



Struggling with our stories of race

Journal and Exploration Guide

WELCOME

Someone recently noted that this pandemic has created space/opportunity for us to face the realities of racism in a way not seen in this nation since the Civil Rights movement. I am grateful to see so many congregations and ministries already engaging intentionally in anti-racism learning and action. My hope is that we will all heed the call of the Spirit to participate in this *kairotic* moment and movement. For many of us, this work means *unlearning* many assumptions, patterns, and narratives that have shaped our vision of “truth” and “reality” with regards to racism.

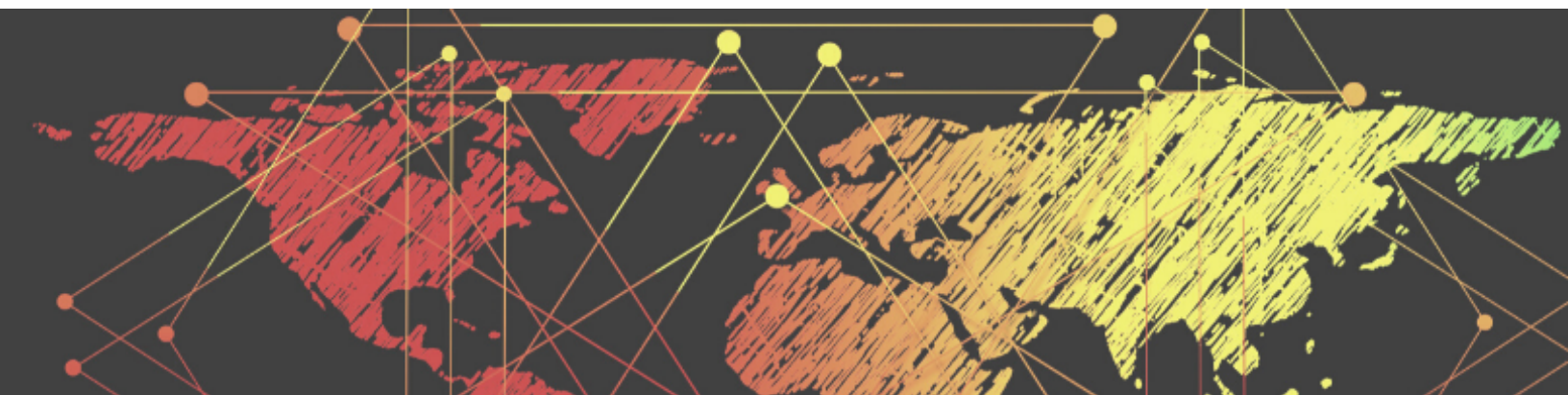
As the ELCA, we have made an explicit commitment across all expressions of our church to act together to end racism and to foster healing for all. The commitment to work for justice and peace is named in our baptismal covenant even as it is embedded in the ordination vows of every rostered minister. I am grateful that you as members of the Rocky Mountain Synod have made the commitment to join us in this Lenten journey. This work is central to our work of *church becoming*.

Welcome to a journey that will ask us to look back and forward and deep. There are three parts to this discussion guide:

- 1) An opening conversation live on Ash Wednesday,
- 2) A 5 part guided timeline
- 3) Weekly individual journal prompts.

Thank you for making the commitment to join us in this journey of exploration, curiosity, learning, unlearning, and communal discernment. This work of exploring our stories, histories, and biases is challenging work, which is why we do it together -to both learn from one another and to encourage one another. Blessings on your journey.

Bishop Jim



How to Participate

- **As a Congregation:** Gather as a congregation small group to view the specified parts of the timeline and discuss the journal prompts from that week.
- **With the RMS group:** Join either Sunday or Wednesday evenings throughout Lent to view the timeline with folks from around the synod. This can be as an individual or congregational group.
- **As an Individual:** While the journal prompts are meant to be done individually, you may also view the timeline on your own as well. If you select this option, it is strongly encouraged you find a conversation partner to process your learnings with.

Note: While the journal activities are meant to enrich our exploration, you are invited to engage the reflections as you have capacity. If you don't have time to do all of them, do what you can and come back to the others at a later date!

Preparing for This Work

A full community covenant is available on the Rocky Mountain Synod website and will be reviewed at the beginning of each gathering. The following list is to help you stay grounded in this work.

- **Listen respectfully and carefully to others.** This is your best way to begin to understand others. Listening helps bring out differences and helps to probe for shared values and positions.
- **Write and speak honestly about your thoughts and feelings.** Personal thoughts, feelings, values and experiences are as legitimate a part of the conversation as factual information.
- **Stay open to new perspectives and trust that the Holy Spirit is present in the conversation.**
- **Embrace the messiness.** These are hard conversations. Expect to be wrong, expect that others will make mistakes, know that loose ends will be present, and the work will be unfinished at the end. You are encouraged to ask clarifying questions and disagree while offering abundant grace as we learn together.



Beginning the Journey (Part 1)

View the opening conversation with Bishop Gonia & Dr. Edward Antonio.

Join live on Ash Wednesday via ZOOM or Facebook Live, or view the recording on Facebook or the RMS website. This should be viewed before attending the first timeline viewing session.

What questions or wonderings emerged? Jot them down here:

Beginning the Journey (Part 2)

Watch [The Danger of a Single Story](#)

(you are encouraged to watch this prior to the first timeline session)

Both the journal and timeline experience are inviting you into a process of both learning and unlearning our individual and collective story(s). What are your hesitations about participating? What are your hoped outcomes?



Timeline Experience Gathering 1:

Write down dates or events in the timeline that caught your attention.

What you do notice? What do you wonder?

What emotions are emerging?

What dates or events do you want to explore further?

Continue your reflection in the coming week using journal prompts 1-3 on the following pages.

Journal Prompt 1

Whose Land do you Live on?

Explore the interactive map of tribal lands: <https://native-land.ca/>.

Which indigenous tribes have lived on the land you now live on?

What do you know about the people whose land you live on? Where do these tribal members live now?

What is the history of US governmental treaties of this tribe?

Consider beginning a timeline of land where you live or the land of your faith community. A guide and example can be found on the [RMS website](https://www.rmselfca.org/). This guide is part of a multi-part curriculum on the Doctrine of Discovery: https://www.rmselfca.org/doctrine_toolkit

Journal Prompt 2:

Continued History of Your State

When did the land that is now your state become part of the United States? How did that occur?

What do you know about it before it was part of the US?

Visit your state's website or state historical website. What history is told on those pages? Are indigenous peoples and governmental treaties named? What parts of the story have been left out?

Journal Prompt 3:

When does your story or your family's story begin on this land and in this country?

How much do you know about your family history? How accessible is that information? Are there accurate records?

When does your story begin in this country?

What are the stories your family tells about your history?

What are the circumstances behind any movement in your family history?

As we continue the timeline, pay attention to the ways you and your family intersect with events on the timeline.



Timeline Experience Gathering 2:

Write down dates or events in the timeline that caught your attention.
What you do notice? What do you wonder?

What emotions are emerging?

What dates or events do you want to explore further?

Continue your reflection in the coming week using journal prompts 4-6 on the following pages.



Journal Prompt 4:

Take a box of crayons out and find the crayon that matches best your skin tone. What's it called? What is the most beautiful thing you have seen that is that color? Using the empty space below, make a picture of it, just for you.



Journal Prompt 5:

Who Else Are You?

Who are you besides the color of your skin? Take a walk listing, one after another, all the various identifiers you claim for yourself. Spend a half block or so with each one. Give thanks for the layers of who you are and for our creator. Alternatively, write or doodle the identifiers in the image below.



Journal Prompt 6:

Manifest Destiny



American Progress (1872) by John Gast is an allegorical representation of the modernization of the new west. What do you notice in this picture? What story is being told? What is the connection between manifest destiny, western expansion, and the emergence of faith communities in the west?



Timeline Experience Gathering 3:

Write down dates or events in the timeline that caught your attention.
What you do notice? What do you wonder?

What emotions are emerging?

What dates or events do you want to explore further?

Continue your reflection in the coming week using journal prompts 7-9 on the following pages.

Journal Prompt 7:

Note: This journal prompt is a tool for white folks to explore white privilege. BIPOC folks are invited to move onto journal prompt 6 or use this space to journal as is helpful.

White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack - Peggy McIntosh

[Here is an article](#) with a list of 50 ways you might see the privilege you have taken for granted.

What feelings or reactions emerged as you read the article?

List below the points of privilege on McIntosh's list that you can relate to or other points of privilege that surfaced:

Journal Prompt 8:

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is the interconnected nature of social categories such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group. These overlapping of categories create systems of discrimination and systems of privilege. Watch this video for an overview of intersectionality.



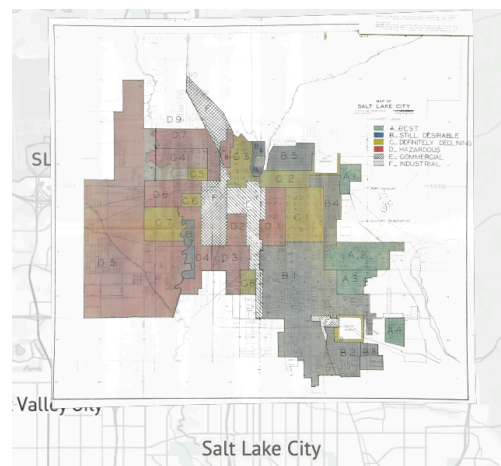
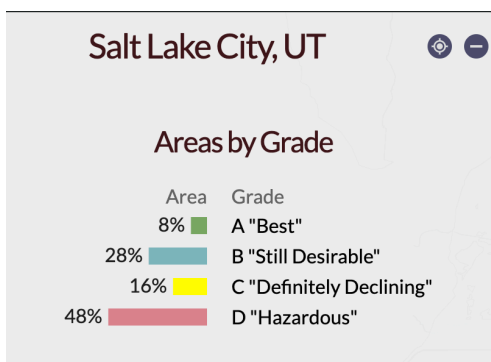
Look back at the identifiers you listed earlier and consider the social categories listed above. What intersection of identities do you see in your own life? How do these overlapping identities create advantage or disadvantage in your life and community?

Journal Prompt 9:

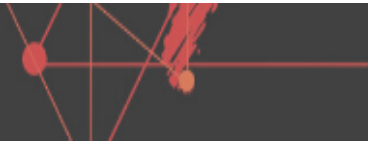
Mapping Inequality: Secret Maps of the Home Owner's Loan Corporation

Long before gerrymandering district lines, redlining was a thing:

“In the 1980s discovery of the HOLC [Home Owner's Loan Corporation] security maps changed the way historians thought about HOLC and New Deal housing policy. Housing activists in the 1960s and 1970s had criticized and protested discrimination in real estate lending and buying, coining the term “redlining” to illustrate the geographic dimensions of housing discrimination.”(Mapping Inequality). In the Rocky Mountain Synod, there were maps for Salt Lake City, Ogden, Denver, Pueblo, and El Paso. [View the Mapping Inequality Website](#)



How might this have affected the generational wealth in your extended family? Were there stories told in your family about property, rentals or moving around neighborhoods? Is there any part of this redlining that you probably would have agreed with? Why?



Timeline Experience Gathering 4:

Write down dates or events in the timeline that caught your attention.
What you do notice? What do you wonder?

What emotions are emerging?

What dates or events do you want to explore further?

Continue your reflection in the coming week using journal prompts 10-12 on the following pages.

Journal Prompt 10:

Noticing your Neighborhood

Drive, walk, or take public transportation around your neighborhood and town.

Who lives in your neighborhood and town? Who doesn't?

Where are the "good" neighborhoods? What makes it that way? What is the housing like areas in are considered "good"?

Journal Prompt 11:

Where Does Your Story Intersect?

Look back over the timeline so far ([Available Here](#) and on the RMS Website). Where has your story intersected with the timeline? What connections does your family have to events on the timeline? Your church?

Did you know about these connections before the timeline? What are you curious about in your family history after viewing the timeline? Who can you talk to or where can you go to learn more?

Journal Prompt 12:

Who Are Your Storytellers?

Look through your bookshelves, your ebook library, and your digital subscriptions. What diversity is represented (age, gender, race, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation, ability/disability)? Whose voices are missing?

What voices are you interested in adding to your library?

Consider the news you read or watch, the tv or movies you watch, the music you listen to. What are the identities of the main voices? Whose voices or perspectives are not present? What stories might you be missing?



Timeline Experience Gathering 5:

Write down dates or events in the timeline that caught your attention.
What you do notice? What do you wonder?

What emotions are emerging?

What dates or events do you want to explore further?

Continue your reflection in the coming week using journal prompts 13-15 on the following pages.



Journal Prompt 13:

Getting Comfortable with the Language

Read through the glossary of terms found on the website. Notice how you are feeling as you read through these words. List below any terms that are new to you, that surprised you, or challenged you. Circle any words you want to explore more. If a word is challenging or made you uncomfortable spend some time wondering why.

Journal Prompt 14:

White Supremacy and the Church

Emanuel Nine, martyrs, 2015

On June 17, 2015, Clementa C. Pinckney, Cynthia Marie Graham Hurd, Susie Jackson, Ethel Lee Lance, DePayne Middleton-Doctor, Tywanza Sanders, Daniel Lee Simmons, Sharonda Coleman-Singleton, and Myra Thompson were murdered by a self-professed white supremacist while they were gathered for Bible study and prayer at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church (often referred to as Mother Emanuel) in Charleston, South Carolina. The shooter had roots in an ELCA congregation and Pastors Pinckney and Simmons were both graduates of the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary. A resolution to commemorate June 17 as a day of repentance for the martyrdom of the Emanuel Nine was adopted by the Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America on August 8, 2019.

Take time to read the [Social Policy Resolution](#) naming June 17th as a day of commemoration and repentance for the Emanuel 9 and the [Resolution](#) condemning white supremacy.

What do you notice in these resolutions? What stuck out to you?

What feelings emerged?

What action step can you take after reading these documents?

Journal Prompt 15:

Where Do We Go From Here

What challenged you in this journal?

What is one thing you learned?

What are your lingering questions?

What are next steps for this process personally, or in the context of your faith community?

Who will partner with you? Will you ask a colleague or a neighbor to hold you accountable?

The point is, we hope you will take time to commit to where you want to go from here. Check out the RMS website for additional next step resources and make plans to be a part of Synod Assembly.

Prayer:

(by Kathryn Mary Lohre, Assistant to the Presiding Bishop, ELCA, p. 75, United Against Racism)

Prayer of Hope

Good and gracious God,

You have set us free from the slavery of our sin, including the sin of racism.

You have gathered your church together, united and freed in Christ.

You have bestowed us with treasures of diversity, blessings that too often we bend into burdens.

For we cling to- all of us, whether captivated by or held captive to- the sin of racism. This deadly “mix of power, privilege, and prejudice” keeps us divided from each other and from you.

O God, our God, we cry out to you that black lives matter.

We come before you, as the prophet Amos did in his time, calling out for your justice to roll down like waters. We cry out for the black lives that are degraded, diminished, demonized, divided, and destroyed, for as long as one cannot breathe, none of us can. The body of Christ is suffocating, and the church is complicit. Breathe your breath of life into us afresh.

Give us your wisdom to help us understand the complexity of racism and the compounding nature of oppressions. Give us your courage in our homes, schools, and communities as we teach our children to honor each person as made in your image. Give us your Pentecost vision of God’s people once scattered now gathered together as we seek to change and build more equitable systems and structures for all.

We are your people of hope- incarnate, in the flesh, - that God is with us, Emmanuel. This is the “hope that does not disappoint us.” This is the hope we long to embody to your world.

In Jesus’s name, Amen.