

# DISMANTLING RACISM

AND IN HIS NAME  
ALL OPPRESSION  
SHALL CEASE

As you prepare to lead your church this Advent season, prayerfully consider incorporating this theme into your preaching and teaching while adapting any of the following elements for use in your context.

## 2021 ADVENT RESOURCE FOR CHURCHES

Prepared by the UMC Council of Bishops and the Eastern PA Conference Connectional Ministries Office.

### ADVENT GOSPEL SCRIPTURES:

Lectionary Year C – The Book of Luke

### ADVENT PRAYER:

God who incarnates, we your people stand in anticipation of your arrival amongst us in this Advent season. In the birth of your son Jesus, we are reminded of the power of the Word made flesh to bring peace, love and justice to all creation. Make your word come alive in us, Holy God. Prepare our hearts to see all of humanity as you do. Open our minds to listen and learn from one another. Convict our spirits to do the work needed to tear down all systems of fear, prejudice, exclusion and oppression. We pray for the vulnerable, the hurting and the marginalized, that they experience peace, safety, belonging and justice, and we pray that you will use us to make these virtues real upon the earth. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

### ADVENT THEME-RELATED SONG:

*O Holy Night, verse 3:*

*Truly He taught us to love one another;  
His law is Love and His gospel is Peace;  
Chains shall he break, for the slave is our brother,  
And in his name all oppression shall cease,  
Sweet hymns of joy in grateful Chorus raise we;  
Let all within us praise his Holy name!*

## WEEK 1: “WE WATCH” Luke 21:25-36

### FOCUS: Environmental Racism

Where are the signs of oppression in our midst that serve as divine invitations for us to “wake up” (Luke 21:35, *The Message*) to God’s calls for justice and peacemaking made real in the coming of the infant Jesus?

We are called to watch and witness and work for justice in regard to our beleaguered natural environment, especially in many communities of color where environmental damage and destruction caused by industry are often felt the hardest.

**Learn:**

“Environmental racism is a form of systemic racism whereby communities of color are disproportionately burdened with health hazards through policies and practices that force them to live in proximity to sources of toxic waste such as sewage works, mines, landfills, power stations, major roads and emitters of airborne particulate matter. As a result, these communities suffer greater rates of health problems attendant on hazardous pollutants.” -Peter Beech

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/07/what-is-environmental-racism-pollution-covid-systemic/>

Hurricane Isaias moved across the Philadelphia region on Aug. 14, 2020, flooding the Eastwick, PA, community, devastating homes and disrupting lives. Hurricane Isaias’ impact on Eastwick in Southwest Philadelphia continues to be felt by individuals and the wider community. As of October 2021, the Rev. Tracy Duncan of Eastwick UMC laments that families are still waiting for their homes to be restored. With the onset of winter, the need for one and recovery is imminent.

**Watch:**

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/07/what-is-environmental-racism-pollution-covid-systemic/>

**Pray:**

Pray for healing the destructive divisions that separate members of the human family and the body of Christ – racism, sexism, tribalism, ethnic conflict, xenophobia.

**Act:**

Lead and encourage actions bearing witness to the harm and pain in our midst and refraining from engaging in divisive rhetoric:

Volunteer in Hurricane Isaias Relief: Crisis response teams are currently active and welcome new volunteers. To learn more about crisis clean-up efforts in Eastern PA, please contact: Bob Simcox, Eastern PA Disaster Response Coordinator:

[drc@epaumc.org](mailto:drc@epaumc.org).

Financial support for Hurricane Isaias Efforts: One hundred percent of the funds given to the EPA Hurricane Relief Fund will be used for direct relief and recovery efforts. Gifts will be used to support home restoration for families and church restoration efforts. To give to the recovery efforts, churches and individuals can share gifts through the Disaster Response Advance Special project #0345. Check: Make your check payable to "Eastern PA Conference" with memo line: Disaster Response Advance Special project #0345 Hurricane Isaias and mail to: Eastern PA Conference, Attn: Accounting, PO Box 820, Valley Forge, PA 19482. Write the name and fund number (Disaster Response Advance Special project #0345) in your check memo. Online: Visit our [Online Giving Portal](#).

## **WEEK 2: “WE PREPARE” Luke 3:1-6**

### **FOCUS: Gun Violence**

As we prepare our hearts for the coming of Emmanuel, we lament with mothers, fathers, families and communities devastated by gun violence. *Rachel is weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted.*

**Learn:**

As of Nov. 5, 2021, there have been 466 homicides in the city of Philadelphia, a 12% increase since 2020. [Interactive: Mapping Philadelphia's Gun Violence Crisis - Office of the Controller](#) Gun violence in Philadelphia is at epidemic levels. The violence does not affect everyone equally. “Predominantly Black neighborhoods in recent decades have averaged five times as many violent crimes as predominantly white communities, according to a [2016 study](#) by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.” [Gun violence is surging in cities, and hitting communities of color hardest](#) Too many acts of senseless violence are committed against innocent victims by neighbors, criminals and police. Homicides and police-involved shootings are happening with frequency, especially in urban areas. Biased policing victimizes innocent African American citizens in particular, often leading to fearful encounters with law enforcement, unjustified criminalization and damaged or lost lives.

**Watch:**

<https://6abc.com/philadelphia-gun-violence-shooting-kids-impacted-therapy-philly/11036269/> [6abc.com]

**Pray:**

Pray for the prophetic witness of the church and for its leaders. Pray that in the face of racial, tribal and ethnic oppression, we will have the courage to be voices crying in the wilderness.

**Act:**

Encourage churches to bear prophetic witness, finding ways to join the work of anti-racism, anti-discrimination and anti-xenophobia in their community. Encourage disciples to actively support, promote and serve with organizations and efforts that address racial disparities in education, immigration, criminal justice, etc. Learn about and support education and advocacy efforts to foster fair, unbiased law enforcement policies and practices involving racial-ethnic persons and communities.

Educate your community about the impact of gun violence. "A Memorial to the Lost® is a unique, visible education tool developed by Heeding God's call to honor victims of gun violence and their surviving families. T-shirts with names and dates of those murdered by gun violence during a previous year in a designated area are displayed in front of a congregation's building or in a public space where community members can experience in a tangible way the loss of life and disruption of lives that gun violence creates." <https://www.heedinggodscall.org/memorials-to-the-lost> Recently, Wayne UMC, St Matthew's UMC of Valley Forge and Swarthmore UMC all hosted the Memorial to the Lost and would be glad to share their experience and testimonies of impact with you. To learn more, fill out this form and a representative from Heeding God's Call will be in touch with you: <https://www.heedinggodscall.org/vendors>

## WEEK 3: "WE ACT" LUKE 3:7-18

### FOCUS: Native American Boarding Schools

"Bear fruits worthy of repentance." (verse 8a) In anticipation of the coming of Christ, we are not passive disciples, rather, we act in boldness as if Christ is already among us for, in fact, he is not only among us, he is in us. Our committed action in dismantling racism is a testament to our recognition of this fact.

**Learn:**

*"...I felt the cold blades of the scissors against my neck and heard them gnaw off one of my thick braids. Then I lost my spirit."* Zitkala-Sa

Pennsylvania is the home of the first off-reservation, government-run Indian boarding school based on the philosophy of "Kill the Indian; Save the man." The first class, made up of 182 children from the ages of 4 to 17 arrived in Carlisle at midnight on October 6, 1879. Teachers from the local Methodist, Quaker, and Catholic churches were involved in this effort. At boarding schools, Native students were denied their way of dress, their language and their culture. Sadly, the Carlisle became a model for other boarding schools across the nation.

<https://archives.dickinson.edu/our-online-projects/carlisle-indian-school-digital-resource-center>

Read more about Methodist involvement in boarding schools:

<https://um-insight.net/in-the-world/advocating-justice/pastor-reflects-on-abuses-at-indian-boarding-schools/>.

EPAUMC CONAM shares the following call to action for our churches: "We hope the church will be the place where people in our churches and wider communities can come to have an honest, solution-driven conversation about the impact of boarding schools. Along with healing support, political support such as writing letters in favor of positive legislation that includes Native communities, is critical." EPA CONAM 11/1/2021

**Watch:**

<https://www.thedenverchannel.com/news/national/historic-native-american-boarding-school-system-faces-new-scrutiny> [thedenverchannel.com]

**Pray:**

Pray for protection and encouragement for those who have been "voices in the wilderness," speaking and acting against racism. Offer prayers of inspiration and courage for those who wish to do more, that they may lead and take action. Offer

prayers of transformation for those who continue to support and/or perpetuate racism, tribalism or xenophobia in any way.

**Act:**

Encourage disciples to actively support, promote and serve with organizations and efforts that address racial disparities in education, immigration, criminal justice, etc.

Our EPA CONAM invites individuals and churches to learn more and become involved in education and advocacy. For more information, please contact Verna Colliver, secretary, EPA CONAM: [vmcolliver@gmail.com](mailto:vmcolliver@gmail.com)

## **WEEK 4: "WE REJOICE" Luke 1:39- 45, (46-55)**

### **FOCUS: Immigration Justice**

While the promise of an end to racism and all forms of oppression may seem like a hoped-for but not-yet realized promise (like an embryo in the womb, waiting to be born), we rejoice in the promises of God whose heart for the marginalized, excluded, violated and forgotten instructs us in the ways of justice and peace.

**Learn:**

The Justice for our Neighbors (JFON) network grew out of the United Methodist Committee on Relief's long commitment to refugees and immigrants. Since UMCOR's founding in 1940, refugee ministry has been at the heart of its work, guided by Christian values of hospitality to the stranger. Several pastors and attorneys of the United Methodist Church founded Just Neighbors in 1996 to develop a practical response to the legal challenges that low-income immigrants face in the United States. Justice For Our Neighbors of the Delaware Valley (Delaware Valley JFON) is a new non-profit immigration ministry located at Historic St. George's UMC in Philadelphia that serves migrant communities in Southeastern PA, Southern New Jersey, Delaware and the Eastern Shore of Maryland. <https://www.historicstgeorges.org/jfon>

**Watch:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1OGRBc2vLwQ>

**Pray:**

Offer prayers of thanksgiving for the gifts that come from those who have been marginalized. Offer prayers of commitment to be midwives of peace and justice so that safety, opportunity and freedom may be available to ALL people.

**Act:**

Encourage acts of celebration for the good things that are happening, for the places where people are working together for change, and for the people who are making a difference.

**Support the work of JFON:**

Volunteer translators, attorneys, and host churches are needed to support the work of JFON. To learn more, please contact Rev. Mark I. Salvacion, Esq., Executive Director of Delaware Valley JFON at [director@jfondv.org](mailto:director@jfondv.org) or by calling (973) 508-6308.

Prospective donors may support Delaware Valley JFON by writing a check payable to "Delaware Valley JFON" and sending the check to Historic St. George's UMC, 235 N. 4th Street, Philadelphia PA, 19106. Electronic donations may be made via the Delaware Valley JFON website at [jfondv.org/donate.html](http://jfondv.org/donate.html). Historic St. George's UMC serves as the fiscal sponsor for Delaware Valley JFON and all donations to Delaware Valley JFON are tax-exempt to the fullest extent allowed by law.

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