ourselves up to broader perspectives which help us see others more clearly and understand them more fully. A few other ideas on sustainability:

- Show up and make yourself available for this work - remember, God is continuously refining each of us through this ministry.
- Be consistent and don't allow yourself to get sidetracked. Keep going even if progress and results are slow.
- Don't give up - when it gets tough, DIG IN and don't get discouraged.
- Have Integrity...mean what you say and follow through on plans and promises you make to each other.
- Share the load of leadership - mostly white churches in particular need to be careful not to default to taking over hosting and planning. White churches need to be willing to release the leadership of combined events and not act like they have all the answers.

- Remember to take time to acknowledge and be grateful for milestones and progress.
- Recognize when you need to step back, take a break and rest to regain your energy.
- Reflect on past progress, evaluate results, and keep asking what's next.
- Be intentional and purposeful in everything you do.

## **Resources**

This section contains a list of helpful resources for local churches to utilize in their ministry of reconciliation journey:

- Resources on the history of racism and racial justice can be found [here](#).
- UMC General Commission on Race and Religion [Resources](#): Anti-racism Starts: Do's and Don'ts, Overt and Covert Racism, Deconstructing White Privilege Discussion Guide, Vital Conversations videos
- GCORR: [25 Traits of the Beloved Community](#)

Articles, Videos and Podcasts:

- Ed Stetzer, in an article in Outreach Magazine, highlights "5 Truths About Diversity in the Church:" <https://outreachmagazine.com/features/18699-diversity-in-the-church.html>
- Lewis Center for Church Leadership article and videos: [Moving Faith Communities to Fruitful Conversations about Race](#)
- ["Seeing White"](#) Podcast by John Biewen
- [Seeing Color w/ Chip & Joanna Gaines](#) + kids - Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Man video
- [A Conversation with the Police](#) - Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Man video

UMC-authored Books

- [I'm Black, I'm Christian and I'm Methodist](#): Ten personal narratives (including Dr. Tori Butler and Dr. Jevon Caldwell-Gross) reveal the shared and distinct struggles of being Black in the Church, facing historic and modern racism.
- [Holding Up Your Corner: Talking about Race in Your Community](#) by F. Willis Johnson
- [Fear of the Other – No Fear in Love](#) by William H. Willimon
- [Deep Denial – The Persistence of White Supremacy in US History and Life](#) by David Billings
- [MBA Quick Book for Ministers](#) by Rev. Dr. Vincent Howell

Other Books:

- [Radical Reconciliation: Beyond Political Pietism and Christian Quietism](#) by Allan Aubrey Boesak & Curtiss Paul DeYoung
- [Be the Bridge - Pursuing God's Heart for Racial Reconciliation](#) by Latasha Morrison
- [Bread for the Resistance - 40 Devotions for Justice People](#) by Donna Barber
- [Dear White Christians](#): For Those Still Longing for Racial Reconciliation by Jennifer Harvey
- [Getting to the Promised Land](#) by Kevin W. Cosby - 2021 Westminster John Knox Press
- [Hope: An Advent Journey](#) by Olu Brown
- [The Third Option: Hope for a Racially Divided Nation](#) by Miles McPherson

- [Race Talk and the Conspiracy of Silence – Understanding and Facilitating Difficult Dialogues on Race](#) by Derald Wing Sue

National Racial Equity Organizations:

- [The Racial Justice and Unity Center](#)
- [The Racial Equity Institute](#)
- [The People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond](#)

### **Scripture References to Guide Racial Healing and Reconciliation Discussions**

- **2 Cor. 5:16-20 (NIV):** So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.
- **Acts 1:8 (NIV):** But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.
- **Rom 12:3-5 (NIV):** For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.
- **Acts 17:26 (NIV):** He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings.
- **Gal. 3:28 (NIV):** There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.
- **1 John 4:20-21 (MSG):** If anyone boasts, “I love God,” and goes right on hating his brother or sister, thinking nothing of it, he is a liar. If he won’t love the person he can see, how can he love the God he can’t see? The command we have from Christ is blunt: Loving God includes loving people. You’ve got to love both.
- **Matt. 5:9 (MSG):** You’re blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That’s when you discover who you really are, and your place in God’s family.
- **Romans 12:2 (NIV):** Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is— his good, pleasing and perfect will.
- **Jeremiah 29:11 (ESV):** For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.
- **Luke 4:18-19 (NIV):**  
 “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
 because he has anointed me  
 to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives  
and recovering of sight to the blind,  
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”

- **John 17:21-23 (NLT):** I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me. “I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one. I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me.
- **Ps. 133:1 (NIV):** How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity!
- **Rom. 12:9-10 (NIV):** Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.
- **Amos 5:24 (CEB):** But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

### **Facilitators and Speakers**

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### **WNCC Church Examples of Racial Healing and Reconciliation Ministry**

- Mt. Tabor UMC - Church for All People Ministry - Winston-Salem, NC
- University City UMC and Ebenezer Baptist partnership for racial equity
- Centenary UMC and St. Paul UMC Justice and Reconciliation Team and TRUTH Cafe