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WHITE PRIVILEGE
let's talk

A Resource for Transformational Dialogue

God is still speaking,
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

WHITE PRIVILEGE: let's talk

vocabulary

Discrimination
The denial of justice and fair treatment by both individuals and institutions in many areas, including employment, education, housing, banking and political rights. Discrimination is an action that can follow prejudicial thinking.

Erasure
The act of denying or refusing to acknowledge that people's race and people's lived experience in America because of their race differs. This is reflected in statements like, "I don't see race," "I'm colorblind," "We are all equal," and "But we're all just one human race."

Implicit Bias
The unconscious attitudes, stereotypes, and unintentional actions (positive or negative) towards members of a group merely because of their membership in that group. These associations develop over the course of a lifetime through exposure to direct and indirect messages. When people are acting out of their implicit bias, they are not even aware that their actions are biased. In fact, those biases may be in direct conflict with a person's explicit beliefs and values.

Microaggressions
The result of implicit bias wherein a statement, action, or incident is indirectly or subtly (often unconsciously) reflective of prejudice. An example would be a person clutching their bag as they walk by a black man.

Prejudice
Prejudging or making a decision about a person or group of people without sufficient knowledge. Prejudicial thinking is frequently based on stereotypes.

Stereotype
An oversimplified generalization about a person or group of people without regard for individual differences. Even seemingly positive stereotypes that link a person or group to a specific positive trait can have negative consequences.

Racism
Power + Prejudice = Racism. Racism describes the result of prejudicial attitudes being combined with the power to dominate and control the systems and institutions capable of carrying out discriminatory practices. In other words, racism results from access to the power to enforce prejudices so as to advantage one racial group.

White Fragility
The defensiveness and avoidance that arise for white people when facing even a minimum amount of racial stress. The feelings can be so uncomfortable that white people distance themselves from engaging or actively shut down conversations about race. It may surface as the outward display of emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation.

White Privilege
The term for the way people and social institutions grant social privileges that benefit white people beyond what is commonly experienced by people of color under the same social, political, or economic circumstances. White privilege is not something that white people necessarily do, create, or enjoy on purpose. It refers more to the phenomenon that social systems award preference based on the presumptions of white as norm.

Definitions assembled and adapted from the work of the Anti-Defamation League, Southern Poverty Law Center, Robin DiAngelo, and *White Privilege: Let's Talk*.

WHITE PRIVILEGE: let's talk
Participant Preparation
FOR SECOND GATHERING

Readings
Before the next gathering, please read part two of the curriculum. We will read part one at a later time. As you read, you will notice there are reflection questions and discussion topics in the text. You are welcome to review these and journal responses to all of these, but please note that you are not required to do so. Our work in gathering two will focus on particular questions and topics. Please read on for more details.

Whiteness as the Norm: Five Loci of Insights on the Binary of Light/Dark and Black/White

- Chapter 1: Whiteness as the Norm: Reflections on How This is Evidenced and Experienced in America
- Chapter 2: Binary: Lightness and Darkness
- Chapter 3: Iconography: The Investment of Whiteness in Narrating History
- Chapter 4: The White Jesus
- Chapter 5: Lightness and Darkness as Experienced in the Genealogy and Liturgy of the Church

Reflecting on Readings
After reading through the chapters above, give yourself some quiet time to reflect on the following questions. You may choose to reflect in silent thought, process through dialogue with someone else, or use your journal as a way of recording your thoughts.

- What's a working definition of white privilege?
- What's your reaction to the graphic to the lower right?
- Revisit Traci Blackmon's statements and gauge your gut reaction as you read them.
    - If you grew up with an expectation that images on TV, in books, and at movie theaters would share your racial identity, you have white privilege.
    - If you have NEVER felt the burden of "representing your race," you have white privilege.
    - If you have NEVER been presumed as intellectually inferior or incapable solely because of the color of your skin, you have white privilege.
    - If you can presume that history courses offered in your school will provide a narrative about people who look like you, you have white privilege.
    - If this country has NEVER debated the monetary value of all the people who look like you, you have white privilege.
    - If there have NEVER been laws passed to prevent your full participation in democracy, you have white privilege.
    - If you have NEVER been categorized based solely on the color of your skin, you have white privilege.
- If you are white, how is white privilege evidenced in your lived experience? If you are a person of color, how has white privilege impacted your lived experience?

WHITE PRIVILEGE: let's talk
Participant Preparation
FOR SECOND GATHERING

Journaling Your Story
In between gatherings, you are asked to spend time reflecting and recording stories from your own autobiography, paying particular attention to the way race has impacted your life's story.

Write the story of the first time you learned about your race. What did you experience? How did you feel?

Write a second story, of a time later in your life, when you were taught about values or descriptions attached to your race. Who was there? Were you taught in words or actions; directly or indirectly? What values or descriptions were attached your own racial identity? What values or descriptions were you taught about people of a different race? Was white seen as the norm to which others were compared?

Note: These weekly writings are in preparation for the activity in gathering five. At that time, you will be combining what you've written each week and adding to the stories to form a more complete autobiography.

Engage and Explore
Engage the reflection questions and discussion topics at the conclusion of part two, chapter one, and do the suggested activities:

> Over the next week, try and take notice of whiteness around you. Where and when do you see whiteness? If you are white, try to say to yourself, even in some of the more routine aspects of your life, "This happened to me because I am white." Be open to discussing insights about what you noticed or experienced as you go through this exercise. For example, if in church ask yourself "Is that a hymn sung only in white churches?"; when in grocery stores ask yourself "Are these food products here because they meet the needs of white people?"; when walking down the street watch how people react to you and ask yourself "Would that have gone differently if I were not white?" Play with these questions, and look for opportunities to recognize how whiteness establishes itself every day in very routine ways as the norm. Note that many of the suggestions listed here assume that you are a white person learning about white privilege. If you are person of color, take note of where whiteness impacts and manifests in the routine aspects of your life. Whatever your racial identity, consider discussing insights about what you noticed or experienced as you go through this exercise with a friend or with the group when you reconvene.

Expanding this exercise (optional, but worthwhile). Venture into the children's toy store nearest your home. What are the race of the dolls and figurines you find? Go in search of a band-aid that would be disguisable on brown or black skin as "flesh" colored or as "clear" band-aids are on white skin. Check out the selection of hair care products and the intended customers. What do you observe? Where are the products located? Is there a difference in the quantity of products available?

WHITE PRIVILEGE: let's talk
Participant Preparation
FOR THIRD GATHERING

Readings
Before the next gathering, please read the first three chapters of part three of the curriculum. As you read, you will notice there are reflection questions and discussion topics in the text. You are welcome to review these and journal responses to all of these, but please note that you are not required to do so. Our work in gathering three will focus on particular questions and topics. Please read on for more details.

The Cash Value of Whiteness or Whiteness as a Tax-Exempt Status

- Chapter 1: Whiteness as a Tax-Exempt Status
- Chapter 2: How Education Advantages Whites
- Chapter 3: How Housing Practices Advantage Whites

Reflecting on Readings
After reading through the chapters above, give yourself some quiet time to reflect on these questions. You may choose to reflect in silent thought, process through dialogue with someone else, or use your journal as a way of recording your thoughts.

- What does it mean to say that whiteness has cash value? What does it mean to say that whiteness is a tax exempt status?
- Education is an economic tool. How does or doesn't your own education translate into economic power? How would a different quality of education have affected your life?
- How is your education a product of where you lived and the neighborhood you grew up in? If you had grown up in a different neighborhood, where houses were much less expensive or much more expensive, how do you imagine your experience in the classroom and in the general public sphere would have been different?

Journaling Your Story
In between sessions, you are asked to spend time reflecting and recording stories from your own autobiography, paying particular attention to the way race has impacted your life's story.

Write a story about an experience you had growing up in the neighborhood or school growing up with attention to how race influenced your experience. What race are the majority of the people in your stories during your early childhood, elementary school, middle/junior high school, and high school years? Were their presumptions made about white people'ss or people of color's ability in the classroom? Was there segregation, either by force or by situation, in your classrooms or neighborhoods? What impact did that have on you?

Note: These weekly writings are in preparation for the activity in gathering five. At that time, you will be combining what you've written each week and adding to the stories to form a more complete autobiography.

Engage and Explore
The readings reference and provide links to several different academic and sociological studies. Choose one or more of these studies to read thoroughly.

WHITE PRIVILEGE: let's talk
Participant Preparation
FOR FOURTH GATHERING

Readings
Before the next gathering, please read the final two chapters of part three of the curriculum. As you read, you will notice there are reflection questions and discussion topics in the text. You are welcome to review these and journal responses to all of these, but please note that you are not required to do so. Our work in gathering four will focus on particular questions and topics. Please read on for more details.

The Cash Value of Whiteness or Whiteness as a Tax-Exempt Status

- Chapter 4: How Income and Wealth Disparities Advantage Whites
- Chapter 5: How the Medical and Health Industries Advantage Whites

Reflecting on Readings
After reading through the chapters above, give yourself some quiet time to reflect on these questions. You may choose to reflect in silent thought, process through dialogue with someone else, or use your journal as a way of recording your thoughts.

- Where and how has the cash value of whiteness affected your life and your family?
- How do you identify its effect on your education, employment, compensation and benefits, mortgage and credit, family wealth and inheritance, social networking and business connections, and/or health care?

Journaling Your Story
In between sessions, you are asked to spend time reflecting and recording stories from your own autobiography, paying particular attention to the way race has impacted your life's story.

Write a story about a time you became aware of the income level of your family and the impact it had on your life and opportunities. Looking back, what influence did your race play on your income or economic mobility? How do you imagine your experience would be different had you been a different race at that same income or economic level?

Note: These weekly writings are in preparation for the activity in gathering five. At that time, you will be combining what you've written each week and adding to the stories to form a more complete autobiography.

Engage and Explore
The readings reference and provide links to several different academic and sociological studies. Choose one or more of these studies to read thoroughly.

WHITE PRIVILEGE: let's talk
Participant Preparation
FOR FIFTH GATHERING

Readings
Before the next gathering, please read part one of the curriculum. As you read, you will notice there are reflection questions and discussion topics in the text. You are welcome to review these and journal responses to all of these, but please note that you are not required to do so. Our work in gathering five will focus on sharing your autobiography through the lens of race. Please read on for more details.

The Spiritual Autobiography Told Through the Lens of Race

- Chapter 1: John Paddock
- Chapter 2: John Dorhauer
- Chapter 3: Da Vita D. McCallister
- Chapter 4: Traci Blackmon
- Chapter 5: Stephen G. Ray, Jr.

Reflecting on Readings
After reading through the chapters above, give yourself some quiet time to reflect on their questions. You may choose to reflect in silent thought, process through dialogue with someone else, or use your journal as a way of recording your thoughts.

Journaling Your Story
Before the next gathering, spend time writing the stories of your own autobiography, paying particular attention to the way race has impacted your life's story. The authors call this a spiritual autobiography. This is different from a religious autobiography. A spiritual autobiography is meant to engage both the events and the emotional, spiritual impact of them.

As you write, use the stories you have written in your journal as a starting place, then add others. You may find yourself re-writing stories as you compile them or adding additional insights. If you are feeling unsure about how to go about writing your stories, revisit John Dorhauer's writing for inspiration on why this is an important practice and how to approach this process.

Questions you might consider while writing:

- How did you first come to learn about and recognize the difference between races?
- Who told you what it means to be white; what it means to be black; what it means to be Hispanic; what it means to be Native American?
- What value was attached to whiteness or blackness, to light skin or dark skin, to speaking a language other than English or having religious traditions other than your own? What do you remember feeling in those moments when words or actions expressed what others in your household or community thought or felt about racial identity?
- What did you see and experience in the world around you that affected how you relate to people of other races?
- Where and when have you been aware of your race? Think about where you were raised, your neighborhood and schooling, friends and acquaintances, spiritual community and work, family stories and traditions.

Participant Preparation

FOR FIFTH GATHERING

- What race are the majority of the people in your stories during your early childhood, elementary school, middle/junior high school, and high school years?
- If the majority of the characters from any of the time periods were white, what if anything did you learn about persons of color during that time? If the majority of the characters from any of the time were persons of color, what did you learn about white people during that time?
- Ponder how you think about yourself. Consider the ways in which white privilege, power, and racism have touched and influenced your story.
- What race and/or ethnicity were the images of people and the Divine in your church, religious, or spiritual settings (stained glass windows, photos, or icons, etc.)? If they were white, were you ever exposed to an image of another race? How did you feel when you saw the image of another race?

Give yourself adequate time to write. Some participants have found it helpful to write during a few different sittings. Remember that you are not carving the stories in stone. They will always be a work in progress as understanding, knowledge, and awareness grow.

WHITE PRIVILEGE: let's talk
Participant Preparation
FOR SIXTH GATHERING

Readings
Before the next gathering, please read part four of the curriculum. As you read, you will notice there are reflection questions and discussion topics in the text. You are welcome to review these and journal responses to all of these, but please note that you are not required to do so. Our work in gathering six will focus on particular questions and topics. Please read on for more details.

On Becoming an Ally

- Chapter 1: Da Vita D. McCallister
- Chapter 2: John Paddock
- Chapter 3: Traci Blackmon
- Chapter 4: John Dorhauer
- Chapter 5: Stephen G. Ray, Jr.

Reflecting on Readings
After reading through the chapters above, give yourself some quiet time to reflect on these questions. You may choose to reflect in silent thought, process through dialogue with someone else, or use your journal as a way of recording your thoughts.

- What does "being an ally" mean to the different authors? What is required of allies?
- What is a microaggression? When have you seen or heard microaggressions used? What role do they have in this conversation about being "allies while white"?
- What tools do you have to resist the temptation to become defensive when your privilege is being called out?

Journaling Your Story
In between gatherings, you are asked to spend time reflecting and recording stories from your own autobiography, paying particular attention to the way race has impacted your life's story.

Write a story about a time when you were an ally or accomplice in racial justice work. What was happening? How did you come to be a part of it? Who was directing the action? What did you experience? What did you learn?

Write a second story about a time when you made a mistake trying to advocate for racial justice or be an ally. How did you know you had made a mistake? What did you learn? How does what you've learned from that event shape how you behave or live now?

Note: This writing builds upon the autobiography you completed in gathering five.

Participant Preparation

FOR SIXTH GATHERING

Engage and Explore: Auditing Your Life

John Dorhauer speaks of a doing a white audit of a church. Using that same idea, do a white audit of your life. Look at the pictures and artwork on your walls. What percentage reflect white people or culture? Take a look at your books. Who wrote them? What percentage are written by white authors? Go a step further and figure out the percentages with regards the books on your shelf that you've actually read. Ask yourself if these figures reveal a hidden bias or commitment to whiteness as a preference. If it does, what new commitments or action comes next for you?

Next, think about your daily activities and the businesses you interact with. Make the list as comprehensive as you can, thinking big and small about all of the companies and organizations you use (cell phone providers, banks, restaurants, grocery stores, pharmacies, childcare providers, mechanics, etc.). What percentage are managed and owned by whites? Ask yourself if this figure reveals a hidden bias or commitment to whiteness as a preference. If it does, what new commitments or action comes next for you?