



Adam Haugeberg The Rev. Tyler Sit

¡Bendiciones! Building a Just,
“Green” Faith Community

Video (6:33): The Rev. Tyler Sit, pastor of New City United Methodist Church, Minneapolis, and Adam Haugeberg, director of environmental justice at New City Church

Adam Haugeberg is the director of environmental justice at New City Church in Minneapolis. He has started a permaculture design and edible landscaping business in Atlanta, managed and helped design a 350-acre permaculture demonstration site in southern Missouri, and worked with several churches and non-profits in the area of environmental justice. His calling is to create sustainable, equitable, and abundant systems that serve God, create justice for people, and harmonize with the earth.

The Rev. Tyler Sit is the church planter of New City Church, a Minneapolis-based church that focuses on environmental justice. New City has been featured in *The New York Times*, on Minnesota Public Radio, and on the website *Patheos*. The church’s ministry was named one of the “50 Environmental Projects to Watch” by online magazine *Grist*. Tyler is an outdoors enthusiast and on the side designs communications for an urban garden program.



Session 13: ¡Bendiciones! Building a Just, “Green” Faith Community

Series 3: Young Adults, Social Justice, and the Church

Preparation

Select a room or location to offer the study. Every session needs a room that has the capability to access the video via the Internet and to project the video for groups of various sizes. Check to be sure equipment is working properly. *This video can be found at www.gcorr.org/series/vc3.*

Preview the video. Be sure to take on what is new for you, what captures your keenest interest, and what one thing you want to be sure to emphasize in the teaching process. Next, read through the lesson plan, making notes of what you need to prepare in advance or persons you may recruit to assist in leading the session.

Gather the following materials:

- Holy Bible, turned to Scriptures: 2 Kings 19:29-31; 2 Chronicles 7:14; and Isaiah 65:21-23
- Listening and Looking Guide (one for each person or project on a screen)
- Pens or pencils
- A potted dwarf tree or small tree of some sort
- A flower pot (medium-sized) filled with potting soil
- Construction paper
- Notebook paper
- Business envelopes (one for each participant)
- Large index cards (4 x 6)
- Markers, colored pencils, and crayons
- Scissors
- Blue painter's tape

Also prepare:

- Your tree poster and brief story about you and a fruit tree
- Write the mailing address and website of New City Church on newsprint for display: <http://grownewcity.church>; New City Church, P. O. Box 7083, Minneapolis, MN 55407.
- A bowl of eight to ten lemons (for display and for use in "Make Lemonade" activity)
- Materials for optional activity "Make Lemonade:" a small table, 2-quart pitcher of water, 2 cups of sugar, stirring spoon, 8-10 lemons, cutting board, a knife, ice, and cups (enough for all group members).

THE STUDY SESSION

Get Started [10 minutes]

Welcome everyone to the session and take care of housekeeping matters. Read statement of purpose (or recruit a volunteer to do so): "The General Commission on Religion and Race presents *Vital Conversations* to help start the dialogue on subjects that may sometimes be difficult to approach. We are all part of the beloved community, and we welcome perspectives that bring enlightenment and understanding."

Recruit a volunteer to read the Scriptures: 2 Kings 19:29-31; 2 Chronicles 7:14; and Isaiah 65:21-23. Invite someone to lead the group in prayer; if no one volunteers, open with a prayer of your choice. Post your group's covenant and highlight the key components: confidentiality;

everyone's voice matters; disagree with care/do not attack anyone. Invite the group to add thoughts and ideas to the covenant, especially if there are new persons.

Draw and Share [15 minutes]

Give each person a sheet of construction paper, and an index card. Provide access to varied colored markers. Ask everyone to think about fruit that grows from a tree. Ask them to think about their favorite fruit tree then "sketch" that tree on one side of the paper. Then ask them to use the index card to write down their memories of eating fruit from that tree (i.e., peach juice dribbling down your chin; fresh squeezed orange juice in a glass; pears so hard that you almost broke a tooth). Show your fruit tree poster as an example.

After everyone has prepared their tree poster and jotted down their stories, ask them to tape their posters on the wall. Then have a museum "walk," encouraging everyone to browse the artistic and literary gifts of the other participants.

Show the Video [15 minutes]

Invite the group to watch the video by sharing this introduction: The Rev. Tyler Sit and Adam Haugeberg focus on the correlation between environmental racism and gentrification in urban areas. Tyler is pastor of New City Church, a Minneapolis-based United Methodist congregation. Adam is director of environmental justice at the church. Their ministry has been named one of the "50 Environmental Projects to Watch" by *Grist* (grist.org), an American nonprofit online magazine that has been publishing environmental news and commentary since 1999.

Distribute the Listening and Looking Guide but explain that they are not to try to answer the questions as they watch – to quickly scan the guide as a way of focusing their attention. They may wish to jot down a phrase or a key point but to try to remain focused on what is being said. If there is time, you may show the video again and encourage more extensive written reflection.

Use the Listening & Looking Guide [10-15 minutes]

Individually, complete the statements or answer the questions on the guide. Point out New City Church's website (<http://grownewcity.church>) and encourage group members to use their phones and tablets to take a look at their website. Next, encourage participants to recall and reflect upon the passion and vision of Tyler Sit and Adam Haugeberg by gathering in pairs (or triads) and discuss one of the key questions on the guide, "How can we be like compost tea?"

Reflect and Share [10 minutes]

Have members think about their conversations and review the information recorded on the guide sheet. Add additional thoughts, complete their vision, their commitment, and their social media share. Invite anyone who wishes to share their commitment to do so after a time of individual reflection.

Appreciation Pause [10 minutes]

Distribute a blank sheet of notebook paper and an envelope to each person. Ask them to write a letter of thanksgiving to Rev. Sit and Mr. Haugeberg. Ask the group to share something specific that they will carry with them or tell someone else about as a result of hearing their ministry story of tree and justice planting. Place the mailing address for New City in a visible place and encourage people to send the letter within the week.

(Optional Activity) **Make Lemonade [10 minutes]**

Place the bowl of lemons, cutting board, knife, a bag of sugar, spoon, ice, pitcher of water and cups on a table in the center of the group. Cut a lemon in half, and squeeze the juice into the water. Invite the group to come in pairs, and repeat the process. As they leave, have them take a cup.

After everyone has added juice to the water, add sugar and ice and stir. Pass the pitcher and have all pour some lemonade in their cups. You may recruit a volunteer to serve the lemonade. When everyone's cup is filled, propose a toast to the lives and ministry of New City Church – share a toast and invite everyone to respond “Here, here! And there, there!” Encourage group members to add a toast as well.

Closing Meditation: Dirt Under My Fingernails [10 minutes]

Ask a volunteer to read Isaiah 65:21-23 again. Explain that Scripture calls us to plant and enjoy the fruits of our labor. Call the group's attention to the flowerpot filled with soil. Invite everyone to come forward, one by one, and scoop up a handful of dirt. Invite them to get dirt under their fingernails. Remind them of the call to action issued by Tyler Sit and Adam Haugeberg. Ask them to think about the new vision that they noted on their Listening and Looking Guide. Remind them of the call to God's people to not only live an abundant life (John 10:10) but to be a provider of that life, (Isaiah 58:11 NIV). We must be like “well-watered gardens, whose waters never fail.”

Recall this statement by Adam Haugeberg:

“In a few years, people who have received trees will literally have more apples than they will know what to do with ... this is our way of saying – God is abundant; God's love for You is abundant; and God is making a home for you here that is abundant.”

Then, read this closing prayer (or share one of your own choosing). Pause after every sentence and ask the group to respond with the word: *¡Bendiciones!* (bayn-dee-see-OH-nays, Spanish for “blessings!”) God, provider of life and nourishment, we praise You. *¡Bendiciones!* We praise You for the deliciousness of every apple we have eaten. *¡Bendiciones!* We praise You for the beauty and aromas of our favorite apples: Honey Crisp, Granny Smith, Golden Delicious, Red Delicious, McIntosh, Pink Lady. *¡Bendiciones!* [Pause and invite others to name the apples that they savor and enjoy.] *¡Bendiciones!* Bless the work of the hands of Tyler Sit and Adam Haugeberg and the members of their faith community. *¡Bendiciones!* Provide for their ministry so they may bring more of Your abundance to the lives of people in their community. *¡Bendiciones!* In Christ's name we pray, Amen. *¡Bendiciones!*

Listening and Looking Guide: The Rev. Tyler Sit and Adam Haugeberg

What stands out for you from the video? (Try to name three things.)

Families who had revitalized their neighborhood, which led to an increase in value and made it too expensive for their income, lamented: “I guess I’m too poor to live in a safe and green neighborhood.” What emotions does that statement evoke for you?

Tyler and Adam say their mission is planting churches and planting trees to inspire others to fight racism, heal the earth, and create disciples in their own context. What does that look like for you?

How can we be like the compost tea that Adam described?

Cultivate a new vision: If we were compost tea, where would we like to be sprayed? What ministries would we plant? Grow?

Make a commitment: _____

Tweet This/Post on your social media: _____

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- Facebook: General Commission on Religion and Race

About the Study Guide Author

Dr. G. Faye Wilson

Dr. G. Faye Wilson is the minister of music and arts at Mt. Zion United Methodist Church in Quantico, Maryland. She is also a lay servant and president of the Salisbury (Md.) District United Methodist Church. In the community, she is a ten-year volunteer with HALO (Hope and Life Outreach), a program providing shelter, meals, and life skills training for families experiencing homelessness.

Dr. Wilson is executive director of GeeFaye Associates, her music and education consulting firm. She gives voice lessons, writes and edits manuscripts, and gives instruction in public speaking.

Dr. Wilson has worked in the areas of communications and outreach since 1978. A staff member of the General Board of Global Ministries for twenty-one years, she led seminars, visited mission projects, taught in United Methodist Women's "Mission U" across the country, and wrote books and articles to help people become more involved in mission work.

When she is not working and volunteering, she likes to play Scrabble, read, travel, and entertain. She loves to cook and is constantly creating recipes using local ingredients as her part in the "farm-to-table" movement.