



Called To Live As God's People

A Study Guide to the Report of the Task Force to Study Reparations

“Careful study, prayer combined with a significant amount of time spent listening to various voices within and outside of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), leads to the conviction that sins have been committed against our sisters and brothers of Native American, African American, Asian American, Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Alaskan Native heritage. Presbyterians and other citizens of the United States have too frequently remained silent in the face of atrocities like the enslavement and colonization of African peoples, the destruction of First World or Native peoples, and the confiscation of lands that were already occupied by indigenous inhabitants. For example, in regard to American slavery, our Presbyterian ancestors both used Scripture to justify the enslavement of other human beings and were slaveholders themselves.

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About the Authors

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Preface

In 2001 the 213th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) acknowledged that the sin of racism has left a deep scar in the life of the church and our society. The commissioners called Presbyterians to make the eradication of racism a high priority, noting that the path to a new vision of a *Beloved Community* will be a long journey—requiring sacrifice, prayer, discernment, and worship-based action. To help equip Presbyterians for this task, the Assembly voted to “create a Task Force to study issues of reparations for African Americans, Native Americans, Alaskan Natives, Asian Americans, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and others who have experienced unjust treatment (*Minutes*, 2001, Part I, pp. 60, 334). This Task Force produced a report, which was approved by the 216th General Assembly in 2004 (*Minutes*, Part I, pp. 57, 133, 701).

The members of the Task Force to Study Reparations were Alice Nishi, co-chairperson; Lydia Hernandez, co-chairperson; Mark Lomax, writing team; Jewel Crawford, writing team; Luther Ivory, Alice Paul, and Ron Kernaghan. Mark Koenig, Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, provided staff support with assistance from Sherri Pettway, Office of the General Assembly Council, and Reggie Weaver, Presbyterian Peacemaking Program Intern.

The Task Force recognized that the work of reparations is a process. Key to that process is listening to one another’s stories. Thus the Task Force created opportunities to gather and listen to a diverse group of individuals. They met in Atlanta, Charleston, Seattle, and Pasadena. In each location, they spent a significant portion of their time listening. Task Force members provided listening workshops at the 2003 meeting of the National Black Presbyterian Caucus. They also travelled to Anchorage.

The purpose of this study guide is to acquaint people with the contents of the *Report of the Task Force to Study Reparations* and to help facilitate more extended discussion of the issues raised by the report. Each lesson is grounded in prayer and biblical study, reflecting the understanding of the Task Force that the process of reparations for the church is a spiritual one. This study guide is intended to be a beginning. Suggestions for further steps and additional resources are included, as it is the desire of the Task Force to engage Presbyterians in the active dismantling of racism in our church and in our society.

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Notes for Facilitator

This study guide is designed to acquaint participants with the contents of the *Report of the Task Force to Study Reparations*. It is not a comprehensive study of issues related to reparations or of the current public debate on reparations in the United States, although that is the context of the Task Force's work. It will be important to keep that in mind.

The lessons in this study guide correspond with the sections of the report. Each lesson is intended to last between 45 minutes and an hour. The more you can connect the Task Force report to local issues and concerns, the more meaningful the study will be for your group.

It will be helpful if participants read the entire paper prior to the study and then read the appropriate section of the paper ahead of time for each lesson. You may want to provide printed copies of the Task Force report in advance or direct participants to the PC(USA) website where they can find the report: www.pcusa.org/resource/report-task-force-reparations/.

The study guide seeks to reflect the spirit as well as the content of the Task Force report. One of the conclusions of the Task Force was that the process of reparations is ultimately a spiritual matter in the church's life. With this in mind, the guide suggests you open and close each lesson with prayer. Bible study is a central part of each lesson, reflecting the way in which the report addresses the issue of reparations as a theological and spiritual issue. The exception is the lesson that focuses on the Confession of Belhar. Due to the many scriptural references in the confession, a separate Bible study is not included.

Many of the Bible passages are drawn from the Task Force report. They provide biblical resources for the group's discussion and will help participants share in the theological reflection that informs the report.

Mutual Invitation is recommended as a tool for facilitating conversation throughout the study. We provide suggestions for its use in the first lesson and encourage you to use it throughout the study. Mutual Invitation facilitates the discipline of listening and helps ensure that all participants have an opportunity to share their reflections. You may want to use it for the first round of discussion either in the Bible study or in the discussion of the paper and then open up the conversation to a more free-flowing discussion. This process may feel awkward for some at first, so you might want to push people to try it two or three times before making any decisions about continuing to use it. After you have used Mutual Invitation once or twice for discussion, we encourage you to take some time to debrief the experience. Here are some questions you might use:

- Did you have experience using the Mutual Invitation process prior to this study?
- What was your experience using Mutual Invitation?
- What can be challenging about listening to others?
- In a group, are you likely to talk more than others or to be silent more than others?
- What did you enjoy or appreciate as you experienced Mutual Invitation?

Before the Study Begins

- Distribute copies of the report or tell participants how to find it online: www.pcusa.org/resource/report-task-force-reparations/. Encourage participants to read the entire report before the study begins and then to read specific sections of the paper for each lesson.
- Tailor the study to the needs and interests of your group. In each lesson there are discussion questions for the Scripture and the Task Force report. If your study time is limited to 45 minutes to an hour, there are probably far more questions than you will have time to discuss. Read them ahead of time and select the ones you think will prompt the best discussion for your group, or use them to frame your own questions.
- You will find suggestions for further study and/or ways to get engaged in your local community. These include identifying local organizations or speakers who might help your group explore the history of your community as it relates to the issues of racism, racial justice, and reparations. You may want to do some research ahead of time to identify local resources to share with your group.
- Consider inviting a speaker or showing one of the films identified in the resource list as a way to generate interest and promote the study of the Task Force report.

Lesson 1: Introduction

Goals for Lesson

- Create an environment for constructive dialogue through community building
- Establish a group covenant for discussion to be used throughout the study
- Introduce the *Report of the Task Force to Study Reparations*

Notes for Facilitator

The focus for this lesson is on establishing a foundation for an in-depth study of the Task Force report. The issue of reparations is controversial for many, and any discussion of issues related to racial justice and the racial history of our nation can elicit strong feelings. For these reasons, it will be important to take time to build relationships among the participants, establish ground rules for the group, and lay the foundation for an open and honest discussion of the Task Force report and the issue of reparations.

Most of this lesson will be used for introductions and creation of a group covenant. Giving instructions for Mutual Invitation will also take time. Therefore, the content from the Task Force report introduced in this lesson is limited. Lesson 2 will focus on a fuller exploration of the introduction of the report, so do not feel you need to cover it all in this lesson.

Before You Begin

Encourage participants to read the Task Force report in its entirety, and then remind them to read the specific section under discussion for each lesson. For this lesson, ask participants to read the introduction to the Task Force report.

Open with Prayer

Creating God, you have taken great care to make each of us in your image. May our discussion today be guided by that same care for one another. Keep our hearts and minds open to recognizing your image in one another. Amen.

Provide an Overview of Study

Describe the study to the participants. Use or adapt these words:

The goal of this study is to explore the report of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s Task Force to Study Reparations as a way to begin an exploration of the issue of reparations. The report was adopted by the 216th General Assembly (2004).

Lesson 1 introduces the study. Lessons 2 through 6 each focus on one section of the paper. The last lesson considers the Confession of Belhar, which the report recommended to Presbyterians for study.

Introduction

The following activity adapts an exercise called Conocimientos. This exercise comes from the work of Eric H. F. Law and is designed to allow people to introduce themselves in a more personal manner. It uses storytelling to enable participants to share about themselves with a greater degree of self-disclosure, but within comfortable limits that each individual sets. We have modified it to reflect the subject of this study and to shorten the time required for the exercise. The subject matter of the questions will provide a sense of what people know about reparations and where the group is entering the discussion. If you have a larger group and significant time constraints, you might just use questions “a”, “c” and “d”. It often helps people to stay within the time limit if they have written down some notes for their response. A handout is provided in Appendix A for this purpose.

Instructions

1. Explain to the participants that you are asking them to introduce themselves using four questions.
2. Distribute the handout from Appendix A that contains the questions and invite the participants to write down their responses. Allow two to four minutes.
3. If time is a concern, you may give the participants a time limit for their responses. Two to three minutes per person is generally enough.
4. Model what you want the participants to do by introducing yourself first. Watch the time!
5. You may want to use Mutual Invitation for the introductions. Summarize the process as described in Appendix B. Encourage the participants *not* to use the option to pass during the introductions. Model what you want the participants to do by introducing yourself first. When you finish, invite someone in the group to share. Avoid inviting the person sitting next to you and reinforcing the tendency to “go around the circle.”
6. The questions are:
 - a. What is your name?
 - b. What is a story about your name?
 - c. What does the term “reparations” mean to you?
 - d. What do you know about conversations concerning reparations in the United States today?

Establish a Group Covenant

The subject of reparations can be controversial. The history uncovered in this discussion can evoke strong emotions. Establishing a group covenant will help set the foundation for a learning conversation and provide an opportunity to begin building relationships of trust within the group. Consider using *Seeking to Be Faithful Together: Guidelines for Presbyterians During Times of Disagreement*, found in Appendix C, as the covenant. Read through the guidelines and invite the participants to affirm them as the Group Covenant. If the group writes its own covenant, you may want to reproduce it as a handout or save it on large newsprint that can be posted for subsequent lessons. A PowerPoint slide with the covenant could also be created.

Bible Study

Invite a participant to read Genesis 1:26–27.

Genesis 1:26–27

Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think the Task Force chose this passage to begin their report?
2. What does the use of this passage suggest is the foundation for a discussion of reparations?

Explore the *Report of the Task Force to Study Reparations*

Invite a participant to read the following excerpt from the introduction of the report:

“Reparation is a process of remembering, restoring, repairing, and redressing injustices for the purpose of reconciliation and human restitution. For Christians, this is a particularly appropriate ministry. Reparations involve an acknowledgement of beneficial gains at the expense of others or harm done to others and includes confession, repentance, forgiveness, and renewal.” (*Report of the Task Force to Study Reparations*, p.10)

Discussion Questions

1. The Task Force report provides a theological definition of reparation. How does this compare/contrast with your own understanding or with definitions you are familiar with from other contexts?
2. How does the definition of reparation in the report reflect a biblical understanding of community?
3. What is the significance of having a conversation about reparations in a Christian community?

Close with Prayer

God, we thank you for your vision of community for our lives. We give thanks that in community your spirit is always being revealed to us. May we continue to challenge and love one another in this community here and in the communities we go out into, so that in doing so, we might always be growing into your vision of beloved community. Amen.

Preparation for the Next Lesson

Invite the participants to read the introduction of the *Report of the Task Force to Study Reparations*.

Lesson 2: Reparations

Goals for Lesson

- Introduce participants to the introduction of the Report of the *Task Force to Study Reparations*
- Explore the Task Force's definition of reparations and its significance for a Christian understanding of community

Notes for Facilitator

As you begin this lesson, do not allow conversation to focus on the history of a particular community. There will be an opportunity for this in later lessons. The focus for this lesson is to define reparations and frame the conversation theologically. If there is a strong interest, you may want to plan a separate class session on the history of a particular group or groups in your community as an enrichment or follow-up to Lesson 3: Remember and Repent.

Key Theological Concepts

- The biblical understanding of community is rooted in God's call to be a covenant people and built through life-affirming relationships with God and each other.
- Reparations, defined theologically, is grounded in an understanding that human beings are created to be in relationship with one another. The question of reparations arises where relationships have been broken, at the particular expense of one group.

Open with Prayer

Gracious God, you have created the peoples of the earth to be one family, and in your reconciling love you overcome all barriers between sisters and brothers, breaking down every form of discrimination that separates and alienates one from another. Teach us to love our neighbor so that we might fully participate in your reconciling love. Amen.

(This prayer draws on The Confession of 1967, 9.44.)

Welcome New Members

Briefly Review the Group Covenant

Bible Study

Invite a participant to read Acts 2:44–47.

Acts 2: 44–47

All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Discussion Questions

1. Acts 2 describes the experience of community for this first generation of Christians. How does it help us define “community” for our contemporary society?
2. Thinking about this passage and the verses from Genesis we read last week, how do these two passages help us frame the question of reparations theologically?

Explore the *Report of the Task Force to Study Reparations*

Invite a participant to read the following excerpts from the introduction of the report:

“From a Christian perspective, reparations is not so much about assigning blame to individuals or groups of people as it is about recognizing that ‘we the people,’ citizens of the United States, are sometimes found culpable for the harm done to others because of our government’s laws and policies and our social practices. It is for those times that we must, as a nation and as a church, repent of our sins against our sisters and brothers, diligently attempt to repair any breach in relationship that has been caused, and do our best to redress any and all injustices visited upon innocent people.” (*Report of the Task Force to Study Reparations*, p. 10)

“Careful study, prayer combined with a significant amount of time spent listening to various voices within and outside of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), leads to the conviction that sins have been committed against our sisters and brothers of Native American, African American, Asian American, Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Alaskan Native heritage. Presbyterians and other citizens of the United States have too frequently remained silent in the face of atrocities like the enslavement and colonization of African peoples, the destruction of First World or Native peoples, and the confiscation of lands that were already occupied by indigenous inhabitants. For example, in regard to American slavery, our Presbyterian ancestors both used Scripture to justify the enslavement of other human beings and were slaveholders themselves.

“The point is not to indict any particular group of people for such atrocities. Rather, as members of the same body, the body of Christ, we must all bear equal responsibility for the sins of our past. The Scriptures call us to bear one another’s burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2, NRSV).” (*Report of the Task Force to Study Reparations*, p. 10)

Discussion Questions

1. What do you believe is the significance of having this conversation in Christian community?
2. What does it mean to “bear one another’s burdens” (Gal. 6:2) in community?
3. What is the understanding of sin reflected in the Task Force’s definition of reparations?
4. Does it make a difference for you to approach the question of reparations as a person of faith?
5. How does the Task Force’s definition of reparations compare/contrast with your own understanding of reparations or with definitions you are familiar with from other contexts?

Note for Facilitator: Consider using Mutual Invitation for an initial round of discussion.

Close with Prayer

Gracious God, you create us and love us; you make us to live together in a community. We thank you for all your children who have been filled with your vision for our lives and who have worked to bring your vision into reality. Fill us with your vision. Guide us to live by your vision, working to build the beloved community where everyone is welcomed, all are valued, power is shared, privilege is no more, and all your children know wholeness and well-being. Through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

Preparation for the Next Lesson

Invite the participants to read “II. Remember” of the *Report of the Task Force to Study Reparations*.

Lesson 3: Remember and Repent

Goals for Lesson

- Introduce participants to “II. Remember” of the *Report of the Task Force to Study Reparations*
- Discuss remembering and repentance as acts of justice and repair

Key Theological Concepts

- God’s covenant extends to all of creation. When we break covenant with our neighbor, we also break covenant with God.
- In the context of the reparations process, repentance and remembrance are essential to maintaining a community of justice and equity.

Open with Prayer

Guiding Spirit, grant us courage to live as your people. May we be encouraged by the presence of your justice and mercy in this world to do good for your people. Strengthen us in community to do your will. Amen.

Welcome New Members

Briefly Review the Group Covenant

Bible Study

Invite a participant to read Genesis 9:8–17.

Genesis 9: 8–17

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, “As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.” God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.” God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.”

Discussion Questions

1. God's covenant with Noah has been established for all people, for all creation, and for all time. God's covenant is with a community, not individuals. What are some examples of how we fail to live fully into this covenant?
2. After the flood, God set a bow in the clouds as a sign of the covenant. What signs of God's covenant can you see today?
3. What are the most significant components of covenant for you? What covenants are you a part of? Can covenants come to an end?
4. What roles do "remembering" and "repenting" play in maintaining a covenant relationship with God? With each other?
5. What is the significance of individual confession to covenant relationships? Corporate confession?

Explore the *Report of the Task Force to Study Reparations*

Invite a participant to read the following excerpt from "II. Remember" of the report:

"We are called by God through Jesus the Christ to remember our entire history. As we remember our sins of the past, we are compelled to confess our sins and to repent for those things we have done, or left undone, that have caused injury to innocent peoples. Remembering is a form of confession, and it is the first step in the process of reparations." (*Report of the Task Force to Study Reparations*, pp. 12–13)

Discussion Questions

1. Theologian James Cone observes that "there can be no justice without memory." Do you agree? Why or why not?
2. What are the risks and what are the costs of not remembering the sins of our past as a community of faith?
3. What unjust laws, policies, or social practices were enacted in your community in the past?
4. What do you know about the history of the area where you live? Can you recall particular harms to groups of people in your area that have happened in the past or that remain present today? Are there any lasting effects of these harms?

Close with Prayer

Gracious God, we give thanks that in our confession you grant us forgiveness. May we have the grace and mercy to do the same for our neighbors. Grant us a spirit of truth to confess where we have fallen short of your vision for our lives together and where we have harmed one another, and then grant us the spirit of your unending love to share with one another in hope and peace. We know that in you all relationships may be restored to wholeness and life. Amen.

Preparation for the Next Lesson

Invite participants to read “III. Repair and Restore” of the *Report of the Task Force to Study Reparations*.

Exploring History: For Further Study

What do you know about the history of the place and the community where you live? What don't you know? Whose story has not been told? Consider organizing an additional meeting time to explore the history of your community. Perhaps the group might want to meet midweek to share a meal, watch a video together, and have a conversation. Other options include: bringing in a guest speaker—a member of the congregation, a sister church, or a community group to tell their story; visiting a museum or historical site; identifying a book to read together. Members of the group might want to do some research and plan another study series to follow this study.

Lesson 4: Repair and Restore

Goals for Lesson

- Introduce participants to “III. Repair and Restore” of the *Report of the Task Force to Study Reparations*
- Explore “repair” and “restore” as functions of community rather than individual compensation

Notes for Facilitator

This lesson is a good point at which to introduce a local perspective and opportunities for local engagement. If a participant is a history buff, you might invite that person to research local history and make a presentation. Consider inviting a speaker to share about the work of local grassroots organizations that might be described as working to “repair and restore” through seeking to create equity by addressing some form or root cause of socioeconomic disparity.

Key Theological Concept

- Jesus announces his mission as restoring God’s intended shalom in community.

Open with Prayer

We thank you, God, for you are good. Your steadfast love endures forever. We thank you, God, for your mighty deeds. You inspire us to observe justice and do righteousness. We thank you, God, for your saving grace. You guide us as we live. We thank you, God, for your care. You hold us from everlasting to everlasting. Blessed be your name. And let all the people say, “Amen.”

(This prayer is based on Psalm 106:1–3.)

Welcome New Members

Briefly Review the Group Covenant

Bible Study

Invite a participant to read Isaiah 61:1–4.

Isaiah 61:1–4

The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor; and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to provide for those who mourn in Zion—to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, to display his glory. They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations.

Invite a participant to read Luke 4:16–21.

Luke 4:16–21

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

Discussion Questions

1. As you read the two passages, what image or phrase stands out for you? What does that image or phrase suggest for your discipleship?
2. Where in your community have you witnessed the realities of captives, the blind, and the oppressed?
3. Where have you been witness to captives being released, the blind receiving sight, and the oppressed going free?
4. How do you think the church should respond to Jesus’ announcement of his ministry in Luke?
5. How do these passages define “justice”? What might it look like to live according to that understanding of justice?

Explore the *Report of the Task Force to Study Reparations*

Invite a participant to read the following excerpts from “III. Repair and Restore” of the report.

“The next steps in the reparation process involve repairing the breach caused by the sinful behaviors of the past and making every effort to restore the dignity and the material losses of those who have been harmed.

“A noteworthy example of reparation and restoration was taken in Durban, South Africa, during the United Nations World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance in September 2001. Members of the human family from all over the world were present, including a delegation from the PC(USA) and other Presbyterians. The report from that delegation, approved by the 214th General Assembly (2002), recommended that Presbyterians study the Declaration and Programme of Action from this conference (*Minutes*, 2002, Part I, pp. 55–56, 711–26). This declaration articulated the complexity of the problem of race in the world. A portion of that declaration, in the section entitled “Source, causes, forms and contemporary manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance” is pertinent to the notions of repairing and restoring breaches in human relationships that were formed as a consequence of the oppression and exploitation of certain groups of people. It reads:

We acknowledge that slavery and the slave trade, including the transatlantic slave trade, were appalling tragedies in the history of humanity not only because of their abhorrent barbarism but also in terms of their magnitude, organized nature and especially their negation of the essence of the victims, and further acknowledge that slavery and the slave trade are a crime against humanity and should always have been so, especially the transatlantic slave trade and are among the major sources and manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and that the Africans and people of African descent, Asians and people of Asian descent and indigenous peoples were victims of these acts and continue to be victims of their consequences. We recognize that colonialism has led to racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and that Africans and people of African descent, and people of Asian descent and indigenous peoples were victims of colonialism and continue to be victims of its consequences. We acknowledge the suffering caused by colonialism and affirm that, wherever and whenever it occurred, it must be condemned and its reoccurrence prevented. We further regret that the effects and persistence of these structures and practices have been among the factors contributing to lasting social and economic inequalities in many parts of the world today.¹

“This part of the United Nation’s declaration from the conference in Durban is important because it confesses harms done to oppressed peoples, acknowledges that harms done in the past impact the present, and is inclusive of a broad array of the world’s people. . . . Relationships remain broken. Suspicion and distrust continue to characterize the interaction between the disparate groups of people in the church and the society.

“Another important aspect of reparation and restoration is forgiveness. Once there is a sincere acknowledgment and confession of offenses, then injured persons can begin the process of forgiving and broken relationships can begin to mend. It is indeed a process—one that will take time to complete. Attending elements in this process are efforts to rectify the wrongdoing through tangible acts designed to reverse the injustices imposed on innocent people.” (*Report of the Task Force to Study Reparations*, p. 14)

Discussion Questions

1. Where do you see evidence of relationships that remain broken in your congregation? In your mid-council or the denomination? In your community? In the larger society?
2. Where do you see “harms done in the past” that “impact the present”?
3. The report cites the UN World Conference against Racism in 2001. How do you see the experience of racism, racial discrimination, and xenophobia in the United States as similar or different from other parts of the world?
4. The report states that forgiveness is an important facet of the process or reparation and restoration. Where have you seen forgiveness at work? Can you think of situations where a public declaration of apology or forgiveness might contribute to healing or restoring relationships?
5. What do you see as similarities or differences between Jesus’ announcement of his ministry and proposals for reparations in the United States? What do you see as differences?

Close with Prayer

O God, we give thanks that you are a God of justice and mercy. We strive to live as Jesus taught, loving you and loving our neighbor. Equip us in your Spirit that we might be a witness to your reconciling love in our families, our church, and our community. Amen.

Preparation for the Next Lesson

Invite the participants to read “IV. Reconciliation” of the *Report of the Task Force to Study Reparations*.

Invite the participants to read the article “Agents of reconciliation: PC(USA) apologizes to Alaska Natives for ‘assimilation’ policy,” found at www.pcusa.org/news/2012/4/11/agents-reconciliation. As an alternative, download the story and make copies for the participants.

Lesson 5: Reconciliation

Goal for Lesson

- Introduce participants to “IV. Reconciliation” of the *Report of the Task Force to Study Reparations*

Key Theological Concept

- Our faith as Christians is grounded in our own reconciliation with God in Christ. God calls us to embody God’s reconciling love in society as our witness to God—what God has done for us is what God desires for all of the human family and creation.

Open with Prayer

O God, you have claimed us as your own and we are assured of your love for each of us. Give us hearts and minds for understanding how we might more fully live in renewed relationships with one another. May we always remain open to your transforming presence. Amen.

Welcome New Members

Briefly Review the Group Covenant

Bible Study

Invite a participant to read 2 Chronicles 7:14 and Matthew 5:23–24.

2 Chronicles 7:14

“If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”

Matthew 5:23–24

“So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.”

Discussion Questions

1. What does reconciliation mean? When have you experienced reconciliation? When have you witnessed reconciliation?
2. How does redressing past wrongs play a part in reconciliation?
3. What role does the church have in redressing past wrongs? In the church? In the community? In our society?

4. How do the passages from 2 Chronicles and Matthew inform an understanding of reconciliation?
5. What do you think is the significance of being reconciled to your sister or brother before offering your gift to God?

Explore the *Report of the Task Force to Study Reparations*

Invite a participant to read the following excerpt from “IV. Reconciliation” of the report:

“We cannot afford to live, work and worship in denial of our collective and historic sinfulness against other human beings. We must boldly demonstrate the willingness to re-enter relationships with people who have been forced to and are presently living in the margins of American society by forthrightly doing our part to welcome them back to the center of the body politic. As a church we have yet to act forthrightly to redress these wrongs.” (*Report of the Task Force to Study Reparations*, p. 18)

Discussion Questions

1. What wrongs related to racial justice remain to be redressed in our society?
2. Are there wrongs related to racial justice that the church needs to address in our society? In the area served by your mid-council? In the area served by your congregation?
3. In what ways might your community be able to engage in reconciliation for such past wrongs?
4. Do you believe that the task of racial reconciliation is complete in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)? Why or why not? In either case, what next steps do we need to take in regard to racial reconciliation?
5. Do you believe that the task of racial reconciliation is complete in the United States? Why or why not? In either case, what next steps do we need to take in regard to racial reconciliation?

Close with Prayer

God of transformation, make us a new creation. May the power of your grace and forgiveness grant us new possibilities for your world and our community. May our desire to repair every breach be ever strengthened in you. Amen.

Preparation for the Next Lesson

Invite the participants to read “V. Conclusion” of the *Report of the Task Force to Study Reparations*.

Invite the participants to read the recommendations section of the *Report of the Task Force to Study Reparations*. This is the section that appears in bold at the beginning of the report.

Lesson 6: Redress

Goals for Lesson

- Introduce participants to “V. Conclusion” of the *Report of the Task Force to Study Reparations*
- Consider ways that participants might get involved in the issues related to reparations, either individually or as a group

Note for Facilitator

Make copies of the recommendations found at the beginning of the *Report of the Task Force to Study Reparations* for the participants.

Key Theological Concepts

- Sin has a corporate dimension as structures, institutions, systems, and agencies exploit, oppress, and violate our relationships with one another and with God.
- God sent Jesus Christ to reconcile humanity to God and one another.
- When we remember our past sins, confess, repent, and seek to restore those whom we have intentionally or unintentionally harmed, reconciliation is possible and brings a renewal of our relationships with God and one another.

Open with Prayer

God of righteousness, teach us to weep with those who mourn, to be humble in the face of our own privilege, to hunger and thirst for righteousness, that we might be a light to the world. Amen.

Welcome New Members

Briefly Review the Group Covenant

Bible Study

Invite a participant to read Leviticus 6:1–5.

Leviticus 6:1–5

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: When any of you sin and commit a trespass against the LORD by deceiving a neighbor in a matter of a deposit or a pledge, or by robbery, or if you have defrauded a neighbor, or have found something lost and lied about it—if you swear falsely regarding any of the various things that one may do and sin thereby—when you have sinned and realize your guilt, and would restore what you took by robbery or by fraud or the deposit that was committed to you, or the lost thing that you found, or anything else about which you have sworn falsely, you shall repay the principal amount and shall add one-fifth to it. You shall pay it to its owner when you realize your guilt.

Invite a participant to read Luke 19:1–10.

Luke 19:1–10

He entered Jericho and was passing through it. A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was rich. He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today.” So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. All who saw it began to grumble and said, “He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner.” Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, “Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.” Then Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.”

Discussion Questions

1. Why were reparations needed in the instance of Zacchaeus? What do you think his actions accomplished?
2. Do you think Zacchaeus’ actions reflect the standard set in Leviticus?
3. Do you think Zacchaeus might have found reconciliation in his community if he repented of his actions but did not make compensation to those he defrauded? Why or why not?
4. How do these passages inform your understanding of reparations?
5. What does the story of Zacchaeus suggest is necessary for forgiveness?
6. What makes reconciliation possible?

Explore the *Report of the Task Force to Study Reparations*

Invite a participant to read the following excerpts from “IV. Conclusion” of the report:

“Our worship and enjoyment of God is the tie that binds us together with God, one another, and God’s whole creation. However, our sin against God, one another, and God’s creation has rendered us spiritually broken and relationally disconnected from God, our neighbors, and the world in which we live.

“Sinfulness against God extends beyond our personal relationships with God and one another. Evil resides in systems, structures, institutions, and agencies, and therefore impacts and involves whole communities. To the extent that we, believers in God through Christ Jesus, support, participate in, and invest in such systems, structures, institutions, and agencies, we sin against God as well as those people who are exploited and oppressed by those entities. We sin collectively, as a community of faith. It is therefore also as a community of faith that we must acknowledge and confess our sin, repent, and engage in acts of restoration.” (*Report of the Task Force to Study Reparations*, p. 20)

“Our Lord, Christ Jesus, taught us to do everything in our power to repair broken relationships even when we suspect that our sisters and brothers have something against us (Matt. 5:23–24, NRSV). This requires more than a little humility. Yet by God’s grace we possess the capacity to do it by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.” (*Report of the Task Force to Study Reparations*, p. 20)

“When we remember our past sins, confess, repent, and do all we can to restore those whom we have intentionally or unintentionally harmed, reconciliation is possible. It is then that a renewal in our relationship with God and fellow human beings can begin.”
(*Report of the Task Force to Study Reparations*, p. 20)

Discussion Questions

1. What does the report suggest is necessary to bring reconciliation?
2. How might you and your community participate in the healing process of reconciliation?
3. In what ways is Christian community helpful in making us more aware of corporate sin and areas that need repentance and restoration?
4. How might your community encourage one another in and be witnesses to be “diligent in the renewal of life”?
5. Review the recommendations adopted by the General Assembly, which are listed at the beginning of the Task Force report. Are there any actions suggested that you might take as a community? As individuals?

Close with Prayer

In a broken and fearful world, O God, grant that your Spirit give us courage
to pray without ceasing,
to witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior,
to unmask idolatries in church and culture,
to hear the voices of peoples long silenced,
and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace. Amen.

(This prayer is based on A Brief Statement of Faith, lines 65–71.)

Preparation for the Next Lesson

Invite the participants to read the Confession of Belhar. The confession is found on pages 2–6 of the *Report of the Task Force to Study Reparations*. It is also available for download at www.pcusa.org/resource/belhar-confession/.

Lesson 7: Renewal

Introducing the Confession of Belhar

Goal for Lesson

- Introduce participants to the Confession of Belhar

Notes for Facilitator

This lesson is formatted differently than the other six. Because of the extensive references to Scripture in the Confession of Belhar, we suggest that you ask participants to reflect on scriptural references they recognize and find meaningful in the confession rather than studying a specific Bible passage.

Open with Prayer

God of the ages, you call the church to keep watch in the world and to discern the signs of the times. Grant us the wisdom the Spirit bestows, that with courage we may proclaim your prophetic word and complete the work you have set before us; through your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

(*The Book of Common Worship*, p. 373, no. 3)

Welcome New Members

Briefly Review the Group Covenant

Introduce the Confession of Belhar

Use the following passage from *A Study of the Belhar Confession and its Accompanying Letter*, written by Eunice T. McGarrahan and published by the Office of Theology and Worship of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), to introduce the Confession of Belhar. For more background, consult the study at www.pcusa.org/resource/belhar-confession-study-guide/.

“The Belhar Confession emerged out of the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. In the nineteenth century the Dutch Reformed Church decided to separate all non-white members into the Dutch Reformed Mission Church. Eventually, as Grand Apartheid was implemented in the middle of the twentieth century and separate homelands were established this Mission Church became three: The Dutch Reformed Mission Church (the *coloured* church), the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (the *black* church), and the Indian Reformed Church in South Africa (the *Indian* church).² The Belhar Confession was

2. In South Africa, the term black is sometimes used broadly to refer to all non-white persons (black, coloured, and Indian) and other times to refer more specifically to those of sub-Saharan ancestry. Coloured persons have ancestry from Indonesia, Malaysia, India, Holland, England, France, and sub-Saharan Africa—the term brown is used as well. Indians trace their ancestry to the Indian sub-continent. White refers to persons of Northern European ancestry, primarily Dutch, English, and French.

originally a product of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church as it protested the sin of apartheid. Just a few years later it became the confession of the Uniting Reformed Church, the reunion of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church and the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa. It is a product of a conversation between the Theological Declaration of Barmen and the unjust realities of South Africa. Clearly, Belhar is a specific act of confession that emerged out of a specific context—a context that is non-European and non-North American.”

Tell the participants that the 219th General Assembly (2010) recommended the inclusion of the Confession of Belhar in *The Book of Confessions* of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and sent that proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes. The vote on including the Confession of Belhar was 108 affirmative votes and 63 negative votes. Amendments to *The Book of Confessions* require the affirmative votes of two-thirds of the presbyteries (in this instance 116 affirmative votes). As a result, the proposal to add the Confession of Belhar failed.

Exploring the Confession of Belhar

Read the Confession of Belhar out loud. Because of its length, it is best read responsively. You may alternate between yourself as leader and the class, or divide the class into two, three, or four groups, and read the paragraphs responsively.

After the reading, note that the Confession of Belhar includes many scriptural references. Use these questions to explore the use of Scripture in the confession:

1. Are there particular Scripture references that you recognize in the Confession of Belhar?
2. Is there one that is particularly significant or meaningful for you?
3. Does the confession challenge your understanding of Scripture? In what way?

Use these questions to guide further discussion on the Confession of Belhar:

1. What passage in the confession stands out for you? Why?
2. The Confession of Belhar challenges the church to confront its own participation in racism. Where do you see evidence of racism or the legacy of racism present in the church today?
3. One reason given to include the Confession of Belhar in *The Book of Confessions* is that it would add the voice of the church in the global South. What does the Confession of Belhar say to the church in the United States as a partner in the global Christian community? What challenges does it pose?
4. What does the Confession of Belhar contribute to the discussion of reparations in the United States?
5. The General Assembly amended the original report from the Task Force to Study Reparations by removing a recommendation that would have directed the PC(USA) to write a new confession that would speak directly to the church’s own complicity the history of racism in the United States. Do you think the PC(USA) needs to write such a confession? Why or why not?

Close with the Lord’s Prayer

Appendix A

Conocimientos

Knowing ourselves, knowing one another

a. What is your name?

b. What is a story about your name?

c. What does the term “reparations” mean to you?

d. What do you know about conversations concerning reparations in the United States today?

Conocer: to know; knowledge gained through experience; may imply familiarity or close acquaintance with another

Appendix B

Mutual Invitation

A process designed by Eric H. F. Law

described in *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb*: St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1993

Mutual Invitation is a process for discussion designed to ensure that everyone who wants to share has the opportunity to speak. It proceeds in the following way:

The leader or a designated person shares first. After that person has spoken, she or he invites by name another person to share. This does not need to be the person beside the speaker.

The person who has been invited has three options:

- a) to speak and then invite the next speaker;
- b) to pass for now and then invite the next speaker; or
- c) to pass and then invite the next speaker.

The group should be sure to offer a second opportunity to speak for any participant who “passes for now.” Passing indicates the participant does not want to respond to the question.

The process works best with groups of between four and fifteen people. It may be fairly awkward at first and may require persistence.

Mutual Invitation addresses differences in the perceptions of personal power among participants. Some people will be eager for their turn, while others will be reluctant to speak when invited. If someone speaks very briefly and forgets to invite the next speaker, do not make the invitation for him or her. The leader should simply point out that the person has the privilege to invite the next speaker. This is especially important when someone passes. By ensuring that this person still has the privilege to invite, that person is affirmed and valued independent of their verbal input.

Mutual Invitation provides a means of sharing power in groups where participants have different perceptions of their personal power and enables the entire group to take responsibility for making sure that all participants have an opportunity to speak. People who perceive themselves as powerful are asked to refrain from using their power freely. They are asked to wait their turn. They are asked to listen to others and not worry about controlling and directing the movement of the group. They are asked to exercise humility. But they are also given their share of time and space to exercise power and so maintain their sense of power. Doing this consistently allows them to become more sensitive to others in the group who might not have as strong a sense of power. This helps them appreciate others based on what they have to share and contribute to the group. Mutual Invitation provides a structured way for people who do not consider themselves to be as powerful to participate.

Mutual Invitation may be used in a variety of settings to facilitate discussion. It may be used for an entire discussion or it may be used for one round of discussion when a new topic is introduced and then continue the discussion in a more free-flowing manner. When a new topic is introduced, the person who was invited last on the previous topic may be asked to go first on the new topic

Appendix C

Seeking to Be Faithful Together: *Guidelines for Presbyterians During Times of Disagreement*

In a spirit of trust and love, we promise we will . . .

- **Treat each other respectfully so as to build trust, believing that we all desire to be faithful to Jesus the Christ.**
 - We will keep our conversations and communications open for candid and forthright exchange.
 - We will not ask questions or make statements in a way which will intimidate or judge others.
- **Learn about various positions on the topic of disagreement.**
- **State what we think we heard and ask for clarification before responding, in an effort to be sure we understand each other.**
- **Share our concerns directly with individuals or groups with whom we have disagreements in a spirit of love and respect in keeping with Jesus' teachings.**
- **Focus on ideas and suggestions instead of questioning people's motives, intelligence or integrity.**
 - We will not engage in name-calling or labeling of others prior to, during, or following the discussion.
- **Share our personal experiences about the subject of disagreement so that others may more fully understand our concerns.**
- **Indicate where we agree with those of other viewpoints as well as where we disagree.**
- **Seek to stay in community with each other though the discussion may be vigorous and full of tension.**
 - We will be ready to forgive and be forgiven.
- **Follow these additional guidelines when we meet in decision-making bodies:**
 - urge persons of various points of view to speak and promise to listen to these positions seriously;
 - seek conclusions informed by our points of agreement;
 - be sensitive to the feelings and concerns of those who do not agree with the majority and respect their rights of conscience;
 - abide by the decision of the majority, and if we disagree with it and wish to change it, work for that change in ways which are consistent with these Guidelines.
- **Include our disagreement in our prayers, not praying for the triumph of our viewpoints, but seeking God's grace to listen attentively, to speak clearly, and to remain open to the vision God holds for us all.**

Adopted by the 204th General Assembly (1992) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) for use by sessions and congregations

Appendix D

Resources for Further Study

Films and Television

American Experience: A Class Apart. Dir. Peter Miller and Carlos Sandoval. PBS Home Video, 2009.

American Experience: Simple Justice. Dir. Helaine Head. PBS Home Video, 1993.

The Apology. Dir. Sarah Spillane. Milko Productions, 2008.

Farewell to Manzanar. Dir. John Korty. Korty Films, 1976.

Gran Torino. Dir. Clint Eastwood. Matten Productions, 2008.

Greensboro: Closer to the Truth. Dir. Adam Zucker. Longnook Pictures, 2007.

The Mission. Dir. Roland Joffé. Warner Bros. Pictures, 1986.

Seguin. Dir. Jesus Salvador Trevino. La Historia Productions, 1982.

Traces of the Trade: A Story from the Deep North. Dir. Katrina Browne. Ebb Pod Productions, 2008.

The Tuskegee Airmen. Dir. Robert Markowitz. Home Box Office, 1995.

The Visitor. Dir. Tom McCarthy. Groundswell Productions, 2008.

PC(USA) Web Pages

Advisory Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns: gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/acrec

Presbyterian Peacemaking Program: gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/peacemaking

Presbyterian Racial Justice Ministries: gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/racialjustice

Presbyterian Women's work for Justice and Peace: gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/pw/justice

Other Web Sites

Congressman John Conyers, Jr.: www.johnconyers.com/issues/reparations

Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission: www.greensborotrc.org

National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation: www.ncdd.org

The Tulsa Reparations Coalition: www.tulsareparations.org

Books

Harvey, Jennifer et al. *Disrupting White Supremacy from Within*. Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2004.

Horowitz, David. *Uncivil Wars: The Controversy over Reparations for Slavery*. San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2002.

Leary, Joy Degruy. *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing*. Milwaukie, OR: Uptone Press, 2005.

McGarrahan, Eunice T. *A Study of the Belhar Confession and its Accompanying Letter*. Louisville, KY: Office of Theology and Worship, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 2008. Available at www.pcusa.org/resource/belhar-confession-study-guide.

Plummer, Deborah L., *Racing Across the Lines: Changing Race Relations Through Friendship*. Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2004.

Shriver, Donald W. *An Ethic For Enemies: Forgiveness in Politics*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Shriver, Donald W. *Honest Patriots: Loving a Country Enough to Remember Its Misdeeds*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Takaki, Ronald. *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America*, rev. ed. Boston, MA: Back Bay Books, 2008.

Winbush, Raymond, ed. *Should America Pay? Slavery and the Raging Debate on Reparations*. New York, NY: Amistad Press, 2003.



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