

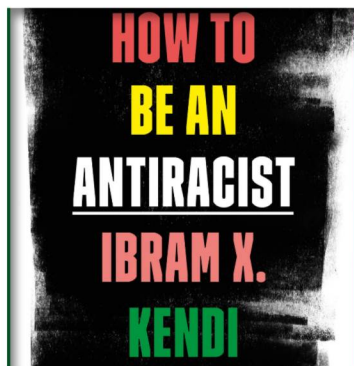


A United Church of Christ/
United Methodist Church
& a LGBTQIA
Welcoming Congregation

UCUP

August Newsletter 2020

No matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey,
you are welcome here.



BOOK STUDY WEDNESDAY NIGHTS IN SEPTEMBER 6-7:30pm

Over 30 people participated in a four-week study using Robin Diangelo's book "White Fragility: Why it's so hard for White People to Talk About Racism". We are grateful for Angie Wolle and Amara Oden providing content and a framework for the class, and to Tanya Sorenson and Nancy

Davis for helping facilitate small groups for each session. At the end of the class, people reflected on what we learned, discovered, noticed or heard these past few weeks, and committing to a personal next step on the journey toward anti-racism. We also had conversations in small groups about what steps we could take as a faith community. The journey of our inner work and reflection leading to outward action is on-going. We will continue this deeper work in September when we study Ibram X. Kendi's book, "How to be an Anti-Racist".

KENDI is one of America's foremost historians and leading antiracist voices. He is a #1 New York Times bestselling author; Founding Director of the Boston University Center for Antiracist Research; the director of the Antiracist Research & Policy Center at American University; a contributor writer at The Atlantic; and a CBS News correspondent. He will become the 2020-2021 Frances B. Cashin Fellow at the Radcliffe Institute for the Advanced Study at Harvard University. Kendi grew up dreaming about playing in the NBA, and ironically ended up joining the other NBA (National Book Award) in 2016 for "Stamped from the Beginning: the Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America."

Kendi, one of the most respected scholars of race and history, steps away from documenting the racist sins of others, and turns the lens pointedly, uncomfortably, at himself with a wrenching examination of his own evolution of racism to becoming antiracist, beginning with a day in 2000 when he gave a prizewinning speech as a young student. "I remember the M.L.K. competition so fondly. But when I recall the racist speech I gave, I flush with shame. It is hard for me to believe that I finished high school in the year 2000 touting so many racist ideas. A racist culture had handed me the ammunition to shoot Black people, to shoot myself, and I took and used it. Internalized racism is the real Black on Black crime." He details his grapplings with racism and his advice for eliminating it. His courageous confessional of self-examination invites us into the inner work we all must undertake at some point in our lives.

For Kendi, there are no non-racists; there are only racists — people who allow racist ideas to proliferate without opposition — and antiracists, those who expose and eradicate and dismantle a society suffused with white supremacy, capitalist exploitation, and misogyny. A key theme of his book is that all people can and do a play a role in struggles around social justice. Everyone is accountable. And just as anyone can be racist, so, too, can anyone be anti-racist. Antiracism takes effort. Racism is not born out of ignorance. Racism, history shows, is born out of its profitability and utility. It is rooted in patriarchy and capitalism.

Please join us for this study in September, even if you were unable to join us in July. We simply ask that you attempt to make each class, so we can continue to build on the trust we establish each week.

FROM OUR PRESIDENT

As we continue to gather and worship in virtual space, I'm reminded of a comment that Pastor Cathy shared recently – "the church never closed, so "reopen" isn't really the right word to describe our response to the COVID-19 virus." Indeed, our virtual worship is rich with music, images, thought-provoking sermons, prayer, and fellowship. The spirit is alive and well with the congregation of United Church in University Place!

We are, however, in a very different kind of space. Our plan for working through the pandemic is titled "Plan for Reopening and Transforming during the COVID-19 Crisis," and transforming is the operative word. As we work through the reality that the virus will be impacting our lives for months to come, it's important that we embrace the opportunity to transform not only how we worship, but also how we stay connected with one another and work together to continue the programs and mission of our church. On a more personal level, each of us can consider how we can transform our perceptions of church, its role in our daily lives, and the ways in which we serve the church.

Our plan for reopening and transforming United Church in University Place was approved by the UCUP Board and by Methodist District Superintendent Derek Nakano in July. It has also been shared with the UCC Conference Office. With these approvals, we have moved to "Stage 2" of operations, as defined in the plan. It's important to note that while our plan defines four stages, or phases, of operation, these levels vary from the phases of reopening described by Pierce County and the State of Washington. Following the guidance of the Methodist and UCC conference offices, we are taking a more cautious approach as we work through each stage. To help all of us remember that our stages differ from the phases of the county and state, we are calling them "Stages." It is likely that we will stay in Stage 2 for an extended period of time.

Here are the stages, as described in our plan:

1 Stage 1

Stage 1 began in mid-March, and remained in effect through early July. The church building was closed to all but essential services. All worship, education, and committee activities were held online.

2 Stage 2

In Stage 2, the suspension of in-person worship continues. A group of 10 or fewer may gather in the building to record or produce components of the online worship services, while practicing physical distancing, wearing face masks, and observing other hygiene practices. Each person may remove their face mask while they are speaking during active recording. The production of in-person vocal music is prohibited in facilities, with the exception of recording soloists and woodwind music, with precautionary measures for social distancing, for use during the virtual service. High-touch surfaces must be sanitized after each use. Access to the church building is limited to designated staff, volunteers, meetings, and essential services. Anyone entering the church building must sign the log-in registry, complete a temperature check, and adhere to all of the safety/hygiene actions. The church will continue to meet, serve, and worship together remotely, striving to include vulnerable persons and making healthy choices to participate in virtual ways.

3 Stage 3

Stage 3: Stage 3 allows for the option of in-person worship, weddings, and funerals for up to 50 people while wearing face masks and utilizing proper sanitizing and physical distancing. No communion, live singing or food service is allowed, and high-risk populations must continue to worship from home. Virtual, online worship services will continue to be offered in some capacity. Outside of worship, access to the church building is limited to designated staff, volunteers, meetings, and services. Fellowship and education activities for adults, children and youth must remain virtual.

United Church in University Place will move to Stage 3 upon these conditions:

- After Bishop Stanovsky and Pierce County have both advanced to Phase 3
- When the pastor and church leaders (ad hoc committee and board) deem it is appropriate.
- Reductions of reported COVID cases in the area, adequate testing, contact tracing, and expansion of the UCUP volunteer teams will be considerations.

Even in Stage 3, UCUP will likely continue to primarily meet online for the protection of our more vulnerable members.

4 Stage 4

Stage 4: Stage 4 returns to more “regular” worship and other gatherings with no size limit. High risk populations are invited to join at their discretion, but the church will explore new ways of providing meaningful worship opportunities online and other ways to participate in the life of the church virtually. With increased hygiene practices communion may be shared and limited “coffee hour” or “fellowship time” may resume. Childcare and Sunday School may resume, with enhanced hygiene practices. Live singing is still not permitted. Access to the church building is open, while maintaining appropriate safety practices.

Beyond...

Beyond Stage 4: This “new normal” for the church is yet to be defined. It will include continued monitoring for health indicators and will adhere to guidelines from the governing denominations and local health authorities. Options for virtual or recorded services will continue.

Our reopening plan addresses key actions in the following areas:

- Leadership Responsibilities
- Safety Actions
- Staff and Volunteers
- Worship
- Ministry Activities and Events
- Building Use
- Community Connections and Outreach

I’d like to once again thank the members of the ad hoc committee that worked with Pastor Cathy and me to develop our plan: Chris Berry, Tanya Sorenson Becker, Dave Higby, and Judy Thierry. If you have questions about the plan, please feel free to reach out to any of us.

Wishing you peace and health in this transformative time,

Marilyn Thompson,
President



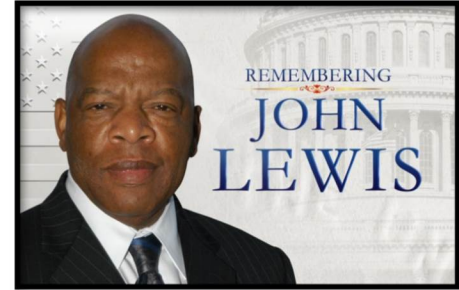
From Our Pastor

May Civil Rights Icon Congressman John Lewis who died on July 17th rest in power. He wrote this essay shortly before his death. He wanted it to be published on the day of his funeral which occurred July 30th. I offer this space in the newsletter for his words of eloquence and wisdom.

TOGETHER, YOU CAN REDEEM THE SOUL OF OUR NATION

By John Lewis

While my time here has now come to an end, I want you to know that in the last days and hours of my life you inspired me. You filled me with hope about the next chapter of the great American story when you used your power to make a difference in our society. Millions of people motivated simply by human compassion laid down the burdens of division. Around the country and the world you set aside race, class, age, language and nationality to demand respect for human dignity. That is why I had to visit Black Lives Matter Plaza in Washington, though I was admitted to the hospital the following day. I just had to see and feel it for myself that, after many years of silent witness, the truth is still marching on.



Emmett Till was my George Floyd, my Sandra Bland and Breonna Taylor. He was 14 when he was killed, and I was only 15 years old at the time. He could easily have been me. In those days, fear constrained us like an imaginary prison. Though I was surrounded by loving parents, brothers, sisters and cousins, their love could not protect me from the unholy oppression waiting just outside that family circle. Unchecked, unrestrained violence and government-sanctioned terror had the power to turn a simple stroll to the store for some Skittles or an innocent morning jog down a lonesome country road into a nightmare. If we are to survive as one unified nation, we must discover what so readily takes root in our hearts that could rob Mother Emanuel Church in South Carolina of her brightest and best, shoot unwitting concertgoers in Las Vegas and choke to death the hopes and dreams of a gifted violinist like Elijah McClain.

Like so many young people today, I was searching for a way out, or some might say a way in, and then I heard the voice of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on an old radio. He was talking about the philosophy and discipline of nonviolence. He said we are all complicit when we tolerate injustice. He said it is not enough to say it will get better by and by. He said each of us has a moral obligation to stand up, speak up and speak out. When you see something that is not right, you must say something. You must do something. Democracy is not a state. It is an act, and each generation must do its part to help build what we called the Beloved Community, a nation and world society at peace with itself.



Ordinary people with extraordinary vision can redeem the soul of America by getting in what I call good trouble, necessary trouble. Voting and participating in the democratic process are key. The vote is the most powerful nonviolent change agent you have in a democratic society. You must use it because it is not guaranteed. You can lose it.

You must also study and learn the lessons of history because humanity has been involved in this soul-wrenching, existential struggle for a very long time. People on every continent have stood in your shoes, though decades and centuries before you.

The truth does not change, and that is why the answers worked out long ago can help you find solutions to the challenges of our time. Continue to build union between movements stretching across the globe because we must put away our willingness to profit from the exploitation of others.

Though I may not be here with you, **I urge you to answer the highest calling of your heart and stand up for what you truly believe.** In my life I have done all I can to demonstrate that the way of peace, the way of love and nonviolence is the more excellent way. Now it is your turn to let freedom ring.

When historians pick up their pens to write the story of the 21st century, let them say that it was your generation who laid down the heavy burdens of hate at last and that peace finally triumphed over violence, aggression and war. So I say to you, walk with the wind, brothers and sisters, and let the spirit of peace and the power of everlasting love be your guide.



Those of us that 'attended' church on Sunday, the 26th, were saddened by Robert Brown's news that Papa or George (his father-in-law), is now on Hospice. Our prayers are with him for a peaceful passing. We are thankful that he is surrounded by a family that loves him - daughter Kathi, Robert, granddaughters and great-grandchildren...and we want to keep them in our prayers.

Please keep Jim Davis, recovering from ankle surgery, and Leif Oden, recovering from shoulder surgery, in your prayers...and all students, teachers and school administrators as we near the time for the start of a new school year. High on our prayer list should be Pastor Cathy, our office administrator, Kelly, President Marilyn Thompson and our church Board.....We give thanks for ZOOM (really), because of it we are able to have Sunday services, meetings and even if it was 3 weeks after the actual wedding, some of us got to attend the wedding of Sara Davis and Justin Bennett on July 28th. What a delight to have the mother of the bride join us....that Angie Wolle's family recent celebrated her Aunt Winnie's 98th birthday. We celebrate with Jim and Fran Cash with the birth of their newest grandchild, born to Rachel and her husband.



How fun/interesting it has been during Fellowship Time since Pastor Cathy has had a question for us. So what new name do you think you'd choose or do you think the Lord might give you? Not surprising Neva thought 'teacher', Ruth thought maybe she'd be called by her first name 'Grace'. I think it was Don Thompson that thought Roger Martin should be called 'Top Splash'. There's a good story behind that name, which is best told by Roger.

Remember to wear your mask (a BIG thank you to the mask makers out there) and pray for the day we'll be able to gather at 3912 Grandview again.



Last November Amara Oden became a member at United Church in University Place. In March, she used her social media skills to help launch our virtual worship in the early days of the pandemic. In June, Amara preached a powerful and prophetic sermon on Hagar. Later in June and July, she worked with Pastor Cathy, Angie, Tanya and Nancy to facilitate a challenging study of self-

reflection using the book "White Fragility" with over 30 people in attendance. In July, Amara met with Staff Parish Relations and shared her personal faith biography and talked about her call to ordained ministry in the United Church of Christ. SPR recommended Amara to the Board, who voted unanimously on July 13th to recommend Amara to be considered for Member in Discernment in the Pacific Northwest Conference of the UCC. Amara expects to finish her Masters of Divinity from Seattle University's School of Theology and Ministry in the spring of 2021. In a small congregation that already holds more than 10 Masters of Divinity, it shouldn't surprise anyone that we will be adding one more. What is to be celebrated is that this is the first time that UCUP has supported someone ON their journey towards ordination. Even though we will be seeing less of Amara, as she begins her internship with Magnolia UCC, let us continue to support Amara and her family with our prayers and encouragement. Amara will be in the pulpit one more time on August 16th before she begins her internship.





Regional Spring Summits

On June 7 of this year, the Faith Action Network held its Spring Summit for the Puget Sound Region. It is from that meeting that these notes came. There were some 50 or so people in attendance, and they divided into interest groups. These notes are used by the FAN leaders to cobble together policy proposals for the legislature that we will advocate for at our Interfaith Action Day, which will be held in February next year. What you cannot see is the breadth of religions that are included here. The following are reports from each group:

Economic Justice

- *Protect essential workers*, particularly in the food industry. Agricultural and food-processing workers have been forced to work in unhealthy conditions.
- *Protect unions*. Unions have been suppressed in the agriculture, grocery and healthcare industries. Worries that state legislators will cut education and other vital services as they slash spending to address the budget shortfall caused by the coronavirus shutdown of the economy.

Among the top concerns was the regressive tax structures of the state of Washington. Washington's tax structure taxes the poor at somewhere between 17-19%, while the rich are taxed somewhere between 1-3%. The ways we thought to solve this were:

- A wealth tax, such as suggested nationally by Elizabeth Warren, but using different numbers.
- A higher level of sales tax, in which only things costing above a certain amount, like \$5,000 or \$10,000 would be taxed. A graduated income tax.
- Property taxes could be expanded to include wealth other than real estate property.

Criminal Justice

- Police reform/bail reform - Defunding police, with funds shifted to community services that address the root problems underlying criminal behavior such as homelessness, mental illness, and addiction.
- Prison reform
- Re-entry from prison - Give formerly incarcerated people the tools they need to succeed after leaving prison.
- Long-term focus: Get Abolition of the Death Penalty into state law.
- Enforce I-940 – Get the points of this police de-escalation training initiative codified and enforced.
- Require police accountability to civilians. Do not allow guilds to evaluate themselves.
- Reform the police.
 - Look at 'Best Practices'
 - Use 'Community Policing'.
 - Revise the bail system.
 - Provide & require social services
 - Allow early releases during the pandemic for prisoners who have already served 15-20 years.
- Follow the money

Housing and Homelessness

- Housing is a human right- people who have served their time should not lose their right or ability to get housing
- We need to look at how to change the current tax structure that makes it easy for persons to own more than one home.
- Need to continue to develop more ways of providing “Housing First”, meaning supportive housing for those coming directly out of homelessness

Environmental Justice

- Decrease Plastics (especially plastic bags and single-use plastic bottles)
- Public Transportation – increase access to existing transportation and support expansion
- Support Local Businesses (Shop, etc. as locally as possible)
- How to pay for environment/tribal obligations/farmworker protections in the time of budget cuts? Climate action and justice must not be lost, pushed aside.
- We need to block national environmental rollbacks and promote the Green New Deal—channel unemployed and young people into transformational work for sustainability and justice.
- State actions – Clean fuels bill and Snake River Dams—fish, tribal justice, push the governors to push for change nationally.

Immigrant Rights -- Focus: People getting trapped and taken by ICE in our communities.

- Caring for those at the NW Detention Center.
- A different perspective on keeping the detention centers where they are.
- Providing sanctuary to undocumented immigrants
- Utilize Church Council of Greater Seattle resources to support immigrants.

Racial Justice

- Demilitarize the police
- More gun control legislation (probably following the lead of the WA Coalition for Gun Responsibility)
- Support the Poor People’s Campaign
- Racial justice starts with ALL of US! It begins with us acknowledging and undoing WHITE PRIVILEGE! We need to start a dialogue on race honestly and openly even though it may be uncomfortable.
- We need to work with Police Unions to get them to accept the change that is necessary and to hold police accountable.
- Police must be Retrained - They need to deal differently with people of color with mental illness, those who are homeless (no more sweeps). We need to speak out to stop the Sheriffs and Police departments who are calling for training for using force and those who refuse to implement I-940.

Health Care and Mental Health

- Universal health care to provide insurance coverage for everybody in our state, and we should all follow the Universal Health Care Work Group established by the Health Care Authority as a result of a budget proviso in the 2019 Legislative Session (a true victory).
- Repair the inequities in our current health care system by supporting services to reach out to disabled people, immigrants, people in prisons, and disenfranchised members of our state. We did not identify specific actions for FAN, but we felt it was important to focus on these issues within our faith communities.
- Defend improvements in mental health coverage over the last few years, by preventing cutbacks like we saw in the last depression or recession. Add to FAN's legislative agenda.



SUPPORTING WOMEN VOTERS CALLING ALL POSTCARD WRITERS!

We will have a continuing opportunity in supporting women voters. A second set of 100 postcards will be arriving soon. Contact Judy Thierry at jthierry84@gmail.com to participate.

Thank you to Sharon, Leslie Ann, Ruth, Dorothy, Nora and Cathi for completing the first round.



Postcard Artwork by [Natalie Bui](#)



Dear UCUP People:

You all know that I often write for the Faith Action Network. In fact, in this newsletter, you will find some writing about the Spring Summit meeting I was part of last month (June).

I am unsure whether I have ever written about my activity with the Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Church of Christ's Dismantling Racism subcommittee of the Peace and Justice Committee. I should have done that. So, I want to share that within this group, there is activity concerning reparations, more activity by some members of the committee to witness at the prison in Monroe, still more activity to protect a strip mall in SeaTac that had businesses owned by and serving people of color, and we try to work as white folk (with some black members among us) to grow in our understanding of white privilege and to see obvious as well as hard to find instances of racist expression. More good news: Amara Oden is joining our group. If others are interested in joining our discussions, we meet on the second Tuesday at 6:30 P.M. of each month. Prior to COVID, we met at Plymouth Church in Seattle, but now everyone is at home. I am delighted to have Amara on board, and I am somewhat embarrassed to admit she found this committee on her own. Thus, I want others to know.

Further, and this is an issue the national church has an interest in: I am a member of UCC-PIN (Palestinian-Israeli Network) in that I receive e-mails regularly from the group. I am so offended by what Israel is doing to the Palestinians; the most recent action is overtaking land in the area of Jerusalem and its near surroundings that has been controlled by the Palestinians for years, and is part of their claim that Jerusalem is their capital, too. The offensive behavior by the Israeli Jewish leaders extends to their claim that it is antisemitic to have any opinions against the Israeli government, and, of course, President Trump is on board. We need to uniformly call out Israel as an apartheid state. The national church has done this, and I hope we can get behind the movements that support the Palestinian people. One of those movements is BDS (Boycott, Divest, Sanction). I only ask that you look into this issue.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert M. Brown



An Interfaith Conversation on Race and Faith

Details

- 🕒 Monday, August 3, 2020 at 6:30 PM – 8:00 PM
- 🌐 Public · Hosted by The Islamic Center of Tacoma
- 🌐 Online Event
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83104395894?pwd=cE01Wit0b2NBb0dFUUnNCcEx2Nkl1Zz09>

Join us for an interfaith conversation on Race! Panelists include: Dr. Abdulhakim Mohamed from ICT, Cantor Geoffrey Fine from Temple Beth El, Erin Jones from Trinity Church, and Sean Paul Lanegan from the Soka Gakkai International Buddhist Organization!

Collecting backpacks and school supplies

Even though school will be virtually taught this fall, backpacks and school supplies are still needed for the Family Housing Network. Any "standard" school supplies for children in grades K-12 would be appreciated. Please contact Judy Thierry at jthierry84@gmail.com or (240) 994-8572 for assistance or questions.



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