

# Little Rock Race and Faith Summit

2022



The Little Rock Congregations Study  
The Clinton School of Public Service  
The University of Arkansas at Little Rock



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# Should Racial Justice and Reconciliation be a Priority for Your Congregation?



Our 2020 survey showed race relations is the number one issue people want to see their place of worship engaged in helping to solve.



A 2016 survey of leaders in the National Association of Evangelicals found unanimous agreement that racial reconciliation is a Biblical mandate.



The vast majority of clergy (64%) believe race relations will get better-- and they are in a position to help make that happen.



Many religious traditions emphasize justice and equality.

"What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" Micah 6:8



Access faith-based resources for racial justice and reconciliation and learn more about the research of the Little Rock Congregations Study by visiting our website: [research.ualr.edu/lrcs](http://research.ualr.edu/lrcs) or contacting the study Director, Dr. Rebecca Glazier, [raglazier@ualr.edu](mailto:raglazier@ualr.edu)



# Our Models

Based on the literature and subsequent interviews, three different models emerged for congregational racial justice and reconciliation efforts. Below are these three models:

## MODEL 1

### The Interracial Friendship Model

1

2

3

4-6

WEEK 1:

WEEK 2:

WEEK 3:

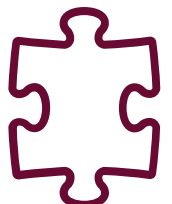
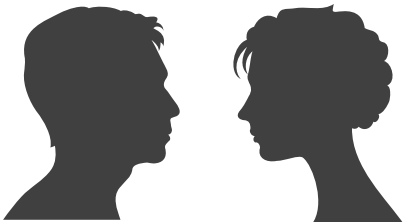
WEEK(S) 4-6:

Focus on relationships with others from another congregation across racial/religious divide

Focus on individual reflection with in-congregation, small group discussions

Focus on trust and friendship, established by communication and transparency

Focus on reconciliation, problem solving, building bridges, moving forward



# MODEL 1:

# explained...



## 6 WEEK MODEL

Week 1: (Focus is on relationships) Prepares individuals to reach out to a person on the other side of the racial divide from nearby congregation

Week 2: (Focus on Individual reflection) Small group discussions: why reconciliation? (using scripture references historical trauma and injustices in Little Rock, common interests)

- Individual congregation work
- White Identity 101 with white congregations: includes discussion of historical trauma and racial injustices in Little Rock
- Focus on emotional and spiritual healing work for minority congregations

Week 3 (Focus on trust and relationships): Establish trust by open and honest communication & transparency

- Joint congregation work
- Small group discussions

Week(s) 4-6: (Focus on reconciliation): How do we move forward? Need to create an action plan or next steps (when will we meet next?)

- Joint congregation work
- Small group discussion

## THINGS TO CONSIDER...

★ This is a suggested timeline. Based on the priorities of the individual congregation, this model may take more or less than 6 weeks.

★ The responsibility of reaching across the racial divide should not be placed on minority congregations. Instead, majority white congregations should take this first step.

# Our Models

Models, continued

## MODEL 2

### The Scripture Model

Small, in-congregation work involving reading relevant scriptural texts (of all kind) to highlight racial justice as essential to scripture



Calls for building of group vocabulary as well as internal reflection practices



Encourages a reeducation on how participants traditionally read their scripture



# MODEL 2:

# explained...



This model highlights the importance of looking at religious texts to highlight racial justice as essential to scripture and that calls individuals to the work of racial justice. Often, it suggests examining historical oppression in scripture and relating it to race relations today.

Examples from the Christian Bible:

- Story of Exodus: Liberation from slavery
- Leviticus (19): 10 Commandments
- Galatians (3)
- Revelation (5, 7, 11)

Examples from the Quran:

- Quran 49: 13
- Quran 60:8
- Quran 5:8
- Prophet Muhammad's Last Sermon

Examples from Baha'i Scripture

- The Advent of Divine Justice
- Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l Baha (pp. 291-292)
- Writings from the Baha'u'llah
- Writing and Talks of Abdu'l- Bahá

Examples from the Torah:

- Exodus: Liberation from slavery
- Five Books of Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers & Deuteronomy)
- Genesis: the Creation Story

**\*Remember these are simply starting points. Other themes and passages will emerge the deeper you go.\***

# Our Models

Models, continued

## MODEL 3

### The Racial Audit Model

Internal, in-congregation model that religious organizations can use to assess their own history of racism, racial justice etc.



Congregational leaders share institution's historical documents (bylaws, mission, philanthropic giving) with participants in small group work



Encourages a conversation between church leaders (those in power) and congregants to strategize moving forward in an equitable manner



This model emphasizes the fact that racism can be perpetuated by systems, including religious institutions.



# MODEL 3:

## *explained...*



This model is designed to look at or create congregations' own commitment to racial justice. Here are some things to consider when implementing this model:

Gathering important documents (i.e. congregational bylaws, mission statement, philanthropic giving) highlights the importance of "who's making the decisions" and "are these the right choices" when moving forward with racial justice work.

Ground rules regarding honesty, confidentiality and respect are encouraged before starting a conversation of this nature. This work can be both difficult and emotional, thus it is important to create a safe environment before starting.

This model also gives a basis for conducting a joint congregational and denominational audit. This means looking at the greater religion or institution to see when the greater denomination may have perpetuated racism, even subconsciously.

This model was designed around the idea of needing an action plan to move forward. In this case, an example could be rewriting institutional documents in anti-racist language.



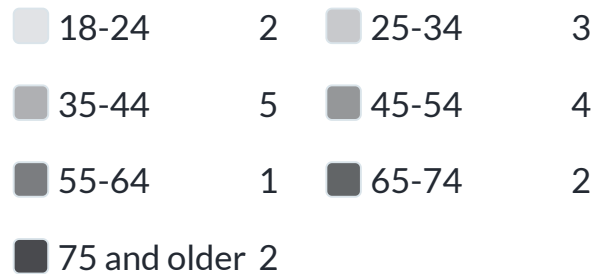
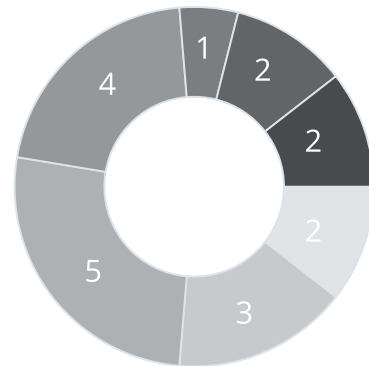
# Focus Group Series

In order to best gain insight on the proposed models, we gathered members of different congregations together for 5 focus groups, with a total of 20 participants. Upon completing each session, we asked each participant to complete a short survey in order to gain information regarding the demographics of our participants.

## Demographic Report

### AGE

The age of our participants varied from 18 to 75 and older.



### GENDER

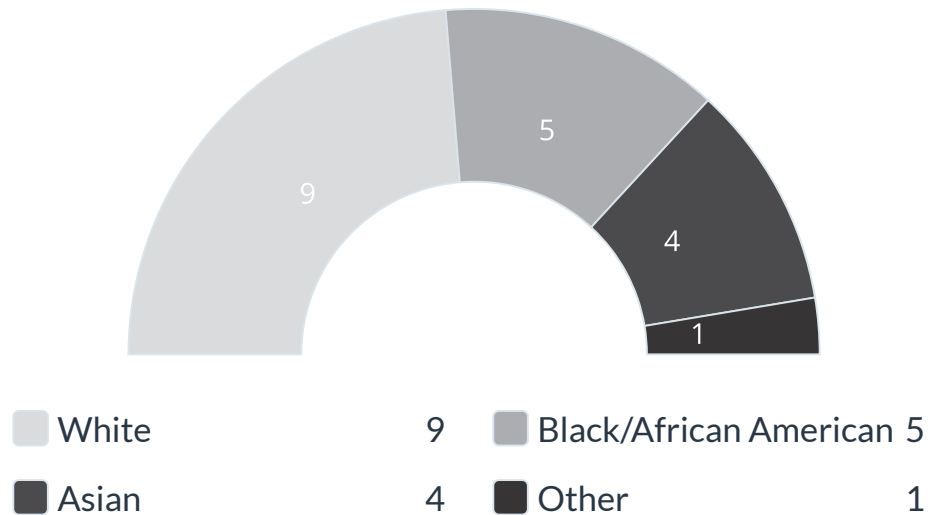
Our participants were 55% female and 45% male.

# Focus Group Series

Demographics  
Report, continued

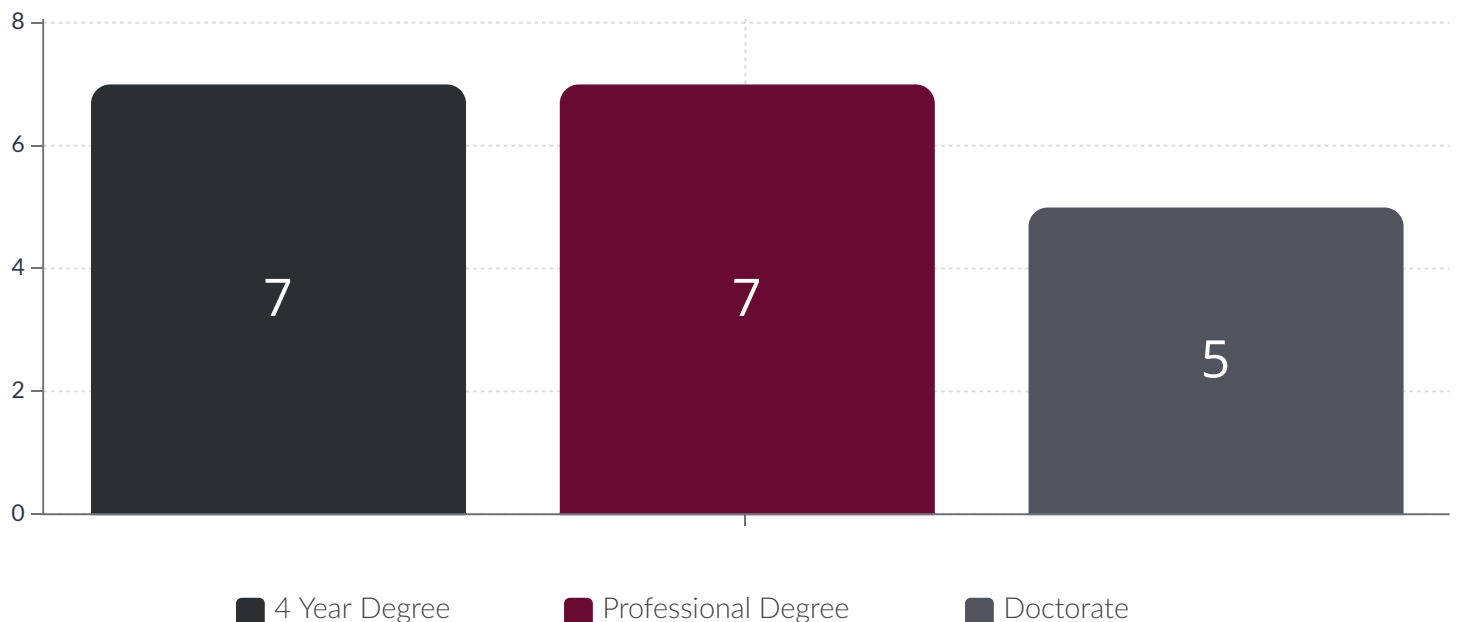
## RACE

While it is hard to limit racial identity to mere survey options, our survey displayed a diversity of race in our overall focus group participation.



## EDUCATION

All of our participants they had a Four-Year Degree, a Professional Degree, or a Doctorate.

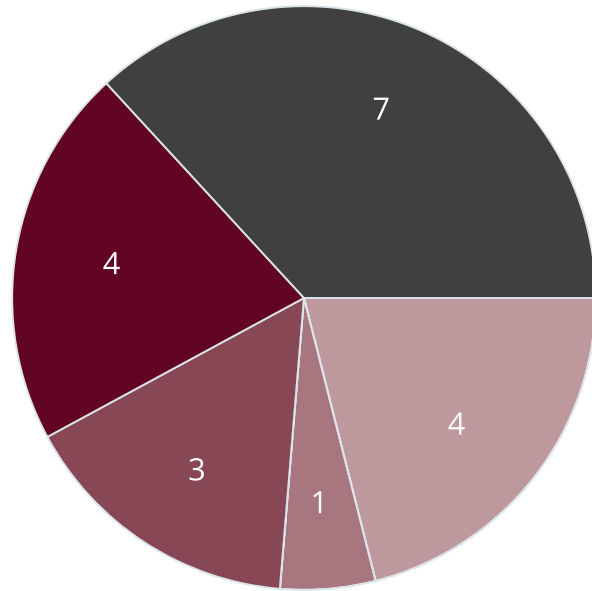


# Focus Group Series

Demographics  
Report, continued

## GEOGRAPHY

In our survey, we asked participants to include how long they have resided in the city of Little Rock.



1-5 years 1    6-10 years 3    11-15 years 4  
16-20 years 4    20+ years 7

## Results

Based on feedback from our five focus groups, we were able to gather data on the strengths, challenges, and potential integration of the three models. Below are our findings, as reiterated to us through our participant feedback.

*"This whole idea of justice, racial justice, and the equality of the whole of mankind is the reason for religion...even existing"* - Focus Group Participant, 2022



# Suggestions for Congregations Engaging in Racial Justice Work



1

**Begin with prayer.** Choosing the right approach for your faith tradition and your members will take contemplation and divine help. This is hard work, but it is work rooted in our shared identity as children of God. Your efforts will be blessed as you seek the best path forward through prayer.

2

**Set some ground rules.** Before you engage in what may be difficult conversations, set some ground rules that all participants can agree to. These may encompass ideas of confidentiality, respect, and honesty.



3

**Move beyond talk.** As you discuss and work through the models, or other approaches, be prepared to do more than discuss. Strategize steps for implementing the models, for building relationships, and/or for taking action in your community.

4

**Think long term.** Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King said that the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice. The work that you are doing is hard and it will take time. Think of the models as starting points or stepping stones within a much bigger process.



5

**Be a peacemaker.** Moments of disagreement or contention are sure to arise in doing this work. When they do, seek out areas of agreement and reiterate the love that exists among participants. Moving forward in disagreement will not be productive.

# Analyzing Our Results



## STRENGTHS

*of the models...*

### Model 1:

- + Emphasis on building trust, friendship and rapport with those outside of comfort zone/congregation is essential to any productive model and action plan
- + Based on input from focus group participants, iterations of this model have been done in the past, and long term relationships have stemmed from interpersonal connections throughout the years.

### Model 2:

- + Especially for those who naturally engage in spiritual thinking, this model can be seen as a natural next step for congregants.
- + This model provides a common space for participants to connect and agree on texts that align with common interests and values. This scripture, along with a shared group vocabulary, can provide a foundation for moving forward in a collective manner.

### Model 3:

- + Acknowledging hard truths about congregational or denominational compliance in perpetuating racism before moving forward is essential.
- + Per the recommendations from our focus group, this model provides a clear action plan and concrete next steps. This was important to our participants, as it gives a congregation the tools to strategize moving forward.

# Analyzing Our Results



## CHALLENGES

*of the models...*

### Model 1:

■ The burden of reaching across congregations or the racial divide should not be placed on minority congregations or communities. This undue burden may cause further division, leading to possible feelings of resentment or pressure.

■ One concern that was raised was the timeline of this particular model (6 weeks). Some of our focus group participants thought that 6 weeks to complete these tasks was too long or too short.

### Model 2:

■ A challenge that this model faces is the lack of an action plan associated with scriptural analysis. Many of our focus group participants believe that looking towards scripture is not enough.

■ As this model is done on a smaller, or even individual, scale, this model can also be seen as lacking in the area of personal relationships and fostering meaningful connections.

### Model 3:

■ This model has been recognized as not being applicable to all congregations, especially minority congregations. It is the work that many majority congregations must embark on, whether it is a racial or denominational majority.

■ Many congregational leaders have mentioned the difficulty of obtaining these documents, as some of them may be older or lost.

# Analyzing Our Results

## Integration of the Models

Based on feedback from our focus group participants, there is not one clear model congregations should adapt, but rather suggestions on how to combine the models to fit congregations' needs and priorities.

### Suggestions for Non-Christian congregations:

Model 1 -> Model 2 -> Model 3

For non-Christian congregations, it might be best to begin with Model 1 (relationship building), before moving to Model 2 (scriptural analysis) and then Model 3 (audit).



### Suggestions for majority white congregations:

Model 2 -> Model 3 -> Model 1

Model 3 -> Model 2 -> Model 1

While these differ slightly, it might be best for majority white congregations to begin with either Model 3 (audit) or Model 2 (scriptural analysis) before reaching Model 1 (relationship building).

### Suggestions for minority congregations:

Model 2 -> Model 1

For minority (demographic or denominational) Model 3 (audit) may not be necessary. Instead, it might be beneficial to look to Model 2 (scriptural analysis) for spiritual healing before participating in Model 1 (relationship building).





# Analyzing Our Results

## Summary of Results

Overall, based on the feedback and analyzing the positive and negative attributes of each model with our focus group participants, our team came up with the following conclusion:

**Congregations should choose elements of the model or models that best fit with their priorities as an institution and willingness to participate in this work.**

✦ It is important to remember that models are not perfect answers, but rather stepping stones to achieve racial justice and reconciliation in Little Rock. Congregations can and should choose pieces and approaches that work best for them.

✦ The consensus among focus group participants was there is an evident need for personal connection and relationship building in this process, along with a tangible action plan for congregations.

***"I see all of these as really pieces of the same efforts and necessary pieces that need to go together"*** - Focus Group Participant on the integration of the models, 2022

# A Starting Point: Questions to Consider on Racial Justice and Reconciliation

Has your congregation already done racial justice/reconciliation work?



If not, we recommend starting on an internal level (Model 2: scriptural analysis) and congregational level (Model 3: audit), and then moving forward with intentional relationships (Model 1: relationship building).

Is your congregational leadership transparent about your institution's history?

If not, we recommend beginning with Model 3 (audit) before moving forward. If so, Model 3 (audit) can be omitted from this process.

Do you and/or your congregation's leadership reflect on the importance of racial justice and reconciliation when reading scripture?

If not, we recommend starting with Model 2 (scriptural analysis) before jumping into the other models. It is important to build a group vocabulary and reach a level of productive consensus before moving forward.

Want to learn more? Check out our website: <https://research.ualr.edu/lrcs/>

# Responding with Faith if you get Pushback on Racial Justice and Reconciliation

Talking about race just causes more division.

Our congregation/community doesn't have a problem with racism.

This sounds like a slippery slope to CRT.

When any of God's children are being hurt, including by racism, we should respond with love and compassion, seeking to build unity.

- Ephesians 2:11-22 (Jesus broke down barriers between Jews and Gentiles, making peace and a new humanity)
- Romans 12:15 in the Bible and Mosiah 18:9 in the Book of Mormon (we are called to mourn with those who mourn)
- Quran 49:13 (diversity of creation was purposeful, so we could come to know one other)

Let's prayerfully reflect on whether the racial and ethnic makeup of our congregation reflects our community and why that might be. Let's talk to our members and listen to their experiences. Diversity of creation is purposeful and pleasing to God.

- Quran 30, 22 (one of the wonders of creation is the diversity of tongues and colors)
- 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 (the Body of Christ is made up of many diverse parts)
- Guru Granth Sahib, page 259, from the Sikh tradition (Don't create enmity with anyone as God is within everyone)

There will always be new buzz words. Let's focus on the image of God in all people, the love of God for everyone, and our obligation to love one another.

- Genesis 1:27 (each person is created in the divine image)
- Galatians 3:26-28 (we are all one in Christ)
- Leviticus 19:34 (You shall love the stranger like yourself)
- Lawh'i 'Ibn'i Dhib, "Epistle to the Son of the Wolf" 30, from the Baha'i tradition (choose for your neighbor what you choose for yourself)

# What we Learned about Race from the Little Rock Congregations Study

## Racial Division is Major Problem

**78%** of congregation members said the Little Rock has a problem with racial division

**88%** of clergy said the Little Rock has a problem with racial division

**4<sup>th</sup>** race relations was the 4th most important issue in Little Rock

## But there is Reason for Hope



Race relations is the number one issue people want to see their place of worship engaged in helping to solve

The vast majority of clergy (64%) believe race relations will get better-- and they are in a position to help make that happen.



We asked African-American Pastors in Little Rock about race, collaboration, and their experiences. This is what we learned:



**1**

### They share a concern over racial divisions.

*"...there has to be a deliberate approach to break[ing] down those walls ... especially the traditional Black churches with the traditional White churches."*

*"unity is a fundamental Christian value ... we are terrible at it ...one of the many black eyes on the public face of Christianity...the way that racial and socioeconomic things separate us."*

**2**

### They face challenges with collaboration.

*There is a long history of "taking care of our own" rooted in experiences with segregation and discrimination.*

*Sometimes experiencing exclusion: "if you are not part of that church or someone at that church, you probably are not going to know what they are doing."*

**3**

### They are seeking to engage with both the past and the present.

*"We recognize that race ... all injustice, was a long-standing kind of scar"*

*"The focus of the black community ... faith ... pushes us towards ... equality ... economic security ... social concerns"*

## Key Community Questions



How can we encourage dialogue between clergy and congregants across racial lines?

What communication practices encourage working together towards common goals?

How can we listen and learn from our history while working together for a better future?



Little Rock Congregations Study

Learn More about the Research and our Methods

Visit our website: [research.ualr.edu/lrcs](http://research.ualr.edu/lrcs)

Follow us on Facebook:

[facebook.com/LittleRockCongregationsStudy](https://facebook.com/LittleRockCongregationsStudy)

Contact Dr. Rebecca Glazier, [raglazier@ualr.edu](mailto:raglazier@ualr.edu)



# Resource Guide



Given the event that these models do not appear applicable to your congregation, or there are mounting hesitations, we recommend referencing the following resource guide. This can be both an alternative to the models, but also a starting place for those who would like to learn more about racial justice and reconciliation.

## Organizations



Race Under Grace Network + Facilitation Guide (City Church Network):

<https://citychurchar.org/race-under-grace-2017/>

Philander Smith College Social Justice Institute:

<https://rethinksocialjustice.org/>

Ethnicity, Justice and the People of God Online Course:

<https://www.ntwrightonline.org/>

## Documentary Films:



*A Time for Burning* (1966)

*Injustice Anywhere* (2016)

*Backs Against the Wall* (2019)

*White Savior: Racism in the American Church* (2019)

## Articles:



"Black Leaders Assess Church's Efforts to Battle Racism During CPG Webinar for Black History Month" (David Paulsen, Episcopal News Service, 2022)

# Resource Guide

Resource Guide,  
continued

## Articles:



"How an Open Bible Should Dismantle White Supremacy" (J. Ross Wagner, Duke Divinity School, 2020)

"The Intersection of Christianity and Racial Justice Advocacy" (S. Brock, A. Hambrick & A. Jun, Journal for the Association for Christians in Student Development)

"Reading While White in 2021: An Introductory Reflection on Howard Thurman" (Adam Bailey, Earth & Alter Magazine, 2021)

"Revisiting a Time for Burning and the Spiritual Crisis of Racism" (Richard Brody, New Yorker Magazine, 2020)

## Reports:



"Embracing Equity: Seven Steps to Advance and Embed Racial Equity and Inclusion Within Your Organization" (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2014)

"Leadership and Race: How to Develop and Support Leaders that Contribute to Racial Justice" (Learning Leadership Community, 2009)

## Books:



*Be The Bridge: Pursuing God's Heart for Racial Reconciliation* (Latasha Morrison, 2019)

*Becoming Beloved Community: Vision, Plan and Resources* (Rev. Michael Bruce Curry, 2017)

*Being Human: Race, Culture and Religion* (Dr. Dwight N. Hopkins, 2005)

*Building a Healthy Multi-ethnic Church* (Mark DeYmaz, 2007)



# Resource Guide

Resource Guide,  
continued

## Books:



*Call for Justice: From Practice to Theory and Back* (Dr. Kurt Ver Beek & Dr. Nicholas P. Wolterstorff, 2019).

*Congregational Journey Toward Racial Justice: A Resource for Churches Moving Toward Racial Equity and Reconciliation* (North Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church, 2020)

*The Cross and the Lynching Tree* (Rev. Dr. James H. Cone, 2013)

*Dear White Christians: For Those Still Longing for Racial Reconciliation* (Dr. Jennifer Harvey, 2014)

*Dear White Peacemakers: Dismantling Racism with Grit and Grace* (Osheta Moore, 2021)

*"The Elusive Dream: The Power of Race in Interracial Churches"* (Dr. Korie Little Edwards, 2010)

*Having Conversations: A Devotional Series for Dismantling the Sin of Racism and Building God's Reconciliation* (United Methodists of Arkansas, 2021)

*How To Fight Racism: Courageous Christianity and the Journey Towards Racial Justice* (Dr. Jemar Tisby, 2021)

*Jesus and the Disinherited* (Rev. Dr. Howard Thurman, 1996)

*Racial Justice in the Catholic Church* (Fr. Bryan N. Massingale, 2010)

*Resipiscence 2018-2020: A Lenten Devotional for Dismantling White Supremacy* (Rev. Vahisha Hasan & Rev. Nichola Torbett, 2018-202)

*Urbansouls: Reflections on Youth, Religion and Hip Hop* (Rev. Osagyefo Uhuru Sekou, 2018)

# Clergy Advisory Board



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The Little Rock Congregations Study Clergy Advisory Board is made up of religious leaders from diverse backgrounds across our city. They advise the research team both on methods (question selection, survey distribution, inclusive question wording, etc.) and on outreach (congregation recruitment, networking, etc.). Board members serve rotating two-year terms.



# Research Team



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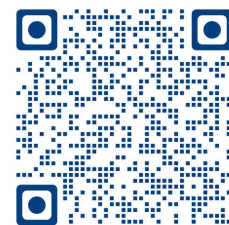


# Little Rock Race and Faith Summit Potential Commitments



As you read and ponder these resources, we hope that this will be an opportunity for you and your congregation to make commitments moving forward. Below are a list of potential commitments. There are spaces to write your own as you are inspired regarding what is best for your congregation. Feel free to check the items you want to commit to and to refer back to this page to remind yourself of your commitments.

- Read some of the recommended scriptures in the scripture model and ponder on how they can apply to racial justice.
- Create a committee at your place of worship to look at the racial history of your congregation.
- Preach about racial justice, or at least mention it in a sermon, \_\_\_ number of times this year.
- Pray about this issue. Take it to God and ask if this is important to God and something your congregation needs to do more about.
- Connect with City Church's Race Under Grace program.
- Sign up to be part of further research on race and faith with the Little Rock Congregations Study. Email project director Dr. Rebecca Glazier for more information: raglazier@ualr.edu.
- Order a book from the reading list (or take a free book from the Race and Faith Summit!) and read it.
- Ask your staff and congregation to pray on the issue of race and whether it is one your congregation should prioritize.
- Plan a community service project with a congregation of another race. Be partners in serving the community together.
- Talk with members of your congregation who are not of the majority race and listen to their experiences.
- Pick one of the books from the reading list and host a book group at your congregation.





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