

WELCOME

Thank you for using this discussion guide for the video “Racism: A Conversation Among Friends.” The video participants are Phil Armstrong, Community Leader and Director of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre Centennial Commission, Joseph Bias, Community Leader and Director of Worship at First United Methodist Church in Tulsa and Jessica Moffatt, Lead Pastor of First United Methodist Church in Tulsa. The video was made on June 1, 2020, immediately following the death of George Floyd.

For each session, please identify someone to fill the role of the facilitator or leader. This does not need to be the same person for every session. The facilitator will help move the group through the experience, watch the clock and make sure everyone has an opportunity to participate.

For each session, the leader is invited to:

1. Begin with a prayer of openness and a welcome of the Holy Spirit.
2. Note with the group that the setting is confidential and that nothing should be repeated beyond the group setting.
3. Remind the group that a person can “pass” on any part of the conversation.

If you would like to interact with Rev. Moffatt, write to her at jessicamoffatt@fumctulsa.org. She welcomes all comments, questions, conversations and feedback. Thank you for participating!

Racism: A Conversation among Friends

Conversation Guide

First United Methodist Church

Tulsa, Oklahoma

SESSION 1

Video Segment - 00:00 to 12:08

Topic 1: Another Person's Shoes

Try to place yourself in Phil's shoes, a father raising two young black men.

- What do you see as the reasons for his concern?
- In what ways is this similar to your own lived experience, as a child or a parent? In what ways is this dissimilar?

Topic 2: Presence, Healing, and Peace

Phil follows up his concern with expressing the need for God's presence, healing, and peace.

- What are specific wounds of racism that need God's healing for black people? For white people?
- What are specific areas where you see the need for God's help, presence, and peace as we all seek healing from racism?

Topic 3: Personal Reactions

- When you either heard the reports or watched the video of George Floyd being killed, how did you find yourself reacting? What thoughts and feelings did you have?

Topic 4: Realizations

Joseph references the murder of Emmett Till, a 14-year-old black boy, as the first time he realized that he was thought of negatively among white people. Emmett Till was lynched for allegedly looking at a white woman "the wrong way" from across the street. In the Jim Crow era, this was called "reckless eyeballing."

- What fears and emotions do you think this would have brought up in Joseph as an 8-year-old boy?
- What fears and emotions might black children be experiencing now?

Topic 4: Realizations Continued: Compare this to your own story.

- When was the first time you realized you were the skin color you are? How old were you?
- What meaning and emotions were attached to the realization of your skin color?
- How is that similar or different from Joseph's experience?

Prayer

Based on the discussion today, what are specific ways that you can pray for racial healing?

Take time to pray and ask the Holy Spirit to search your heart and give you direction regarding your understanding and response to racism.

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Tulsa, Oklahoma

SESSION 2

Video Segment - 12:09 to 26:40

Topic 1: Calling

In response to the recent events surrounding racism, Joseph asks himself the question, “What is my calling?” He answers by saying, “Be Christ. Be the Word. Don’t let the devil dictate what you will do. Respond to the Holy Spirit.”

- In what ways would the devil like to dictate what we do regarding racism?
- How might we instead be Christ, be the Word, as we fight racism?

Topic 2: FUMC Core Values

Joseph and Phil both describe core values and characteristics of FUMC that stand out to them.

- What are the core values of FUMC that could be used by the Lord to build a bridge between our predominantly white congregation and black congregations within our community?

Topic 3: Prejudice

While sharing his story about coming to FUMC for the first time, Phil is honest about his prejudices, his “predeterminations of what he thought people at FUMC would be.” Phil’s point is that we all have prejudices.

- If you are honest, what are your prejudices about people of another race than your own?
- What would be your prejudices if you were to attend, for the first time, a church that is predominantly of another race than your own?

Topic 4: Breaking Bread

Phil suggests inviting someone to share a meal with you in order to begin to build relationships and deepen our understanding of one another.

- Does anyone come to mind as you think of who you might be able to invite for a meal?

Topic 4: Breaking Bread Continued

The word companion is composed of the Latin words “com” meaning “with” and “panis” meaning “bread or food.” A companion is one with whom you break bread.

- What is it about sharing a meal with someone that nourishes friendship and how might this be the beginning of a deeper understanding of one another as we bridge the racial divide?
- What are the vulnerable questions you would want to ask?
- What are the fears, anxieties and prejudices you may want to discuss?

Prayer

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SESSION 3

Video Segment - 26:41 to 39:00

Topic 1: Family

Joseph says, “We’ve all got surface friends but we only have a few family members. The body of Christ is a family. We need to act like a family.”

- How is family different from friendship?
- When we look at one another as members of the family of Christ, what are specific ways we should relate to one another regardless of race?

Joseph shares about the conflict between him and his brother over the different ways they have experienced racism. Since the interview, Joseph and his brother have come to an agreement on how to handle their conflict. They have agreed not to talk about their opinions and to respect each other as brothers.

- Have you experienced conflict with your family members about racism? If so, how has the conflict affected you? If the conflict is ongoing, is there a possibility of resolution?

Topic 2: Connection

Jessica points out that many people at FUMC don’t have the opportunity to befriend someone of another race but would like the opportunity to begin to do so. Joseph and Phil respond with some ideas on how connections can be formed.

- How might you and your friends or your Sunday school class use these ideas to begin forming connections?
- What are other ideas you have after hearing their suggestions?
- Do you have existing relationships that could help make this happen?

Topic 3: Tulsa’s Racial History

Phil quotes James Baldwin who said, “Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.”

- Why is facing our past, in general, so difficult for us to do?
- What happens to us, on an individual level, if we do not face our past and deal with our hurt?
- How might you apply that knowledge to collective hurt like the Tulsa Race Massacre?

Phil gives us some specific information about what occurred during the Tulsa Race Massacre.

- When do you first remember learning about the Tulsa Race Massacre?
- What do you know about the events surrounding the Tulsa Race Massacre? What led up to the events? What happened during the events? What happened after the events?
- How might a deeper knowledge of the events change or more deeply soften your heart and help the black community feel heard and begin healing?

Prayer

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Tulsa Race Massacre Resources

The following websites provide a deeper look at the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre:

- Tulsa Historical Society and Museum | tulahistory.org/exhibit/1921-tulsa-race-massacre/
- Greenwood Cultural Center | greenwoodculturalcenter.com/1921-tulsa-race-massacre
greenwoodculturalcenter.com/black-wall-street
- 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre Centennial Commission | tulsa2021.org/

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Tulsa, Oklahoma

SESSION 4

Video Segment - 39:01 to 51:06

Topic 1: Tulsa's Faith Community

Our community has a high population of churches and is influenced by Christian culture. In fact, Tulsa has been known for its strong faith community.

- How should being a part of such a strong faith community inform the need for education about racism within our community?
- What does our faith specifically say to us and require of us in regards to race?
- How is Christ using Tulsa's church communities to bring His healing to our community? What might be the next step?

Topic 2: Collective Trauma

Because of COVID-19 and our nation's racial unrest, we are experiencing collective trauma. Collective trauma refers to the psychological impact a shared event has on the feelings and actions of a group of people. Collective trauma, much like personal trauma, may cause an increase in collective or individual fear and vulnerability, damage to a group's (or nation's) positive sense of self, feelings of shame or guilt, and heightened vigilance for new threats. Additionally, if you have experienced personal trauma in your past, you may have found yourself reverting back to old trauma responses, being triggered more often by circumstances that would normally be neutral and having similar thoughts and emotions surrounding your past trauma. All are normal responses to collective trauma. The hope we have in Christ, to bring us through this collective trauma, fosters resilience and growth if we allow Christ to do that deeper work in us and through us.

- How has experiencing the collective trauma of COVID-19 negatively affected you? How has it positively affected you?
- Has this experience caused you to rethink your life and priorities? If so, how?
- How does the concept of collective trauma help you better understand, and perhaps see more compassionately, the large response the black community and its allies have had to the killing of George Floyd?

Topic 2: Collective Trauma Continued

- Genesis 50:20 says, "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives." Max Lucado puts it another way saying, "You wove evil, but God rewove it together for good." How do you see God rewaving these collective traumas for our good?

Topic 3: A Realistic Expectation

Joseph explains to us that we need to have a realistic expectation of how our invitations may or may not be received.

- What are the heart attitudes that you need to have in extending an invitation to someone?
- What are reasons you can think of that may be behind a person's rejection of your invitation?

- Which words might you use to respond to someone's rejection of your invitation with the grace and love of Christ?
- Joseph also says about forming these new relationships, "It's going to take longer than you think and be harder than you think, but it's going to be more rewarding than you think." What are some realistic expectations you should have in trying to develop these new relationships?

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SESSION 5

Video Segment - 51:07 to 1:06:30

Topic 1: Say Something

Phil points out that we have been here before as a nation. In 1963, Martin Luther King Jr., in “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” wrote, “We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the hateful words and actions of the bad people but for the appalling silence of the good people.”

- Of what might we need to repent as individuals and as the Church?
- Of what might we, as a nation, need to repent?

Phil says it this way, “Enough is enough... We’re tired of being the only ones that will say something... We have marched enough. We have pleaded our case enough.... I need you (white friends) to say something that everybody else can hear.” Phil ends this part of the conversation by saying, “I need my fellow brothers and sisters to say something, to be vocal with me, stand with me and say, ‘Yes, this is wrong and it needs to stop.’”

- How might you begin to say something? What words might you speak?
- What actions might you take to stand with our black brothers and sisters?

Topic 2: Weep with Those Who Weep

As Jessica shares her own reactions to watching George Floyd die, she expresses her emotions and lets Phil and Joseph know that she does not expect them to try to help her feel better. Joseph responds by expressing how much her empathy means to him.

- Have you ever had a person come alongside and weep with you or have you ever been the person to come alongside another and weep because they were weeping?
- How did sharing in tears affect the relationship between the two of you?
- Through these discussions about racism, what has stirred up empathy in you?
- In Scripture we are called to share in one another’s suffering. How might sharing in the suffering of the black community help us cross racial divides and strengthen relationships?

Topic 3: My House Is on Fire

Phil explains “black lives matter” this way: “If my house is on fire, every one of the houses on that block matter. My neighbor’s house matters. It just happens to be, right now, my house is the one that’s on fire. So, my house matters most right now. Help me put out the fire at my house so that it doesn’t spread and burn down every house in this neighborhood. All lives matter, but right now, in this moment in history, there’s a fire in the black community as it relates to how they’re perceived by some, not all, by some in certain levels of authority that is having a profound effect on our nation.”

- How does this explanation influence your perspective on the statement “black lives matter”?

Prayer

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SESSION 6

Video Segment - 1:06:31 to 1:18:33

Topic 1: Jesus

In answer to Jessica's question regarding the unique role the Church may play in bringing unity between the black and white communities, Joseph says, "We have one common Table, one common Lord, one common faith."

- Name the commonalities that have been given to us as black and white believers through our faith in Christ.
- In John 13:34-35 Jesus says, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." Give illustrations of how Jesus loved.
- How do those illustrations inform the way we love?
- What are some other practical and tangible ways we at FUMC could genuinely demonstrate love to our brothers and sisters in predominantly black congregations?

Topic 2: The Only One

Jessica asks Phil about the difference between how Phil has had to raise his children in comparison to how she has had to raise her own. Phil responds by sharing the story of his children being at FUMC during his internship with Joseph. In the story Joseph asks Phil's son if he likes coming to First United Methodist and his son replies, "We're the only black people here!" Joseph responds by telling him that he has a special opportunity to stand out and be different just because of who he is and not to ever let that make him feel "less than" because he is the only black person.

- If you are white, would you notice if you were the only white person in the room?
- How might it make you feel to be the only person of your race in the room?
- Who needs to see you interacting with people of another race? Who needs to see how comfortable you are in that interaction?

Topic 3: Living Hope

Maya Angelou said, "Hope and fear cannot occupy the same space. Invite one to stay."

- As this conversation comes to an end, what brings you hope?
- As you consider this short series of conversations, what might be the next steps toward a hopeful future?

Prayer

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