

MLCC
Minority Local
Church Concerns

SHATTERING

**the
Stained
Glass
Window**

Addressing Racism
in the Church



Oklahoma Conference
of The United Methodist Church



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Introduction

At first glance, it may appear that United Methodists in Oklahoma are a culturally diverse, vibrant, brilliant and creative bunch. But in Oklahoma churches, stories have historically been told by the majority white culture overlooking the stories about our shared history and shifting our expectations for our common future. This has stifled the people of God from fully becoming what God intended for the church. In the pages that follow, you will read from the perspectives of a few clergy whose identities as both people of color and Oklahoma United Methodist leaders equips them to lift up the voices of those whose stories have been silenced, forgotten, or ignored. This guidebook provides new insights that will encourage us through hearing diverse perspectives on faith.

The five sermons included call us to wrestle with the lingering aftermath of violence that birthed our country, the violence in Tulsa that has been pushed beneath the surface and the current racism that pervades our reality. In the words of Rev. Dr. Victor McCullough, “It is time to stop skirting around the mountain of discomfort of talking about racial injustice and gather the courage to start climbing that mountain and reimagining a just, inclusive future. In light of much of the unrest that has occurred within our country, the church is called to lead the way of inclusion and justice.” As Rev. Victoria Lee shows us, “The effort to connect and show hospitality by serving each other and learning about others’ cultures is a catalyst for new ways to dismantle racism and foster community.” Rev. David Wilson reminds us that “Visibility is a shared responsibility, and that it’s our collective task to look around the table and ask, “who is missing?” In the beginning of what is now the United Methodist Church in Oklahoma, Native American Christians preached and established Methodist churches before white Methodist missionaries were even officially sent to the territories we now call home.” Rev. Erica Thomas also reminds us that “It’s exhausting to be Black in America and that the ongoing practice of telling the truth, the WHOLE truth, must be prioritized if we are to heal.” Rev. Carlos Ramirez blesses us with a translation of the beatitude which refers to “The poor in spirit by calling up the image of George Floyd begging for air. May we all be so desperate for justice that we can’t breathe until all people’s human rights and dignity are honored.”

All of these essays are tied back to the ultimate story that binds us together and guides us to the right next step: the story of Jesus. The stained glass windows in our churches are meant to kindle in our hearts and minds that connection every time we walk into a sanctuary: that we are all part of the body of Christ and that God loves us too much to let us be content when any part of the body suffers. We all have a role in making Christ’s vision a reality in our church and in our world. These messages are intended to aid us all in our growth to be more like Christ. With these stories, we hope to shatter the stained glass window that tells only one part of the story, address the harm, and begin to redesign a window that reflects our true identity as a diverse, vibrant, brilliant, creative Body of Christ.

FROM MOLEHILL TO MOUNTAINTOP

"Then the Lord spoke to me, you have skirted this mountain long enough, Go northward!"
-Deuteronomy 2:2-3



Rev. Dr. Victor McCullough
District Superintendent
Heartland District

For many of us, mountains are magical and majestic. Mountains can apprehend us and capture the imagination. There is a fascination of heights. There is a gaze toward the heavens. That is what happened years ago during my first introduction to Oklahoma. A group of us seventh-grade kids and our teachers from Harry Stone Middle School in Dallas, Texas came to Turner Falls in the Arbuckle Mountains. It was our seventh-grade graduation trip. Although we were kids accustomed to the concrete pavements of Oak Cliff (Dallas), it seemed a view of the spectacular could not come fast enough. We were in awe of the eye-catching yet threatening landscape. Likewise, mountains have been and remain eye-catching yet threatening on the journey of life.

In the passage from Deuteronomy, the Israelites were on a journey from Egypt to Canaan. They were out of the land of bondage. God had heard the cry for freedom. Deliverance had come and the people were moving on. Gradually, the pilgrims seemed to become stuck, stagnant, and content with the existing conditions. Notice, this contentment with their circumstances came even before the Israelites reached the promised land. Now, in the context of the mission, it seems many in the church have stuck, stagnant, and content. Have we allowed the lip service

of social justice and social holiness to replace the command to do what is just, to show constant love, to live in humble fellowship with our God regardless of the season? Do we see all our neighbors all the time no matter what? Have we let tolerance substitute for authentic inclusion? Are we not allowing spiritual apathy and complacency, social irresponsibility, and human wickedness to deteriorate the common good throughout our land? I hear the Lord saying, *"you have skirted this mountain long enough!"*

It appears that we have become comfortable in our comfort zones. In our debates and discussions, many of us seem to have a lot to say about what Jesus said so little. Meanwhile, the great mission Jesus gave the church to do is done so minutely. There appears to be little to only token excitement about moving on and up a little higher in discipleship. In our churches there appears faint enthusiasm about reaching out in pursuing justice and sharing the good news of God's love and expanding our sense of mission beyond our comfortable church-circles. Maybe it is the COVID pandemic. Maybe it is the preoccupation with our denominational issues. Maybe it is just social and racial justice fatigue. Maybe it is just a failure to shift out of the normality of "we've always done it this way before." But whatever the case, hear this word: *"You have moved around this mountain long enough, go northward!"* In other words, stop skirting around!

My Sisters and Brothers! Have you noticed as it relates to making disciples of Jesus Christ (*not* simply adding new members) and revitalizing our congregations we have skirted around the same old mountains? Does it appear as it relates to sexism and racism and being diverse in our churches and inclusive in leadership representation throughout our conference boards, foundations, and agencies we have skirted around the same old mountains? Are we any farther along or perhaps are we not even farther behind where we have already been in recruiting, hiring, and building relationships in the church and marketplace with communities of color and people from other countries? Or has anyone else, beside me, noticed that we have been going around the same old intellectual, spiritual, traditional, and missional mountains far too long?

I want to encourage the church to get past the rhetoric of the political and religious spin doctors. Move on beyond the multiple news soundbites. Too many of us have been on the same plateau of normalcy, this hillside of safe and polite Christianity, this contentment with beautiful buildings and balanced budgets are nice; but it is only halfway up. It is too much going on all around us to allow ourselves, for the sake of Christ's mission and the glory of God, to confuse where we are now with the summit of the gospel call in the world.

God has called us from the molehill to the mountain peak. It is time to move on!

As we look around in this 21st Century, we must consider the multiple things we have learned, mostly out of necessity. The technological advances we have made during the pandemic have been amazing. We continue to move further and broader scientifically, and for many of us, we are even prospering financially. We can rejoice but let us not get it twisted.

The Spirit of God is at work amid us to delivered God's people from hatred and greed, social inequities, economic elitism, and barriers in human relations. The Spirit comes to shatter the walls of human exploitation, legal discrimination, judicial injustice, and mass incarceration. Now is the time to get unstuck in becoming the Beloved Community - the sister and brotherhood of humanity that Dr. King and Howard Thurman and Mother Theresa and Thomas Merton pointed us toward. Materialism, classism, religious nationalism, and indignity toward any human person created in the image of God can no longer hold us back. Not when the Holy Spirit teaches the way of Jesus and ushers in the reign of God. Yes, we are tired, and we are fatigued. Yet, it's time to move from this level plane!

WE NEED THE COURAGE TO SEE!

See the light of beauty, loveliness, righteousness and holiness, during times of pandemic fears, social chaos, and religious darkness.

WE NEED COURAGE TO GO BEYOND OUR COMFORT ZONES

There is a great deal of pain in our country, pain in our communities and pain in our churches. We are dealing with in our personal lives. But the good news is *the pain in our lives can be leveraged for reimagining and renewing the future.*

I recall the poignant words of legendary activist Stokely Carmichael - *"If you want to lynch me that is your problem. But if you have the power to lynch me that's my problem."* There are some misguided power constructs in our nation that need to be deconstructed. Certainly, there are some power constructs that we as people of faith, love, righteousness, and justice are called to address in the church and society.

WE NEED COURAGE TO REIMAGINE

Reimagine how we educate our children for a global context, how we get the implicit bias out of the health care system, and how we look at restorative justice when we lock someone up.

We must reimagine the Church seeing all the neighbors, all the time. Now is the time to be filled with the Spirit of love and mobilize for work of justice and fulfilling the prophetic witness of Jesus in the world today. We have been here too long. It's time to move on!

I'm pressing on the upward way, new heights I'm gaining every day; Still praying as I onward bound, "Lord, plant my feet on higher ground."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- “Going north” is a metaphor from for breaking out of complacency. What areas of church complacency concern you?
- What can a comfortable church do to step out of their comfort zone and love their neighbor?
- How does the Stokely Carmichael’s quote impact the role of the Christian? The Church?
- What does authentic inclusion look like?
- How do we learn to see those different than us as our neighbor?

HAPPY ARE THOSE WHO ARE BEGGING FOR AIR

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"

Matthew 5:3



Rev. Carlos Ramirez
Coordinator of Hispanic/Latino Ministry

"Happy are people who are hopeless, because the kingdom of heaven is theirs" (Mt. 5:3 CEB). This is not a bad translation, yet it still does not capture the depth this beatitude has.

First the word usually translated as poor (πτωχός) can also be translated as "beggar, helpless, or powerless to accomplish an end." Furthermore, this word is heavily rooted in the Jewish Scriptures traditions where the "poor" is a "person deprived of his/her inherited rights." Consequently, the beatitude could read as "happy are those who beg, are helpless, powerless or whose rights have been deprived." Perhaps that could be a good translation for the passage in Luke, since the beatitude does not include "in spirit." What, then, to do with the Matthew version of the beatitude that includes "in spirit"? The word translated as spirit (πνεύμα) can also be translated as "air or breath." My translation of this beatitude therefore is: **"happy are those who are begging for air; or happy are those who are powerless to accomplish the end of breathing; or happy are those whose rights have been deprived to the point they cannot breath"** for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Think of people like George Floyd who was **begging for air** as a police officer placed his knee on his chest not allowing him to breathe. Think of people like me, that because the color of our skin, or the accent we may have as we speak English or the simple fact that we are not white; we are treated disrespectfully or with suspicion. We who are the recipients of hatred and racism. We whose value is underestimated and often overlooked. We who need to be painfully aware of how we are perceived by others, therefore adopting "non-threatening" attitudes and behaviors. We who are easily dismissed as lazy or ignorant. We who need to "get over it" and stop "whining."

We are those begging for air. Many people leave under compound circumstances (being non-white, poverty, underperforming schools, underserved neighborhoods, mass incarceration, racism, among many others) that press over their chests as bricks not allowing them to breathe freely.

This is why I found strength and hope in this beatitude. Jesus is blessing us who cannot breathe freely. Jesus calls us "blessed or happy." We are blessed not because of the circumstances that impede our breathing, but because God's strength will make us inheritors of the kingdom of heaven/God. We who beg for air, amid our circumstances, will raise victorious. Now, if you are reading this and you do not identify with any of this, you may be asking yourself: "Am I not blessed? Is this beatitude just for people of color?" My answer is NO. If you empathize with a person begging for air. If your heart breaks each time you hear these type of testimony. If you feel as if you cannot

breathe when your brother or sister cannot breathe, then blessed are you!

I invite you to assess how we contribute to people's inability to breathe freely. What kind of behaviors (explicit or implicit) we may have that are making people gasp for air? Do we even care? Do we treat people different than ourselves with suspicion, disrespectfully, with disdain or contempt, as lazy and/or ignorant? Do we need to confess that we have biases and that part (or much) of our judgment toward people has to do with their race or ethnicity? Do you want to receive Jesus' blessing/beatitude? Then become a person who is **"begging for air"** because the injustice of our world, or the sin in which we have built our lives, sometimes is overwhelming. Yet, rest assured that "yours is the kingdom of heaven!"

When we read this passage, it is quite easy for us to immediately understand it in terms of piety. The "poor in spirit" are those who do not spend time praying or reading the Scripture. We may even think of those who do not know Jesus. The moment the word "spirit" is read we tend to think of something ethereal or otherworldly. Many of us may prefer to read the beatitudes found on the gospel of Luke where Jesus says, "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God" (Lk. 6:20 NRSV). Luke helps us eliminating the ambiguity caused by the words "in spirit."

Yet, for a while now, I have found in this beatitude a source of hope and a source of strength. For me this passage is not ethereal or otherworldly. It is a beatitude that Jesus speaks to me when I feel "poor in spirit." Now, what if we translate this beatitude differently? The Common English Bible translates this passage as



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- We all long for a place of belonging that feels like home. How do you want to be treated when you feel you do not belong?
- We are invited to envision ourselves begging for air. How might taking that perspective impact our view of social justice?
- Do we label people as hopeless?
- Why does race play such an intricate part in how we receive people?
- How can we become people who are aware of our own micro-aggressions and biases?

"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

Luke 10:36



Rev. Shuan Hie "Victoria" Lee
Pastor - OKC Charis Alive UMC

N"Ni Hao!" or "greetings" in Mandarin, whether said at the seminary, at a DCOM interview, at the Church of the Servant, or at the supermarket, always brings a smile and makes me feel welcomed. This simple, warm greeting often releases my anxiety instantaneously, especially in an unfamiliar environment followed by a pleasant conversation. Almost three decades ago, an American couple, Alice and David Voelkers, greeted me with "Ni Hao" at the restaurant I worked at. The second time I waited on their table, they invited me to come stay at their 2 bed/2 bath house even though we hardly knew each other. David and Alice had this habit of walking up to Asians greeting them with whatever language they speak, such as "Annyeong haseyo" (Korean), or "Konnichiwa" (Japanese). Though this action might be deemed as awkward by others especially in today's society, the simple greeting had opened up the opportunity to host over 100 international students, mentoring numerous international friends, proof-reading college papers and PhD dissertations, traveling to Asian countries multiple times, etc. The Voelkers family always treated me as one of their own, and I always felt at ease in their presence. Every time I asked for advice, Father David would always joke, "my advice is only as good as what you paid for. Since you pay nothing, it is probably worth nothing." Above all the things I learned from the Voelkers, other than being kind, optimistic, humorous, grateful, etc., one thing that changed my life was that I experienced GRACE, the undeserved, unearned favor of God, and the CHARIS ALIVE ministry was birthed out of the seeds they sowed in my life.

On the other hand, many Asians have not been so fortunate to experience such blessings as from the Voelkers. In the past year as the world struggled with the Covid-19 pandemic, surveys showed that an alarming number of hate crimes and stigmatization against Asian American populations has tremendously increased since 2020. The use of racial terms such as 'Chinese virus' and 'Wuhan virus' to describe the Coronavirus has

contributed to negative stereotyping of Asians relating to the pandemic. There has been a vast increase of vandalism, physical assaults, and robberies against Asian American people, businesses, and community centers all over the United States. Locally, we have witnessed multiple Asian businesses become the target of burglary and vandalism. One of the local Asian restaurants in Del City owned by a single mom who works full time as a nurse was vandalized not once, but four times within a two months period.

Eight days after the March 16 Atlanta mass shooting, more than 200 people gathered at the OKC Wesley United Methodist Church in the Asian District. As the community mourned those who lost their lives as a result of Asian hate crime, the vigil service provided a sanctuary of healing for a community glooming with fear and anger, and in unity, gathered forces for a call of solidarity to stand against Asian Hate.

America's morals are based on the ideology that "We are One Nation under God" and "the Home of the Free," yet the direct attacks towards the Asian American Community continually increase not only in number but in severity. Why should these attacks affect Asian American who had nothing to do with the uprising of the Covid-19 pandemic simply because it originated from China? As "One Nation under God," what gives us the decency or right to be openly racist towards other American citizens. Isn't it true that our core belief is that though we are different, all persons are individuals of sacred worth, created in the image of God? Christ does not judge us based on outside appearance, but rather what is within. Jesus is the definition of LOVE, and without it, we are all sinners. As a body of Christ, how do we relay Christ's unconditional love and dismantle racism with the antidote for hatred?

The parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37 resonated with me as I watched the Asian American community continue to struggle with racial injustice. Jesus told this parable to illustrate how we "love our neighbors as ourselves." Before telling the story of the Samaritan, a certain law expert stood up to test Jesus,

giving Jesus his interpretation of the Levitical law that we must love God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind and also to love our neighbors as ourselves. "Who is my neighbor?" he questioned. Jesus responded to him by saying, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him."

It's a question we still ask ourselves today. Who are our neighbors? What does it mean to be a loving neighbor? There is no simple answer nor a singular path to this answer as it pertains to racial injustice, but we certainly can't just look the other way as the priest and the Levite did. Perhaps we chose to look the other way in the past just because it is too political, or simply because it is not our responsibility. We choose not to get involved so we don't have to be bothered by others' problems. It is when other people need our help, like the injured, half-dead man on the road, that our love for our neighbors is truly tested.

The Good Samaritan didn't judge the beaten man. Beyond racial differences or socio-economic status, he saw a man in need of his assistance and took action. He did not let the past underlying perception or future incurring expenses to determine the worthiness of this action, but focused on simply aiding a person in present need. He demonstrated compassion and mercy by tending to the injured stranger the immediate needs as best he could. In the same way, Jesus calls us into relationships with one another, into relationships with people who don't look like us. He calls us to celebrate with those who are joyful and to weep with those who mourn. As Christ laid down His life

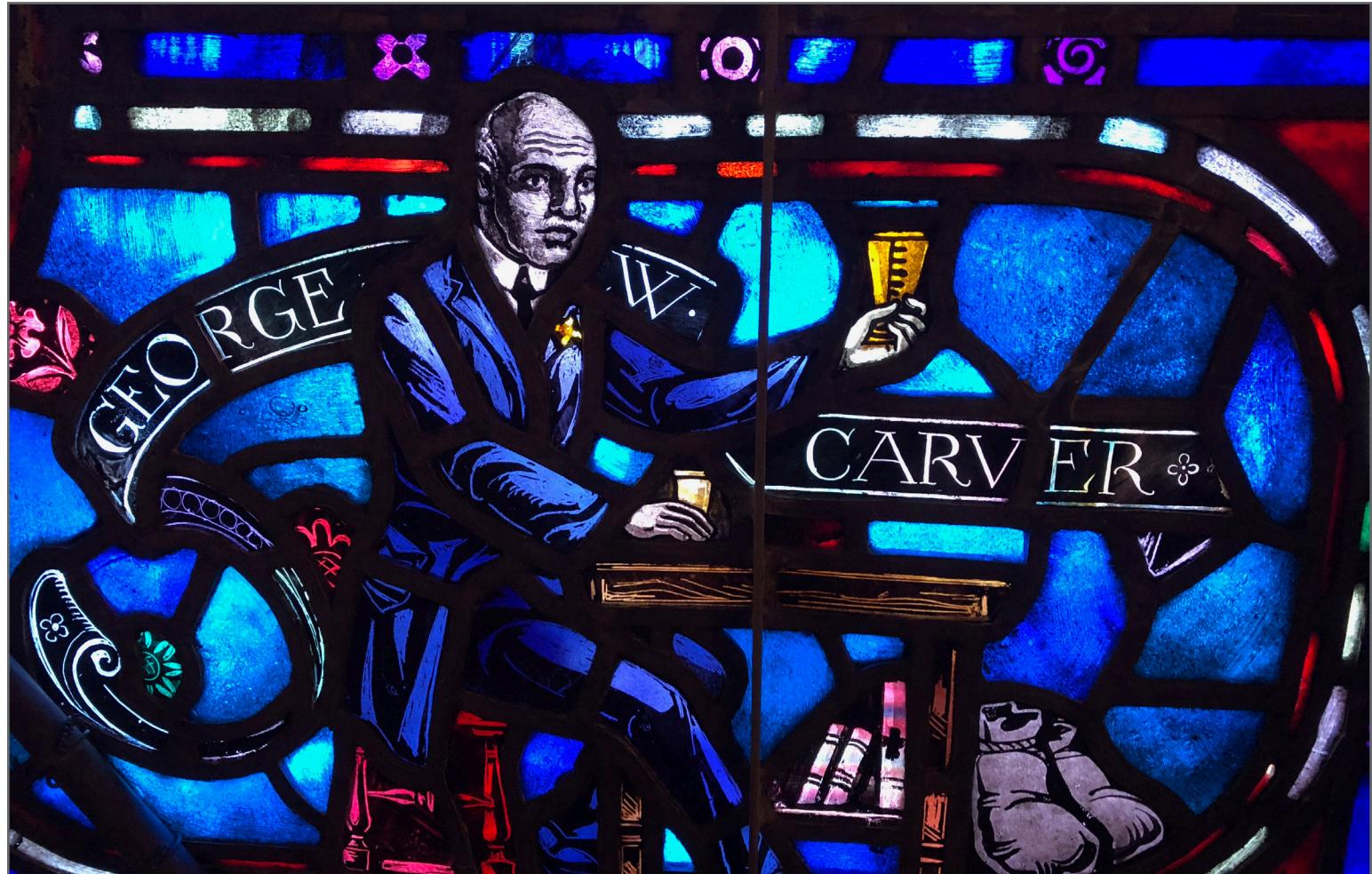




for us, we too must humbly set aside our priorities and comfort for the sake of others, even the underserved. As a Church, we must follow this modality of helping by fostering inclusivity with people who don't look like us. I pray that the love of God continues to permeate in our community as we continue to care for others, heal the wound, share resources, listen with intention, give sacrificially, just as the Good Samaritan did. All these could start with a simple "Ni Hao!"

Discussion Questions

- What are some things you can do to engage with people whose backgrounds differ from your own?
- What are examples of things you have learned from other types of people?
- How can we come to understand how racial slurs impact people?
- What does the Good Samaritan parable say to people who are afraid of getting involved with helping people?
- What is one tangible way I can help the fight against Asian American/ Pacific Islander (AAPI) hate?



There are very few stained-glass windows in Native American churches in Oklahoma and probably around the country. One of the windows I think of is in our church at Claremore, and the windows don't tell the story of Christianity as many stained-glass windows do, but rather they include images of what is important in our tribal cultures.

The window includes images of many Oklahoma tribal designs and items that are sacred to many such as corn.

The windows were inspired by the members of the church because these images tell the story of the people of the church; past and present. The images instill pride and joy in those who started the church and those who now attend because it displays the value of who we are as Indigenous peoples; created in the image of Creator God. When I think of what it means to shatter the "stained glass windows" of racism, I think of how Indigenous peoples in the church have lived our lives as people of God, despite the obstacles along the way.

Although we were the first Methodists in what is now Oklahoma, we are often thought of as "less than" because we don't fit the image of what it means to be a Christian in the eyes of the dominant race. More often than not, we are afterthoughts when it comes to inclusion.

Among the common themes that have emerged in the lives of Indigenous peoples around this country is invisibility. This theme is prevalent because around this state, country and the Church, that is how we often feel. Invisible. This is in a state of 39 federally recognized tribes. A state where Native Americans were the first to inhabit Indian Territory and the first to build churches and the first Methodists as well.

My long-time friend and colleague, Rev. Anita Phillips is a retired Elder in The Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference. She and Dr. Henrietta Mann, Cheyenne, produced a book "On This Spirit Walk," which was written as a resource for studies following the 2012 Acts of Repentance for Native Americans.

In the book, Anita writes, "As a Native American person, I am intimately aware that one of the greatest burdens born by Native people in the Americas and by Indigenous peoples around the world, is that we have become the invisible ones."

"Because of the history of this country, we are considered a people who have been conquered, who now, in the essence, belong to the dominant ones in our nation."

"We are thought of as relics or figures from the past, who have no contribution to make toward the future."

Ephesians 2:4-10 reads,

"But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in

transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

This passage is one of many that remind me of the value and worth of all of God's people. It tells of the service and ministry that all are called to do for all of God's people. It inspires me to hear that this grace by which we are saved, is not from ourselves but from God. And it is to be shared across the world with all and by all. We are all God's handiwork!

George Floyd's death in May of 2020 reignited the Black Lives Matter Movement and inspired folks of all ages to make needed changes in this country. The Movement made changes quickly as a result, changes that many tried years to do. The movement caused the country and maybe the church to look at the structures of racism that exists in so many entities.

If it were not for the Black Lives Matter Movement, the derogatory name of the Washington football team would not have been changed. Serious conversations and actions around other mascots began to happen and others have followed suit. Many of us were so pleased with the results. Particularly because mascots depict Indigenous peoples as Anita referred to earlier: as relics of the past.

Since this was in the midst of the pandemic, organizations within many denominations began to host online zoom gatherings on race. There were many panels and discussions on race held all over. I was so pleased to see this happening and I was always interested in who was represented. More often than not, a panel or discussion on racism included every racial ethnic group except Native Americans. This happened within many religious entities in the state of Oklahoma.

And several times, I would contact the organizers and share my disappointment of a group of people being left out of a conversation on race in the Church. Too often, when people think of issues of race, it is about black and white. It is about so much more!

We have to do a better job of building relationships and learning from each other. We have to support one another in our shared ministry.

Eugene Peterson's translation of 1 Corinthians 12 reads, "The way God designed our bodies is a model for understanding our lives together as a church: every part dependent on every other part, the parts we mention and the parts we don't,

the parts we see and the parts we don't. If one-part hurts, every other part is involved in the hurt, and in the healing. If one-part flourishes, every other part enters into the exuberance."

May we live our lives in a way that shows the world the importance of our connectedness and relationship as God's handiwork!

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS



Rev. Dr. David Wilson
Assistant to the Bishop of OIMC

"But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved."

Ephesians 2:4-5



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



- How do we embrace the priorities of other people and open our doors to genuine Christian love?
- How should the notion that all people are created in the image of God impact your service to humanity?
- How do indigenous peoples view their faith?
- How do we help indigenous peoples reclaim their visibility?
- As we exist as part of the Body of Christ, how should we connect with those who are hurting?

CONFRONTING OUR HISTORY



REV. ERICA THOMAS
Associate Pastor OKC Quayle UMC

I am tired, I am troubled. I. AM. EXHAUSTED. Being black in America can make one feel all of those things often at one time. As we have all heard through the news or social media of the “Doing while Black” scenarios, well it just puzzles and perplexes me. It seemed that there is something every week, often every day that catches our attention. And if we let it, it could really make us become quite bitter and angry. Is it any wonder why 21st century African Americans struggle with their sense of God, God’s presence and community as we face so many obstacles which include the constant barrage of police shootings, re-emerging voter suppression laws, education imbalances and too many other things to list? It is enough to make one lose faith. Many communities face some of the same problems which makes it more important than ever to find avenues of educating with honest conversations that foster healing and wholeness. Through it all the hope lies in the fact that instead of giving in to despair, those who are being discriminated against for no other reason than existing are fighting back by living and enjoying their life in spite of those who try to keep them from it.

We live in a tension and a conflict of emotions. Our historical past continues to haunt us. And depending on who is telling it, you either love it or hate it. If you are on the winning side, of course you glory in your history and relish all the accomplishments you or more correct your ancestors have done. If you are on the losing side, let’s be honest, we know all about that don’t we? It is especially important that those that come after us know all about what has happened and how we came to be where we are in this place and time. But, the problem with history is that it is almost always told from the victor’s viewpoint. One side is considered the successful conquerors and pats themselves on the back for all that they

“Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”

Luke 10:36

have accomplished. Told from the side of the oppressed - history is not full of the wonderful events we were told about in school. Too many times the history of the marginalized is not told appropriately and is full of half-truths and obvious lies.

In this 21st century, I am so appalled by the lack of honest and real history that is NOT taught in our school systems. Hosea 4:6a says, *“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.”*

I was very fortunate in that I had a mother and father who did not rely on the school system to teach me about my history. Books, magazines, games and whatever else they could get their hands on made its way into our home. And I read all of it like a sponge. We have to teach a history that tells all sides of the story and doesn’t gloss over the failures, the successes and all the in-betweens. All history is valuable for learning what to do and more specifically what not to do. It gives us a good starting point, and what we take from it will tell our history to the next generation. As an educator, I know the value of teaching young people about history. At the Wesley Foundation at Langston University, we will be offering an afterschool program that will look at the Civil Rights Movement and the Christian Church. Prayerfully instilling in young minds how the Church was instrumental in moving us all forward. Education is a powerful way to shatter that stain glassed window.

Allowing the whole history to be taught should not be something to fear. The history book of the Christian faith tells us about a people that we can identify with, about Someone who cares about us and who through God’s offspring gave us new life. When you read this book, the word does not sugar coat anything. It tells the good, the bad and the ugly... always. No matter who is the culprit, the words of this book tell it like it is. What makes this book of history so relevant is that it is full of events that one might not

suspect would be in it. There is murder, slavery, incest, adultery, persecution, and many other horrific events we cringe at. We might wonder why God allowed the writers to put these stories in the Book to begin with, but I believe these stories are there to teach us and let us know that no one is perfect and that through it all, we have One that is greater than we think we are, One that cares for that which The One created, and One that ultimately gave His life for us.

Jesus took our sins, our hurts, our pain, our sicknesses, whatever ails us, and Christ took it to Calvary with him and annulled our troubles. It does not matter what our history has been, where we have come from, how the history books see us or says about us, there is no greater moment in history than the night that Jesus was crucified on the cross for us. That is the story that needs to be told over and over again, *“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.”* As we pass on the real and true history of our cultures and our families I pray that we will never leave out the sacrifice and redemption of Jesus, for then the future will be shine brightest. And then whatever needs to be shattered will be shattered.

It is unfortunate that many in our world today see Christians as hateful, judgmental, unloving and mean. That is not why Jesus came. Our job, particularly as Christians, is to love people, it is God’s job is to change them if God chooses to do so. In the meantime, try loving someone who doesn’t think like you, doesn’t look like you, doesn’t do anything like you, is just plain different from you. And maybe when you take communion, think of that person and say “this is Jesus’ body and blood for _____.” And see what God will do with that.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How would you imagine the history of slavery as told by the enslaved? How might it differ from the perspective of the standard high school text book?
- What is left out of our history books that oppressed peoples would include?
- The Bible includes the good and the bad. Why do you think God included both sides?
- The sacrifice of Jesus pays for our sins. What sacrifice do you think God expects from all of us?
- When I take communion, what people do you think God wants me to remember he loves too?





Learning from the *Past*

Investing in the *Future*

The Tulsa Race Massacre
UM Response: building
new communities of faith
Annual Conference 2021
Special Offering



In light of our theme as well as the 100th observance of the Tulsa Race Massacre, we encourage cheerful giving to this year's annual conference offering which will be used to benefit the ongoing work of planting new faith communities and reaching the needs of the Greenwood area of Tulsa.



Submit offerings on the conference website through
<https://www.okumc.org/specialoffering> or mail it to
our conference office at 1501 NW 24th Street,
Oklahoma City, OK 73106.

Remembering
the
**Tulsa Race
Massacre 1921**



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Pastoral Letter regarding the Tulsa Race Massacre
5/27/2021

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Greetings in the name of the risen Christ.

100 years ago, a massacre occurred in Tulsa which destroyed one of the most prosperous African-American neighborhoods in America. The Greenwood District, or Black Wall Street as it was commonly called, was decimated by a white mob not deterred by law enforcement. Over 300 residents of Greenwood were killed, many buried in unmarked graves, and many more were arrested for committing no crimes. Thousands were left homeless and a neighborhood was ransacked, leaving behind millions in property damage. After that, the story of this event was mostly forgotten.

During this time, there were two branches of Methodism in Tulsa – the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South – that would eventually become part of The United Methodist Church. Other branches of Methodism were active in the community, including the Vernon African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, which is the only edifice to survive the massacre.

Both downtown churches, Boston Avenue and First, were utilized as make-shift hospitals for the injured. At the same time, church leaders in many of the Methodist-affiliated churches preached sermons blaming the victims of the massacre for inciting it. After Tigert Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church, South moved to a new location, their former building was sold and the site became the corporate front for the Ku Klux Klan. It is important that we recognize our own explicit and implicit actions in perpetrating and responding to this horrific event.

As we observe the centennial of the Tulsa Race Massacre, United Methodists across the state of Oklahoma stand with the people of Tulsa as we look forward to a more inclusive future even as we look back at this moment in time. In the words of John

Hope Franklin, "If the house is to be set in order, one cannot begin with the present; (one) must begin with the past."

For many Oklahomans, this injustice was not a topic studied in school or something known by a majority of our citizens. Until a few years ago, it was one of the least-known incidents of racial violence in United States history. As faithful followers of Christ, we must not allow that to be an excuse going forward. What can you do to observe this tragic event and glean some lessons from it? Here are some resources:

In mid-January, Rev. Dr. Robert Turner, pastor of the Historic Vernon AME Church in Tulsa was the preacher for the meeting of the clergy of the conference. You can view his sermon at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qtfWI9N-Jmj8>.

In mid-May, the conference hosted a webinar called "Tulsa: 100 Years Later" featuring two African American church planters in the Tulsa area interviewed by Rev. Bessie Hamilton, the conference's leader for multi-ethnic initiatives.

Review the resources at the conference website <https://www.okumc.org/mlcc> curated by our Minority Local Church Concerns Ministry Team as well as resources related to racism.

For those who work with youth, share this illustrative resource as a way for young people to understand what happened in Tulsa.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/sponsored/hbo-2019/the-massacre-of-black-wall-street/3217/>

There are also other curriculum resources for children at <https://www.tulsa2021.org/resources>.

The denomination's Discipleship Ministry unit on preaching and worship offers a daily prayer related to anti-racism. You can sign up to have those delivered to your email inbox <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/articles/praying-for-change-daily-prayers-for-anti-racism#subscribe>.

Last year, the Council of Bishops launched a campaign to dismantle racism. They called upon all levels of the church to engage with this effort. As a part of the campaign, the General Commission on Archives and History put together a church study called "Pride, Shame and Pain: Methodist History with Racism and Efforts to Dismantle It." We encourage you to download the materials and schedule times in your settings when you can utilize this resource <http://www.gcah.org/resources/heritage-sunday-2021>.

You can find out much more information at the Tulsa Race Massacre Commission's website <https://www.tulsa2021.org/>.

Before the COVID 19 pandemic, the annual conference had intended to hold an in-person gathering in Tulsa, to include worship, education, tours and a time to repent for our role in the massacre, but we were forced to cancel those plans.

In light of that, we invite you to join our conference in praying the historic prayer of confession that we use when approaching the Lord's Table:

*Merciful God,
we confess that we have not loved you with our whole heart.
We have failed to be an obedient church.
We have not done your will,
we have broken your law,
we have rebelled against your love,
we have not loved our neighbors,
and we have not heard the cry of the needy.
Forgive us, we pray.
Free us for joyful obedience,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

The 2021 Annual Conference offering will be used in the

Tulsa area as we plant two new multi-ethnic faith communities as well as assist in efforts to commemorate this horrific event.

As we remember the 300 lives lost and a community decimated 100 years ago, let us commit today to ending the complicity of silence about this massacre and all acts of racism. Let us commit to bringing God's healing to those who have been damaged by the wrongs of the past and present sin of racism. And, as Christ has commanded, let us love God with all our hearts, all our souls, and all our minds, and our neighbors as ourselves... all our neighbors.

May God continue to remind us our past while pointing us toward a brighter, more inclusive future.

Bishop Jimmy Nunn on behalf annual conference leaders

"We recognize racism as sin and affirm the ultimate and temporal worth of all persons. We rejoice in the gifts that particular ethnic histories and cultures bring to our total life."

- United Methodist Social Principles, 2016



REMEMBERING NATIVE AMERICAN VICTIMS OF U.S. SCHOOLS NATIONAL DAY FOR TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

UNITED METHODIST LEADERS DECRY CHURCH SPONSORSHIP OF U.S. ABUSIVE "INDIAN BOARDING SCHOOLS" AND CALL FOR REMEMBRANCE OF VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS Statement Released from the United Methodist Church and Society September 2021

Recent media reports, a public education campaign, and the announcement of an investigation by the U.S. Department of the Interior have cast renewed light on one of the most shameful practices in the deplorable treatment of the Indigenous people of North America by European colonists across 500 years. This was the forcing of thousands of Native American boys and girls into "Indian boarding schools" in a deliberate attempt to separate them from their families and cultures.

Disturbing new reports from both Canada and the U.S. indicate that, in some cases, large numbers of the young people died in school custody without notice to families and were buried in mass schoolyard graves. Some of these burials have been documented internally in boarding school records, but others have not.

While authorized and primarily funded by government, some of these schools were also sponsored or operated by religious organizations, including several with Methodist affiliations. Some Methodists and their institutions shared and promoted the sentiment that Indigenous people must be "Christianized" and then "civilized" to be regarded as human beings, or as stated by prominent proponents, "Kill the Indian and save the man."

We know the names and locations of

a number of Methodist-related Native American boarding schools and efforts are underway to identify as many such institutions as may have existed. We need to better understand our complicity in this form of cultural genocide and to bring the boarding schools more clearly into focus in our expression of repentance for the inhumane treatment to which the church and its members subjected Indigenous people in the past. Such repentance was expressed by the 2012 United Methodist General Conference.

The National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition represents an effort to educate the public in the U.S. about these schools and their lingering harmful legacy. In light of the recent reports of abuse and neglect, the coalition called for and observed a National Day of Remembrance for U.S. Indian Boarding Schools on September 30, 2021. This date aligned with the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation that is dedicated in Canada to residential school survivors.

The National Day of Remembrance was observed by Native American United Methodist leaders, including the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference, Native American Comprehensive Plan, Native American International Caucus and numerous annual conference committees on Native American Ministries. Our agencies joined our Native American sisters and brothers in this special occasion, an opportunity for individual grief and collective reaffirmation of the 2012 "Act of Repentance Toward Healing Relationships with Indigenous People." Suggestions from the healing coalition for ways to remember the victims and survivors of the schools can be found online at <https://boardingschoolhealing.org/national-day-of-remembrance-for-us-indian-boarding-schools/>.

We welcome a recent announcement by U.S. Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland that the Bureau of Indian Affairs will investigate the programs and operations of these boarding schools. We will share information we may discover in our investigation of Methodist involvement in such institutions.

Background

The history of the "Indian boarding

schools" is complex and perplexing, particularly regarding religious complicity. Policies and practices regarding such schools in the U.S. took various forms across a century and a half – from the 1820s to the 1980s. Current media attention is on schools reflecting a strict military-style model, the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania, opened in 1879. While Carlisle itself had no religious sponsors, others of its ilk did. The promotion of Carlisle-type schools corresponded to the development of U.S. policy on Native people at the end of the so-called "Indian wars," a time when the reservation system was being implemented for Great Plains tribes was emerging and included a short experiment in using Christian missionaries as administrators of the "Indian agencies." These schools often transported the young people far away from their home regions. The first class at Carlisle came from Dakota Territory.

There were also earlier Native American boarding schools, usually more local in nature, with mixed patterns of sponsorship – tribal/religious/federal government. At least one Methodist-related example in Ohio in the early 1820s was a tribal/mission school with a federal grant. Some links between churches and the schools lasted for only a few years, while others stretched across decades.

Searching the Record

The General Board of Global Ministries and United Methodist Women, which represent Methodist mission outreach in frontier America, are in the process of attempting to determine exactly where and when Methodists sponsored "Indian boarding schools." In terms of numbers, we have a short list of connections that need further research and our work on that will continue.

But regardless of numbers or duration, earlier American Methodists helped to perpetuate the concept that Native people should be stripped of their heritage through forced assimilation of youngsters in residential schools apart from their families and communities. This is not a new awareness, although the schools were not specifically cited in the denomination's public repentance of its former

attitudes toward and treatment of Indigenous people.

Repentance

The “Act of Repentance Toward Healing Relationships with Indigenous People” was one of the high moments of the 2012 United Methodist General Conference, the denomination’s governing body. The subsequent quadrennial General Conference (2016) adopted an omnibus resolution on “Native People and the United Methodist Church,” drafted by Native members, that specified the forcing of young people into boarding schools as an example of offense. The resolution states:

“Government and religious institutions intentionally destroyed many of our traditional cultures and belief systems. To assimilate our peoples into mainstream cultures, many of our ancestors as children were forcibly removed to boarding schools, often operated by religious institutions, including historical Methodism.”

The Future

In the face of renewed focus on the damages done by the boarding schools, we:

- * Endorse and join the Day of Remembrance on September 30, 2021,
- * Welcome the investigation underway by the U.S. Department of the Interior,
- * Pledge to conduct our own study and investigation of Methodist-related boarding schools,
- * Seek to embody in our work the spirit of our church’s 2012 “Act of Repentance Toward Healing Relationships with Indigenous People,”
- * Review and implement as possible recommendations for healing and reconciliation found in the resolution of 2016, including measures to increase the role and visibility of Indigenous persons and communities, and
- * Promote equity and justice for Native Americans in both church and society.

September 27, 2021

Signed by

General Board of Global Ministries

Roland Fernandes, General Secretary

United Methodist Women

Harriett Olson, General Secretary

General Board of Church and Society

Susan Henry-Crowe, General Secretary

General Board of Higher Education and Ministry

Greg Bergquist, General Secretary

Discipleship Ministries

Jeff Campbell, Acting General Secretary

General Commission on Archives and History

Ashley Boggan Dreff, General Secretary

General Commission on Religion and Race

Giovanni Arroyo, General Secretary

General Commission on the Status and Role of Women

Dawn Wiggins Hare, General Secretary

United Methodist Communications

Dan Krause, General Secretary

General Commission on United Methodist Men

Gil Hanke, General Secretary



FINAL THOUGHTS

If you are reading this, my prayer is that you have read the messages that have been shared within these pages. If not, I certainly hope that you will. Our tendency is to judge a book based on its cover. You may have some preconceived notions as to what this publication is about. For me, I begin with the idea that God so loved the world that God did something about it. God gave us a Son to not only pay the penalty for our sins, but to make us more like Jesus. If we want to be like Jesus, we are called to more than merely tolerating those who are different. We are called to love them, too. That may mean different things to different people. I encourage you to look beyond culture, politics and personal beliefs to become one who loves like Jesus. Then, we can shatter the stained glass windows to see Jesus more clearly.

“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:34-35 (NRSV)

Bessie Hamilton

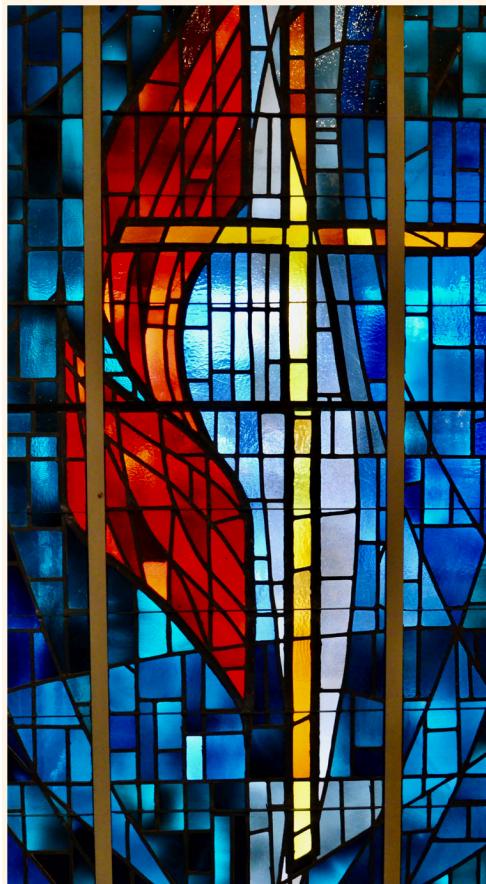


Photo Acknowledgements

16th Street Baptist Church Stained glass window, Birmingham AL, donated by the people of Wales after the 1963 bombing of the church. [@ Alby Headrick, Flickr](#)

Photo by Tan Kaninhanond on Unsplash

Title: [Rear view of truck carrying African Americans during the Tulsa, Oklahoma, massacre of 1921] / by Alvin C. Krupnick Co., Tulsa, Okla. 1921

Library of Congress

[Smoke billowing over Tulsa, Oklahoma during 1921 race massacre]

Creator(s): Alvin C. Krupnick Co. Library of Congress

Burning of church where ammunition was stored during race riot, Tulsa, Okla.

Date Created/Published: June 1, 1921. Library of Congress

Seneca Indian Boarding School taken around 1905 by Charles R. Scott, an employee of the Seneca Indian Boarding School



Oklahoma Conference

of The United Methodist Church