

Dialogue For Change Discussion Sessions

The Dialogue for Change Committee is an interracial committee of seven women who are members of the San Ramon Valley United Methodist Church in Alamo, CA. In order to learn and understand more about the racial issues confronting us, this committee developed a series of sessions for an adult class based on a series of TED Talks and panel discussions. The sessions were led by one of the pastors or a committee member.

It is a critical time in our society and in our personal lives to be asking questions about what we value and how our lives convey those values. Hence, the goal of these classes was that participants will demonstrate compassionate engagement against racial insensitivity and injustice through continued self-reflection and education. The first twelve sessions were developed and offered in the summer and fall of 2020. Since that time, additional sessions have been offered, for a total of nineteen. A book discussion on the book *White Fragility* was also offered in six sessions in the fall.

We offer information about these classes to the wider community in hopes that others might benefit from this format of listening and learning to identify and work against racial injustice in ourselves and our community.

**The task is not done.
The journey not complete. We can and we must do more.”**
—Martin Luther King

| TED Talk | Speaker | Length | Questions for Discussion |
|---|----------------------------|--------|--|
| How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Discussing Race | Jay Smooth (John Randolph) | 12 min | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think was behind the audience laughter at "We often use our ability to avoid speaking about race as a measure of our progress and enlightenment"? How has talking about race evolved over time? • How do you define your own race? Why do conversations about "what you said" often go badly? What are the underlying pieces at stake? • "The race constructs that we live in America were shaped specifically by a desire to avoid making sense." What does this quote spark in your thoughts or feelings about race? |
| Baratunde Thurston on How To Deconstruct Racism, One Headline At A Time | Baratunde Thurston | 17 min | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does Baratunde Thurston's choice of name on a Starbucks cup illustrate about privilege? • What do you think the art of living among whiteness is about? • What are the systemic racism pieces at work in the stories behind these headlines: White Woman Calls Cops on Black Woman Waiting for an Uber, or White Woman Calls Police on 8-year-old Girl Selling Water. • What actions could white people make that could change the story (and the system)? |

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| Panel of three Black women from church community | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considering what you heard from Patsy, Deborah and Alice, what stood out to you? • What emotion or response did you experience as you heard their experiences? • Have you ever witnessed or experienced racist encounters in our community? • Given what we heard today, will you respond differently when you witness or experience racist comments? • What word, phrase or image caught your attention this morning, either from the experiences you heard from Patsy, Deborah or Alice OR from your break out room discussions? • What is God calling you to do or change because of our |
| The Neuroscience of Decision-Making | Kimberly Papillon | 16 min | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is "at stake" for you when you discover unfairness in your own actions or in an institution with which you identify? • How did hearing that all the Harvard study participants knew the woman's name and background affect your thinking about unconscious bias? How does it challenge (or not challenge) your thoughts on fairness? • How do you think the neuroscience of decision-making affects the proportion and makeup of people in charge? Describe if/how you see this in your current/former work environment. What do you think happens when a whole group carries similar pieces of implicit bias? (Think of juries, hiring processes, casting calls, etc.) |
| How To Overcome Our Biases? Walk Towards Them | Verna Meyers | 18 min | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many authentic relationships do you have with young Black people, folks, men and women? • How have we been "schooled" in our bias? • Where are those everyday places that you have noticed your own biases? • When did you last consciously move toward a person of color or someone outside of your own community? What does "walking toward your discomfort" mean in your context? |

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| We Need To Talk About An Injustice | Bryan Stevenson | 23 min | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there someone in your family system (or a teacher perhaps) that is the holder or helper of identity like Bryan Stevenson’s grandmother? How did this change your destiny? • How have we become disconnected from this reality? What systems within our lives are potentially causing our apathy? • Sometimes we are tired, tired, tired. How are we as a community called to be “Brave, Brave, Brave” in the work of justice? |
| The Urgency of Intersectionality | Kimberle Crenshaw | 19 min | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was your reaction to learning that most people had to sit down for the women who were African-American? Discuss together either the intersectionality that you experience and what it is like to have people not “see you”, or the ways your own frames have made it difficult to incorporate new facts about race. • What is one way your perspective and/or understanding has been challenged, broadened, or shifted by these dialogues for change thus far? |
| A Prosecutor's Vision for a Better Justice System | Adam Foss | 16 min | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why do you think the United States is “the most incarcerated nation on the planet”? • What does justice mean to you? What should lawyers be taught that justice is? • Why are prosecutors not incentivized to find alternate solutions? Given the current reality of our justice system, how might the Church be relevant in addressing the inequities? • What role can we play collectively and/or individually? |

**DIALOGUE
FOR
CHANGE**
More Than a Conversation- An **Opportunity** to Learn & Act

A community on a journey with God- mind, body, & soul.



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| The Human Stories Behind Mass Incarceration | Eve Abrams | 14 min | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did you react to hearing the number of innocent people in prison? • What injustices did you learn about from the video? Were there any that you found particularly surprising or disturbing? • What would happen to your family if an adult child were suddenly imprisoned? How would your life change? What do you think the impact of mass incarceration has been on the families of people imprisoned? On their spouses, their children, their employers, their communities, our society? • What is our connection to this issue? |
| Discussion of Movie <i>13th</i> | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what way do you think the message of the movie was helpful to you and maybe ultimately hopeful? While thinking back to the four themes, share some things that stood out for you in the movie. • How do you think media and popular culture representations of Black Americans, particularly Black men, have contributed to a climate of white fear and anxiety? How has that affected tough-on-crime policies? • Is our system of mass incarceration broken, or was it designed to work this way? |
| Panel of three Black men from the community | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what was shared, what stood out for you? • What emotion or response did you experience as you heard their experiences? • Have you ever witnessed or experienced racist encounters in our community? • Given what we heard today, will you respond differently when you witness or experience racist comments? • What is God calling you to do, change, or be? |
| “How to Be an Anti-racist” on Amanpour and Company | Ibram Kendi | 17 min | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think of how Kendi has reframed the issue of racism in terms of actions? • How can we further explore his metaphor of metastatic cancer for racism? What did you find interesting about this idea? |

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| Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Man Episode 6: White parents with Black kids | Emmanuel Acho | 17 min | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why do you think Emmanuel asked if they adopted Black children out of guilt? Can guilt be a force for good? What motives might be more helpful? Share in your group about what you think when you see interracial families, or families of color who live in all-white neighborhoods. Give examples of a past uncomfortable or surprising experience and how you might react differently now. • Regarding Jaimie’s fear for her children, talk about the differences you are now aware of about society’s perceptions and treatment of white children versus Black children. |
| Racism Thrives on Silence | Dexter Dias | 19 min | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dexter Dias says that race is a myth, a social construct, and that social inequalities aren’t a result of race but are justified by race. What do you think about these statements? • How does Dias’ “thought experiment” help you understand that “their life prospects would be affected in many ways,” and that systemic racism is real? • How do Alton’s, George Floyd’s, Breonna Taylor’s, and Andre Maurice Hill’s deaths connect to you? • How do Black Lives Matter in my life? How do I show that Black Lives Matter to me? • Dias talks about the disempowering lie that we cannot make a difference. Do you think we can make a difference? How? |
| Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Man Episode 9: Petaluma police department | Emmanuel Acho | 22 min | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What vibes did you get from Acho and the policemen in the video? What were your own feelings watching this video? • Acho says that 90% of Black people in the last five months have gone through a tragic experience. Why do you think Acho thought it important to say that? Where in your life can you use this knowledge? |

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| Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Man Episode 7: Racism in the church | Emmanuel Acho | 19 min | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We heard some challenging things about churches and about Christians. What was difficult for you to hear, but at the same time, rang true? • In what ways do you think the church has been silent about issues that hurt people of color? How have we in our church community been silent about racism? • Lenz's said, "We think Jesus said, 'Blessed are the peace-keepers.' But Jesus said, 'Blessed are the peacemakers.' This difference is the divide in our country." <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ What's the difference between peacemaking and peace keeping as it relates to racism? ◇ Is one easier for you than the other? ◇ What does peacemaking look like day to day? ◇ Is peace keeping the same as being silent? What are some things we can do to "say something" and not be silent? |
| <p>Speaker: Rev. Dr. Dale Weatherspoon, Easter Hill UMC</p> | Dale Weatherspoon | | <p>Consider inviting a community leader to share personal experience.</p> |
| <p>Presentation on implicit bias in everyday life</p> | Lucinda Huffaker | | <p>Alternatively, use the documentary "Bias" with some discussion questions.</p> |
| <p>Speaker: Rev. Dr. Dale Weatherspoon, Easter Hill UMC</p> | Dale Weatherspoon | | <p>Consider inviting a community leader or use these videos: "Moving the Race Conversation Forward" (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LjGQaz1u3V4); "The 100 Dollar Race" (https://www.youtube.com/watch/4K5fbQ1-zps).</p> |