

Toward Becoming a Racial Justice Church Summary & Calendar of Our Journey

Do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God.

Micah 6:8

Phase I: LEARNERS in a community of mutual accountability studying the historic and continuing impact of white privilege and slavery on racism: **Summer and Fall 2020.**

Summer of 2020, we prepared for the launch of our Racial Justice Journey by reading Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and Ta-Nehisi Coates's *Between the World and Me*.

- https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/11337.The_Bluest_Eye?ref=nav_sb_ss_1_14
- https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/25489625-between-the-world-and-me?ref=nav_sb_ss_1_19

Throughout the fall

- We viewed Dr. Henry L. Gates' 6-part film series, *The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross* and engaged in small group discussions of the 400-year history.
<https://www.pbs.org/wnet/african-americans-many-rivers-to-cross/>
- We shared both readings and videos that complemented our program efforts starting with information on white privilege
[article: http://www.wilmotucc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/mcintosh-1.pdf](http://www.wilmotucc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/mcintosh-1.pdf) and [short video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e-BY9UEewHw&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e-BY9UEewHw&feature=youtu.be)
- With the guidance of Racial Justice Steering Committee (RJSC) member, Donna Reade, we provided the NHCUCC bibliography for racial justice and added our own recommendations weekly.
<https://wilmotucc.org/racial-justice/resources/>

In November

- We sponsored Reverend Reneé Rouse who spoke on *NH African American History*. This program was open to the greater community, a practice that continued throughout many of our programs through 2021.
<https://youtu.be/irdVvQojbbM>
- Five members of our RJSC shared their own racial justice insights during the Sunday Service.
- Opportunities for integrating social and/or racial justice were deliberately planned and provided by our Sunday services through our liturgy, music, and Christian Education.
- Additionally, with the support of Eunice Jadlocki who supervises our church website, we created a special tab for Racial Justice that took the viewer to extensive resources, a weekly newsletter RJ column and resources sponsored by the NHCUCC. Archives of all RJ meeting notes, reports, and programs were kept in an electronic church folder.

Phase II: INTERRUPTERS of the continued cycle of racism with a focus on current events.

January – March 2021

Based on a survey sent to all church members and our collective assessment of Phase I, the RJSC identified three different timely topics that would take us deeper into our racial justice awareness and understanding. Feeling that we wanted to thank our program presenters in a meaningful way, we donated to an organization that is doing good work related to their topic. This donation was announced in our newsletter and during their presentations planted the seeds for future church action and contribution. (End of Document Reference)

In January: Perspectives & Reflections on Prison Ministry & Racial Justice in our Systems of Incarceration with two interactive presentations

- Cheryl Dean, Chaplain of the New London Hospital and Alice Roberts, Chaplain of The New Hampshire State Prison for Women.
https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/oF1E9NK0hXrdsTvdEA_sw2eBzIAFyW5A6P_SQOe6YzLQOu7Y-H-46BX_pnGnNeDHs.WNY3zB-xKxm-WOf2 - Access Passcode: ?Hn?U9GP
- Reverend Russ Gates, Chaplain at the maximum-security men's prison, State Correctional Institution Graterford/Phoenix in PA., and Termaine Joseph Hicks, recently found innocent of his accused crime and released from prison after serving almost 19 years of his sentence.
<https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/0rWqWZhkNIhzIQUUe9LLLzSf6ljvZWJWtno9K7wyrHp9Xa0Qmlop24qlcjCyHdom.5zsJKPKHsQXz09ov> - Access Passcode: Qsp@4gtK
- Recommended viewing and reading:
 - Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=krfcq5pF8u8>
 - Ten Years After “The New Jim Crow”
<https://www.newyorker.com/news/the-new-yorker-interview/ten-years-after-the-new-jim-crow>

In February: Immigration: Public Policy to Local Advocacy

- Dr. Stephanie Diehlmann, Founder, The Well Health Center, Cactus, Tx -
https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/jIBDkgC7HbXL-jkbMI3I83-3kFJgzEpywM0_Lax7Kvfj8EyPunu1bb7YfryfDau.BgQ1gcfDQOUN1Rmt
Access Passcode: 4DE!-55d
- Eva Castillo, Director of New Hampshire Alliance of Immigrants and Refugees
<https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/J4AyaofN1rqsT3cD4M0NzaLjSZELbCQjHjaczm8Ne3qPUjwT-9YgV6MyMSOAdyQZ.MAGUEUdPjlefSN9t>
Access Passcode: &0%V!@3c
- Extensive viewing and reading resources were provided on our website each month.

In March: Education – Systemic Perspectives & Spotlight on Youth.

- Student Stories and Perspectives on Racial Justice in Education: Alex

Marquez and Rebecca Fletcher -
https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/8_2MI5HTpS4oH1ypkW5i9gTQAYbUFmYqpiXtGeoAZhsr8JQeDfQesWo24d8OUslD.-BvKD20Ootgt0fdde - Access Passcode: yDv!8.lk

- Education: Courageous Conversation with a Native Educator: John Around Him -
<https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/TMXyiOZrHoxykogLD8t-Ycww859FMgkyru3yZiOQqqXSPRtZCJ04whAT11GKbg8.7-bUKdEOnj7lwdNN - Access Passcode: UH96%R2M>

Engaging Church Committees: The NHCUCC Racial Justice process recommended that each church consider completing within teams, *Welcoming Diversity: An Inventory for Congregations*. The RJSC responded to this inventory and Reverend Marean facilitated its completion as part of the formation of each new church committee for 2021 as well as with other church leaders and members. The RJSC had previously completed the assessment at their convening meetings.

February was Black History Month and extensive educational resources were available through many sources. Those posted on the NHCUCC, and many others were shared on the racial justice web site.

The NHCUCC Racial Justice Mission Group sponsored a three-hour Youtube workshop on 2/20 - White Nationalism, Contemporary Racism, and the Christian Church. Our members were encouraged to attend.

Lenten Readings and Bible Study led by Rev. Marean during Lent, complemented our racial justice journey.

Phase III: Becoming ALLIES with People of Color in challenging race-based injustice in the areas of criminal justice, environmental degradation, economic deprivation, and exclusion from full participation.

Faith-based Focus

Based on informal feedback from participants of Phase I & II and the RJSC's assessment of our journey, we realized that it was time to slow down and provide time for the processing of this extensive experience of listening and learning. It was also a time to be mindful of how we together move forward in sync with becoming a racial justice church. So, we approached Phase III, Becoming Allies, with a plan in which we looked homeward and inward, looked to the implications of our work for the church, for our faith, and reflected on what we learned and the implications for our own individual journeys.

Shared Leadership Focus

It was a time to be mindful of how we together move forward in sync with becoming a racial justice church. It was a time to be deliberate about bringing this work to the center of our church organization by aligning it with our current church mission and practices. The role of the RJSC shifted to one of facilitating this process of integration; Members of the RJSC continued to help the church find synergies with the structures we already had and what we already do. Increased conversations with church leadership and members will continue to help us also figure out what we may want to do differently or anew, always keeping in mind that as a small and vital church we wanted to be supportive and

reasonable with our expectations. To this end, we set up individual and small group discussions with our members and various committees throughout the spring and into the fall.

Goals for this transition to Becoming Allies:

- Emphasis on Becoming.
- Focus on spiritual foundation - Keep God in the equation.
- Explore complex self-identity - who we are is changing over time throughout the journey.
- Increase comfort levels with our learning; deepen level of learning.
- Create a more inclusive lens - as individuals and as a congregation, increase awareness and develop critical lens regarding issues of racial justice.
- Awaken - increase our consciousness as racial justice revolution moves forward.
- Integrate and infuse our learning with our church's practices; keep us awake, help us each own the work.

Our programming throughout the spring was designed to help us work toward these goals of increased spiritual identity and consciousness-raising about our own personal identities.

In **April**, we sponsored two programs:

- An Interactive Presentation & Discussion with Reneé Rouse and Bonita Betters- Reed, "Becoming Allies: Shifting our Lens."
https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/fUfUJgchOQQ8Hn9jH_wyJkYF0HROjI9acFGVYDLvRVn3VJDZ_SXs5FVNV85k8kjd.NoX8jPhe0tc7_Oqa
- Access Passcode: R?4WOTiX
- A Collective viewing of Mark Charles Ted Talk, We the People: the three most misunderstood words in US History.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H0ktqY5wY4A>

In **May** we also sponsored two programs:

- A virtual author presentation with Drs. Marlene Fine and Fern Johnson on their new book Let's Talk Race: A Guide for White People co-sponsored with Morgan Hill Bookstore -
<https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/enuos9ApUewL55fL9H-00jCK2a2gddz4tGtPSh4Hf-yr1LH0PCdzToHhWxR3bpNS.ou1NFGb5qEfH80vi> - Access Passcode: *B^?Wv2J
- A workshop co-sponsored with the Wilmot Public Library - But I Don't Feel White.

Additionally, Rev. Marean specifically addressed the celebration of Juneteenth in the church newsletter before the 19th and during the service Nancy helped the entire congregation better understand the importance of Juneteenth through the Children's Moment; Will coordinated special music as well.

In July, while Rev. Sara Marean was on sabbatical this past summer, we were blessed to have Reverend Dr. Dawn Berry join the RJSC and guide our community through summer services informed by her racial justice expertise and insight.

Rev. Berry also joined us throughout the summer book discussions of *His Truth Is Marching On: John Lewis & the Power of Hope* by J. Meacham which were held three alternating Sundays after church, beginning July 18.

<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/53431510-his-truth-is-marching-on>

In August We reconvened with Rev. Marean and met with the Parish Committee to share our fall calendar and to reiterate our collaborative goals toward becoming a racial justice church.

Plan for Fall 2021– Creating our Racial Justice Covenant

Having laid a firm foundation in our spring and summer work, we continued collaborative efforts with our greater community and then took important steps toward creating our racial justice covenant:

Sept. 10: We held a second workshop with the Wilmot Public Library, “Understanding Unconscious Bias”, based on the book, *Let’s Talk Race*, 30 members of both our wider and church communities attended!

In October:

- **10th** - The first of two workshops dedicated to collaboratively create our covenant, was held after church, *Our Calling as a Church*.

This workshop provided a summary of our RJ journey and then provided time for us to discuss our key takeaways, reflect on our lessons learned, and begin to shape our racial justice covenant.

- **Christian Education** acknowledged Indigenous People’s Day, *Learning from Our Mistakes*

- **24th**- We invited Kira Morehouse, board member for the NHCUCC, to deliver a sermon during our Sunday service.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PLnc2zcu6_k

- **17th** – Christian Education sponsored a special class for the youth, *What Does Racial Justice Mean to Me?*

Field Trip: About 20 members of our congregation traveled to Portsmouth after church for a private guided tour of the Black Heritage Trail.

In November:

- **7th** - Our second workshop *Toward Covenanting* was held after church. This workshop built on the racial justice learning and insights identified in the first workshop and collaboratively identified key elements of our emerging covenant. The children’s input gathered throughout the fall, was an explicit part of this intergenerational process.

- 16th - The Racial Justice Committee presented a draft of our covenant to the Parish Committee for continued input and discussion.

In December:

- 5th - Communion Sunday incorporated time for a formal congregational meeting to convene and consider for vote the proposed Racial Justice Covenant. Following a presentation by the Chair of the RJSC and time for discussion, the proposed FCCW-UCC Racial Justice Covenant was unanimously approved.

Next Steps after covenant: Tentative plan for winter/spring 2022

During our Racial Justice Sunday Service, we shared our thoughts for an Action Plan, which will help us determine how we live into the

covenant: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e_xHnjgKl0w

- *We, as a congregation, will work together to understand how we want to learn, and challenge and become allies. By necessity this will look quite different over time and over the life of the covenant*
- *There will be many opportunities to engage with our racial justice work and we hope you will continue to offer to ideas, proposals, and your hand.*

Initially, we will want to think through 3 things:

- *How do we communicate that we are now, formally, a Racial Justice Church?*
- *How do we find synergies with church activities and committees that already exist or will be part of the new By-Laws, or that were part of the RJ Journey through all 3 phases?*
- *What irons do we want to get into the fire, to further explore?*

We will want to be focused, aligned with our covenant and reasonable about our capacity as a small church.

As we move forward, it is our hope and prayer, that we will continue to learn how to do our justice work balancing action and reflection; remembering that this is for us a spiritual journey

Some Initial Steps:

- The leadership of the church was again asked to take *The Welcoming Diversity: An Inventory for Congregations*.
- Bible Study
- Church Re-organization and new By-Laws

Racial Justice Outreach and Donations

- \$150 donation to: Christian Aftercare Ministries in Manchester, NH in honor of Cheryl Dean and Alice Richards who participated in a Racial Justice program on incarceration.
- \$150 donation to the Innocence Project of NYC in honor of exonerated inmate Termaine Hicks and Chaplain Russ Gates who participated in a Racial Justice conversation on incarceration.
- Cookies baked by Sunday School and mailed to Dismas Home in Manchester, NH for formerly incarcerated women, and to men in two halfway houses in Ohio.
- "Shower of Love" collection. Sunday School students packed six large diaper bags overflowing with useful items donated for new moms and babies in their Zoom session on Sunday morning.
- In honor of Eva Castillo sharing her time and expertise with us, a \$250 donation was made to the NH Conference UCC Bond and Support Fund.
- Alex Marquez designated Mikva Challenge for a \$100 donation in his honor. Mikva Challenge reaches out to under-resourced communities and schools to create a stronger, more inclusive democracy.
- Rebecca Fletcher's \$100 donation was sent to Black Girls Smile a nonprofit that aims to eliminate racial disparities by empowering young Black girls through mental health literacy programs, therapy scholarship funds, and more.
- John Around Him's \$150 donation was designated for Thunder Valley CDC on the Pine Ridge Reservation in SD. This is a grassroots development organization that seeks to increase the community's ability to flourish through housing, education, youth leadership, social enterprise, and workforce development.
- Drs. Marlene Fine and Fern Johnson requested their donation be sent to Southern Poverty Law Center: <https://www.splcenter.org/>