

Racism

Adapted from Main Line Unitarian Church, Devon, PA

Opening Words & Chalice Lighting:

“We have talked about racism over the years and talked about it and argued about it and fought about it and talked about it and wondered if, out of all those years, we learned a thing. I like to think that we have. Maybe it was something an audience member said. Maybe it’s something you saw in the eyes of an interracial child that made you just think differently. Maybe those moments made you stop and think and, in a small way, open your heart a little wider.” ~ *Oprah Winfrey*

Check-In / Sharing: What’s on your mind today?

Focus Reading:

“First, I argue that inherent within religious liberalism is a fundamental tension that undermines our efforts to become an effective prophetic voice in a society that badly needs one. Second, squarely confronting the continuing evil of white racism and our own complicity in it can shift the balance of this tension and help us reclaim our prophetic voice. Yet, anti-racism work reveals some additional tensions and tendencies within liberalism that make this effort difficult to sustain.

Third, the evil of racism lies deeper than institutional structures and systemic power relations; it has a spiritual dimension that liberals all too often fail to recognize. As a result, despite our clearest analysis and noblest intentions, we sometimes fail to truly engage and call out the evil that holds us in its grasp. Yet, ironically, it is the spiritual dimension that can not only ground our anti-racism work but contribute most to recovering the prophetic power of our own voice, which too often lies dormant or speaks only weakly.” ~ *Paul Rasor in Soul Work*

Focus Questions:

1. Do you identify, from your heritage, with one or several racial or ethnic groups?
2. What is your earliest recollection of racial differences?
3. Where was your first or earliest encounter with racism? Was it in your household, at school, at church, in your town?
4. How did you react? What did you feel at the time?
5. What further experiences have you had of racism since that first incident, and how has that affected you?
6. In your daily life today, how are you aware of racism? How do you deal with symbols, images of racism, vocabulary and language?
7. How do you respond to racist encounters today?
8. What are some life-affirming experiences involving race relations that you could share with us?

Check-out / Likes & Wishes: How are you feeling after this session?

Closing Words & Extinguishing Chalice:

“I never intend to adjust myself...to the evils of segregation and the crippling effects of discrimination. I never intend to adjust myself to an economic system, which takes necessities from the masses to give luxuries to the classes. I never intend to become adjusted to the madness of militarism and violence. It may be that the salvation of the world lies in the hands of the [creatively] maladjusted.” ~ *Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*