

# Resources for undoing racism in our churches

## Part 3

Long-term resources  
gathered and shared by the  
ACC Anti-racism Task Group





# Using this resource



Just like parts one and two of this resource, part three is intended to help congregations - ideally led by a congregational anti-racism team - learn about, process, and respond together to the heavy and intertwined topics of racism, U.S. history, and white supremacy.

The first part, in a separate booklet, featured a wide variety of resources

for those beginning the journey through the work of anti-racism. The second part helped us deepen our understanding of racism and the White church's part in it.

You can find both parts at:

[atlanticcoastconference.net/  
anti-racism-resources](http://atlanticcoastconference.net/anti-racism-resources)

Acting thoughtfully  
taking place over a period  
of years

# Long-term Work

We believe that the most useful, sustainable, and long-lasting change comes from a deep empathy resulting from understanding others and understanding ourselves. We have encouraged that individuals and congregations start with “head” and “heart” work before fully moving into “hand” work.

Racial equity is the long-game. It won't be completed after a flurry of response to a recent event but must be worked at gradually as we advocate for changes in our congregations

and our society, as well as in ourselves.

Once we, as a primarily white community, understand our own place in the story of racism in our communities, then we can begin to push against it.

To this end we've often heard the encouragement to follow the lead of the Black community and to join in to work already being done. This booklet is an attempt to communicate some of our learnings from Black leaders in our own journeys.

## 1. Encouragement to care for yourselves

Anti-racism work is not easy work. It can be tiring, discouraging, shame-inducing and overwhelming. If you feel any of these, you are not alone. Because this is challenging work, we encourage you to care for yourself by including reflection and resting exercises, particularly when doing mind/spirit work as part of this journey.

One example of this type of personal and spiritual grounding that we recommend is the practice of *The Examen*, a prompt for introspection for you to follow or adapt to your own character or spirit. You and your group might choose to read the prayer below, found in *A Book of Uncommon Prayer* by Brian Doyle, each day or each meeting time as a way to focus yourself on the journey.

Please find ways to practice self-care as you continue this important, but tough, work.

### A PRAYER FOR RACIAL JUSTICE

@GRICKHOUSEINTHECITY

WHEN OUR EYES DO NOT SEE THE GRAVITY OF THIS,  
SHAKE US FROM OUR SLUMBER AND OPEN OUR EYES, O LORD.

WHEN OUT OF FEAR, WE ARE SCARED INTO INACTION,  
GIVE US A SPIRIT OF BRAVERY, O LORD.

WHEN WE TRY OUR BEST BUT SAY THE WRONG THINGS,  
GIVE US A SPIRIT OF HUMILITY, O LORD.

WHEN THE CHAOS OF THIS DIES DOWN,  
GIVE US A LASTING SPIRIT OF SOLIDARITY, O LORD.  
WHEN IT BECOMES EASIER TO POINT FINGERS OUTWARD,  
HELP US TO EXAMINE OUR OWN HEARTS, O LORD.

GOD OF TRUTH, IN YOUR WISDOM, ENLIGHTEN US.  
GOD OF LOVE, IN YOUR MERCY, FORGIVE US.  
GOD OF HOPE, IN YOUR KINDNESS, HEAL US.  
CREATOR OF ALL PEOPLE, IN YOUR GENEROSITY, GUIDE US.

RACISM BREAKS YOUR HEART, BREAK MY HEART  
FOR WHAT BREAKS YOURS, O LORD.

## 2. Resources to wrestle with whiteness

### Salt Zine

From the website: In the face of racism, inequality, prejudice, and privilege, do you ever wonder what next steps you can take with your family and friends, neighbors and co-workers, for the sake of God's justice and love? Or how best to be an effective ally (or co-conspirator)?

“The Anatomy of a Christian: A Zine on Privilege and Solidarity” is here to help. In the classic style of a “zine” (a homemade, DIY, small-batch, easy-to-reproduce “magazine” format pioneered in the 1960s and 70s), “The Anatomy of a Christian” takes the ancient image of the Body of Christ as a framework and springboard for exploring the challenges of inequality, privilege, and solidarity in our lives.



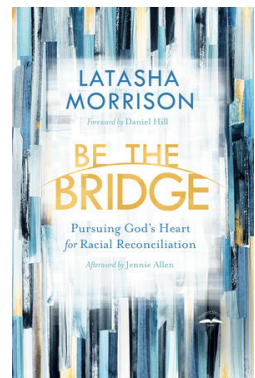
Divided into five sections (which can unfold over five weeks, or five days, or whatever schedule works best for you), “The Anatomy of a Christian” is tailor-made for families and small groups of all shapes and sizes. Each section includes a theme, scripture passage, reflection, prayer, conversation starters, and some simple, accessible activities to try - all for the sake of building a healthier Body of Christ, and a more vibrant, just, inclusive Beloved Community.

[saltproject.org/the-anatomy-of-a-christian](http://saltproject.org/the-anatomy-of-a-christian)

### Be the Bridge

Formed by Latasha Morrison, author of *Be the Bridge*, this organization invites us to form groups to meet, work together and focus on racial reconciliation. Materials and guidance are provided for 10 training sessions. There are groups and activities for youth as well. On the website are links to a blog, podcast and training materials.

[bethebridge.com/](http://bethebridge.com/)



## Coming to the Table

This organization was formed as the two cousins, Betty Kilby Baldwin and Phoebe Kilby, worked together to understand each other, as distant cousins connected through slavery. Betty's family were slaves under Phoebe's family, and also genetically related. The organization initially was meant for others in this situation to discover each other, to learn about the oppression of slavery, and try to repair wrongs. Now nationwide, it consists of both the national and local groups meeting monthly to get to know each other "around the table". Emphasis is on mending relationships and reparations. A group is active in the Lancaster area.



[comingtothetable.org/](http://comingtothetable.org/)

## Diversity: God's Design Storytelling and biblical foundations for intercultural capacity

This 4-session curriculum from Mennonite Church USA was primarily developed by Hyacinth Stevens, along with ten other persons. Each session is designed to be 45-60 minutes, and explores a Biblical text and includes sermonette video, facilitator notes, short "young adult videos," and closing spoken word poem videos. The four session topics are: 1) The gift of difference; 2) We are God's family; 3) Do I belong here? 4) Us vs. Them. The curriculum is helpful for churches as an early step in the journey of anti-racism. It was created with an intergenerational audience in mind for churches, Sunday School, small groups, or for self-study. The curriculum is available at the Mennonite Church USA website for free.



[mennoniteusa.org/diversity-gods-design/](http://mennoniteusa.org/diversity-gods-design/)

If purchasing books, consider buying from [BOOKSHOP.ORG](http://BOOKSHOP.ORG) to support independent bookstores.

### 3. How then shall we live? An action plan for racial equity.

Learning about and internalizing the realities of racism in our culture has no endpoint, no finish line. Those living as part of the dominant white culture will always have more to learn about the experience of people of color (POC) and must meanwhile move into an active response in order to build racial equity in our communities. For this work we follow the lead and the recommendations of POC who have experienced racism and so have the most intimate view of where inequity remains.

This list is shared by Dr. Teman Cooke, a writer and educator from Lancaster, PA. Teman has a Ph.D. in Physics from Georgia Tech, and

graduated with a Masters of Divinity from Lancaster Theological Seminary. Having predominantly lived and worked in white spaces for almost forty years, he has a vested interest in finding ways to transform how we (as Americans) understand ourselves and others so as to seed a future built on forming authentically just and meaningfully equitable relationships between individuals and communities. He is married to a Mennonite pastor and has attended a Mennonite church for the past 16 years.



#### **1. Church communities must ascertain how we as church communities have contributed to a culture of injustice.**

What would it look like for us to form a truth and reconciliation commission to examine our own complicity as a church in patterns of inequity and unwelcome? Will we voluntarily uncover the ugliness of our participation in a society that has unfairly benefited some and excluded others? Acknowledging this reality through repentance and lament as a group is a powerful step.

#### **2. Consider financial donations with no strings, expectations, or control.**

Give to those who currently and historically have been disadvantaged. Give financially in a way that contributes toward restoration of historical inequities. Put our monetary influence into a tithe and release control of how it is used.

Ideas: 1) Contribute to scholarship programs for disadvantaged youth to attend college. 2) Pay into a fund for using Afro-american spirituals in churches. 3) Donate to programs providing real estate purchasing assistance.

### **3. Engage stumbling blocks – these are indicators that we’re moving.**

If your perspective or experience is being challenged, embrace it. For many of us it is difficult not to be perceived as “good”. Naming and exploring biases, which all of us have as members of our society, gives us opportunities to embrace corrective moments. Learning and moving toward a posture of understanding is more important than prioritizing our good image of ourselves.

### **4. Consider deemphasizing the creation of a multicultural world/church.**

Focus on inequity first. Multiculturalism may come later but we can’t expect the whiteness of our spaces to change quickly. When we change how we live in and engage the world, we’ll build trust and create more welcoming spaces. Trust takes time. Many POCs have a long history of being harmed and disappointed by white communities. For now, wrap multiculturalism into what white churches do. Practice genuinely appreciating true diversity of thought and opinion and let go of the need for security and comfort in our traditions (yes, including our music styles). Go and worship in other cultural spaces. This experience can help us understand what it’s like for minorities to come into our white churches.

### **5. Develop ways to receive necessary feedback**

Make it as easy as possible for POC’s to trust so they will share their real experiences in our communities. Set up a closed system of feedback with outside groups collecting responses so there is no connection between what people say and how reviewers hear it. POCs often carry extra work in white communities. They may feel obligated to do a significant amount of self-editing and consider how they appear and how they’ll be received. Give them the gift of safety as we work to make our spaces more welcoming.

## 4. How are other ACC congregations pursuing racial equity?

### Landisville Mennonite Church

Our congregation recently shared a financial gift with Koinonia Indian Mennonite Church, in Clinton OK. The gift was offered in support of Project S.A.C.R.E.D. (Solidarity, Acknowledgement, Collaboration, Recognition, Education, Dignity). The project seeks to address the harm done to Arapaho and Cheyenne children who were forcibly removed from their homes and placed in boarding schools more than a century ago. Specifically, the project will focus on three boarding schools operated by Mennonites. The goal is to identify the children who were taken to those schools, and create a database of information for their descendants. We at Landisville are grateful for the opportunity to offer support to such holy work.

For information about how to support Project S.A.C.R.E.D. :  
[kimc-church.com/](http://kimc-church.com/)

### Frazer Mennonite Church

At Frazer Mennonite Church, we're holding zoom gatherings every other month in 2023, where we're focusing on the question, "How then Shall We Live?" Following George Floyd's murder in 2020, our congregation did a lot of reading, vulnerable sharing, and listening. Now we're asking ourselves, "What do we do? How do we respond to the ongoing injustices in our world?" Each time we gather, we focus on another area. We've looked at Critical Race Theory, Education, and International injustice. This September, we're looking at prison inequities.

### Community Mennonite Church of Lancaster

In August 2023, Community Mennonite Church of Lancaster committed to an "Action Fund in Lieu of National Reparations: addressing systemic racism in Lancaster County." Beginning with 1% of our budget, the goal is to increase by 1% each year until 10% (Leviticus 27:30) of the budget is reached (to be approved each year).

This fund grew out of long-term congregational discernment. In 2020, CMCL formed a Dismantling Racism Committee within the congregation to give focused attention to how our congregation might work toward dismantling racism. Our work included:

1. Most of the congregation participated in a 7 week book discussion of *I'm Still Here* by Austin Channing Brown.

2. Dr. Drew Hart and Dr. Heather Cotignola-Pickens led us through a Congregational Assessment of Racism and Anti-Racism, which involved surveys and interviews followed by congregational discussion of recommendations.
3. We brought in several guest preachers
4. We subsidized a congregational bus trip to the National Museum of African American History and Culture
5. We brought Rev. Naomi Washington-Leapheart in for 6 weeks of Adult Christian Education.
6. We invited Pastor Trevor Bechtel from Shalom Community Church in Ann Arbor, Michigan to share with us about their congregation's Reparative Act. [shalomcc.org/repair/](http://shalomcc.org/repair/)

(Some of the funding for these items came from a sabbatical grant received by CMCL)

Throughout, we used surveys and group conversations to gauge what actions our communal energy and conviction were moving us toward. The Action Fund in Lieu of National Reparations is just one such action. Our predominantly white congregation “understands it has benefited from white privilege and a legacy of white supremacy and acknowledges a responsibility to help dismantle racial inequities in policing, education, employment, health care and other systems. One substantial way CMCL can contribute to systemic change is to commit to reparations for Black People with a focus specifically in Lancaster County.”

While there is essentially unanimous desire within the congregation to work on anti-racism, learning how to work together toward that is complicated! How do you have frank conversations around topics that no one wants to sound “bad” or “wrong” about?

Deciding that one way to work toward anti-racism was to make a commitment from our congregational budget was not easy. Like many congregations, we have experienced more sporadic attendance since 2020, which makes communal discernment more difficult. We are also entering a year of financial stretch, due to significant pandemic-related increases to ongoing congregational commitments to rehab a building on our property for low-income housing and to improve our church building's accessibility. We discussed whether we should wait a year to enact this fund, because 1% was a much lower starting point than we had hoped for. We decided that it was important to begin, even small.

Blessings on all congregations doing difficult and important discernment together! The giving for reparations will be held in a Community Fund and all places of worship are invited to contribute. We would love to hear from, and partner with, other congregations doing anti-racism and/or reparations work.

## **Anti-racism Task Group:**

Ron Adams (chair), pastor, Landisville Mennonite Church  
Ruth Douglas Miller, Conestoga Mennonite Church  
John Williamson, Pilgrims Mennonite Church  
Amy Yoder McGloughlin, pastor, Frazer Mennonite Church  
Ruth Yoder Wenger, pastor, North Bronx Mennonite Church &  
ACC conference minister for New York City  
Brook Musselman, ACC conference coordinator

## **Intercultural Relations Reference Committee members:**

Kenn Thompson, pastor, Friendship Community Church  
Vonetta Storbakken, Manhattan Mennonite Church  
Andrew Bodden, Forest Hills Mennonite Church  
Jannat Veras, Laurel Street Mennonite Church  
Teman Cooke, Lancaster Theological Seminary  
Rashard Allen, Neffsville Mennonite Church

Contact [office@atlanticcoastconference.net](mailto:office@atlanticcoastconference.net) with any questions, comments or for additional resources.

## **ACC Anti-racism Task Group and its work**

ACC's Anti-racism Task Group was formed to collect, highlight, and develop resources and learning opportunities for conference congregations and their members. Our hope is to open windows for people to advance in their journey toward inter-racial understanding and a desire to participate in justice-based change first in our own hearts, and then in our congregations and society as a whole.

From the beginning, our team has held the belief that this is the work of the white community and so intentionally included six white individuals from around the conference.

However, we have also agreed that in many ways, we must follow the

lead of people of color by listening to their requests and gaining their feedback as we approach these topics.

As a result, we have tested our ideas and resources with an Intercultural Relations Reference Committee consisting of six people of color from our congregations. Their feedback has been an important piece of this project and has helped develop ideas for additional resources for the future.

