

“O God, who created all peoples in your image, we thank you for the wonderful diversity of race and culture in this world. Enrich our lives by ever-widening circles of fellowship, and show us your presence in those who differ most from us, until our knowledge of your love is made perfect in our love for all your children; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”



Dear Friends,

Three years ago this past August, something happened in Charlottesville, VA. The Unite the Right White Supremacist Rally set something ablaze in many of us here at Christ Church, and we wanted to do something about it. We formed a group that became known as “A Circle of Friends”, which met in my living room for many months for informal conversations. It was a profound time of listening to each other and learning from our various experiences around race.

It was suggested by one of our participants that we use the above collect, found in our Book of Common Prayer, in our worship together. If you have been with us on Sundays, you know that we use the prayer whenever we can. I particularly like the idea of *finding God’s presence in those who differ most from us*; that seems to be the rub! How easy it is to love those who are like me. Our Lord calls us to something far more than that. Work that is never fully done.

This past July I took the online course offered by our Diocese: Racial Justice and Anti-Racism Training. It had been years since I had made the in-person training event – how to find the time? But in a pandemic, when we are nearly always at home, I decided to commit my Friday evenings. I am so very glad I did. Almost seventy persons participated, not only from the Diocese of NJ but from around the country. We can do that, you know, now that we are all zooming!

There was homework to do between sessions, all of which I found easy to access and well worth the time. The conversations were extraordinary. We had smaller break-out sessions which made sharing our experiences very comfortable. In the big group sessions, I rarely spoke; I felt what I really needed to do for myself was to simply listen. To listen to the experiences of my brothers and sisters of color. No need to be defensive, no need to clarify, simply to really hear the things they have long wanted to say. Some of it was very surprising! Even though I have known some of the participants for over twenty years, we had never spoken about these matters that are so very important and which so “color” the world in which we live.

The Diocese mandates this training for all clergy and lay leaders. I am glad they do, but truly, all of you would find it welcoming, challenging, and transformative. It is a gift to be able to share fears, hopes, disappointments, and dreams with other Episcopalians who do not want to judge but to help. The Team provided a very safe place for us to drop our inhibitions and simply be the body of Christ – joined through the internet, of course! I feel that it certainly widened my circle of friends, the very thing I pray each and every week.

Here is the good news: the training is being offered once again! We have enclosed the registration link below. Do take a look. The cost is minimal, and they offer scholarships – and so do I. So do not let that be a problem.

There are 4 two-hour sessions, with a week in-between which I found very helpful in processing and digesting what I had learned.

I encourage all our leaders and staff to take the training. And after you do? We will have our own conversation about it, and about what we as a congregation can do to achieve this work of our Lord's most holy kingdom.

Peace,

Mother Lisa+

Racial Justice Anti-Racism Training
September 11 – October 2
Live and Recorded Sessions
\$50 fee. Scholarships available.

Register Now

Registration is now open for the next Anti-Racism Training online from the Diocese of New Jersey. Demand for the Diocese's online Anti-Racism Training has been extraordinary and these sessions have filled very quickly. The Anti-Racism Commission is doing all it can to expand capacity.

The Episcopal Diocese of New Jersey Anti-Racism Ministry invites you to take advantage of time at home to enroll in 20 hours of virtual Anti-Racism Training streamed to your computer, tablet or mobile phone. The training takes a historical approach to help participants understand systemic racism and empower them to confront and organize against racism, inequality, and injustice. Lecture and discussion topics include "What is Race?", "Systemic Racism and White Privilege," "Internalized Racism," "The Role of the Church," "Settler Colonialism," "Racism in Immigration and Naturalization Legislation," and "The Prison Industrial Complex".

The training begins on Sept 11 by Zoom videoconference, 7:00 to 9:00 PM. The training also includes Friday evening discussions and presentations (7:00 to 9:00 PM) Sept 18, Sept 25, and Oct 2, and participants receive reading assignments and recorded lessons throughout the course on Moodle, an online teaching platform.

Email Mary Anne Clisham (mclisham@dioceseofnj.org) for registration information or Noreen Duncan (noreen.duncan@att.net) for information about the training.

