# DISCUSSION GUIDE

# **EMERGING LEADERS:** CREATING AN INFRASTRUCTURE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

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RELIGION & RACE
The United Methodist Church

# **OPENING PRAYER**

God. Allow us to see our humanity as tied to those whom we have been taught to dismiss, overlook, and even demonize. I call on you, O God, to eradicate the spirit of fear that fills the seats of our sanctuaries and ruminates the spaces of our minds and hearts. Allow the kingdom to be held accountable to your call and likeness. May this discussion be of fruit and generate new beginnings, understandings, and movements. En tu nombre oramos, Amen.

# INTRODUCING THE DISCUSSION

NATCH THE CONVERSATION

- Ann Jacob
- The Rev. Theon Johnson III, Ph.D.
- Andres De Arco
- Katelin Hansen, Ph.D.
- Erin Hawkins, moderator

# **SCRIPTURE**

### MATTHEW 23: 23-24 (THE INCLUSIVE BIBLE)

Woe to you religious scholars and you Pharisees, you frauds! You pay your tithes on mint, dill and cumin while neglecting the weightier matters of the Law-justice, mercy and faithfulness! These you should have practiced, without neglecting the others. You blind guides! You strain out gnats, but swallow camels in the process!

# **DEVOTION/REFLECTION**

As a life-long United Methodist, I am constantly challenged to live out the call of making disciples for Jesus Christ. This passage, however, serves as a constant reminder of just how radical of a mission this is. It is at times difficult for me to picture an indignant Jesus getting in the face of highly respected religious leadership and unapologetically calling out their hypocrisy. But what is equally unsettling is that thousands of years later, the expectation Jesus has placed toward his followers has not changed. Jesus shows me in this moment that the battles we confront as Christians are not always fought with an agreeable demeanor. Rather, he reminds us that the path towards justice is never on neutral grounds. At some point, our walk with Christ will absolutely oblige us to face Pharisees head on and call them for who and what they are.

Today, we face long-standing Pharisees in the form of racist systems. Speaking candidly, as a Black person living in the U.S., I worry that my skin color can one day become part of my own demise. I worry that I will join the insufferably long list of those whose skin has been an invitation to brutalization. I also worry, however, that the very Christians to whom I'm tied in this call, will remain silent in the face of my suffering. This call to walk with Christ is not one that requires perfection, but it demands courage and repudiates neutrality. We as a community, when facing the Pharisees of the system of racism, must be willing to hold ourselves to nothing less than the standard Jesus has shown us, no matter how unpopular. It is our life-long duty.

# **REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

- How can we begin creating an infrastructure of accountability within our places of worship?
- Where do we find the most resistance/pushback when confronting racist systems in our faith communities?
- Where have we personally fallen short in our quest for racial justice?

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES: WATCH, LISTEN, TAKE ACTION

### HOW TO BE AN ANTIRACIST BY IBRAM X. KENDI

This best-selling book provides a vision for how we may walk in a manner that actively seeks to challenge the internalized racism/racial bias we hold as individuals and as a community. For those interested in engaging in the journey towards antiracism, this book is a great way to start.

IISTEN TO THE AUDIOBOOK

### THE NEW JIM CROW: MASS INCARCERATION IN **AN AGE OF COLORBLINDNESS** BY MICHELLE ALEXANDER

When speaking about the generational effects of a racist system, we have to speak in terms of the lived catastrophes that continue to surround us. This book will open up new perspectives on the moral, ethical, economic, and spiritual catastrophe that is the U.S. carceral state, and how Black and Brown bodies are facing the brunt of its evils.

### LISTEN TO THE AUDIOBOOK

### WRONGFUL CONVICTION: JIMMY DENNIS WAS SENTENCED TO DEATH

This 20-minute video takes us into the brutalization that comes from systems that are predicated upon racist principles. The righteous indignation that comes from such narratives is a likewise invitation to seek actions that dismantle rather than uphold what is normalized in our criminal justice system.



### WHEN BLACK PEOPLE ARE IN PAIN, WHITE PEOPLE JUST JOIN BOOK CLUBS

For those interested in going beyond the conventional responses to moments of injustice, this Washington Post article offers an intriguing perspective on the ways in which allyship can be surface-level and ultimately performative.

READ THE ARTICLE

### ALLEGORIES ON RACE AND RACISM

This Ted Talk is an insightful and creative application of allegories in order to explain complex racial issues in this country. Through creative storytelling, Camara Jones unpacks for us a set of mentalities and actions that uphold racist systems.

DISMANTLING



### POD SAVE THE PEOPLE: TAKE YOUR HAND OFF (WITH ALUA ARTHUR)

This podcast introduces topics of race and racism in conversational ways that have attracted people from across various perspectives. It is my hope that through these conversations, new avenues through which to analyze this system can be opened.

LISTEN TO THE PODCAST



## Dismantling Racism is an initiative of The United Methodist Church. LEARN MORE.

This resource was designed with a United Methodist perspective, but we believe that the content is also relevant for non-UMC seekers who are doing anti-racism work with a spiritual foundation.

