Session 5: Meaningful Conversations on Race

Happy are those who observe justice, who do righteousness at all times.

~ Psalm 106:3 (NRSV)

Check-in
Ask about everyone’s week, along with prayer requests for joys and sorrows.

Open with Prayer

Introduction to the Meaningful Conversations on Race Video
Dr. David Anderson Hooker outlines elements that hinder and help fruitful dialogue on issues of race in the Meaningful Conversations on Race video. In doing so, he traces how myths about race define how we function in life, including work and school, in the form of institutional racism. Dr. Hooker says by avoiding the hard conversations about race, we short-circuit any meaningful dialogue that can result in transformation in our lives and across the country.

Video

Discussion Questions
1. Dr. Hooker lists three main arguments people make to avoid talking about race and racism. How do these arguments reflect your own lived experience or perspective in life?
2. How do negative feelings affect our willingness and ability to discuss the tough topics of racism, racial injustice, and white privilege?
3. In his dandelion-bluegrass analogy, Dr. Hooker asserts that our systems are not neutral but shaped by biases, tradition, histories, and practices, which is one reason that dandelions are considered weeds to be destroyed, while bluegrass is prized as creating a beautiful lawn. Consider the following list, and discuss how our perceptions of race and racial identity influence what we consider as good/positive/appropriate/traditional appearance of:
   • a dating/marriage partner
   • a hardworking person
   • a safe neighborhood
   • beautiful hair and skin
   • a reliable world leader
   • a cute baby
   • the “all-American” couple
   • the kind of pastor I want in my church
   • a Sunday school teacher
   • artists’ renderings of Jesus, Mary, or Moses
   • a stained-glass depiction of Jesus as “The Good Shepherd”
   • a person I would vote for as mayor of my town
4. Dr. Hooker tells his story at the end of the video concerning race and racism. Any similarities or differences in your own story?
5. How do your current local-church experiences in worship, outreach, mission, and witness prepare you to be in community with people of other races? What are some ways you are willing to work in your church to begin building ongoing relationships, Christian community, and space for honest dialogue across racial lines?

Closing Prayer in Unison
Light a candle as a reminder of the Holy Spirit’s presence.

Our God on High! Make plain to us what remains invisible to many concerning racist words, actions, and behavior. We seek You, God, to lead us in dismantling institutional racism and inequitable realities based on so many of our false myths. May we join together as Christian sisters and brothers in agreement. Amen.

Come now, let us argue it out.

~ Isaiah 1:18a (NRSV)