

Dear small group leaders,

Thank you for your willingness to facilitate conversation, reflection, discernment, and confession in the coming weeks with your How to be an Antiracist small groups. Dr. Kendi's book is a wonderful resource for growing in our understanding of the insidiousness of racism and the true nature of antiracist work, but your goal for these next 6 weeks is *not* to be a book club. Your goal is to join others in reflecting on your hearts, your lives, your memories, your actions, your church, our Bible, our Jesus, and your faith, *in light* of Dr. Kendi's witness. We do not read merely as an academic exercise, but as an exercise in formation, believing that the Spirit will work in us as we come together for the purpose of growing in our discipleship and producing the fruit of this labor.

There is a great deal to discuss in this book! As such, we encourage group leaders to share the discussion questions, Scripture passage, and any additional videos or media with their group members *before* their meeting. When possible, it allows for a more thoughtful conversation since a thorough discussion on each question is probably time-prohibitive. As a leader, you may certainly decide to play clips of songs or media during the sessions at your discretion, depending on the nature of your group. We recommend choosing a few questions each week for a focus, depending on the conversation pattern and interest of your group, and also hope you will leave some time at the end of the session for participants to share what additional material resonated with them during the week. Please encourage folks to have pen and paper handy for occasional brief journaling exercises.

Race can be a difficult subject to discuss. We encourage you to emphasize the communication guidelines below to help your group members come to the space with the expectation of experiencing vulnerability, discomfort, and even accountability from their fellow group members. Growth is not always comfortable. Jesus does not call us to be comfortable. And yet in this space, we hope all participants will find paths to better understand their personal antiracist journey and the collective antiracist journey of their church community. May this understanding lead to action. We pray that the Spirit meets you in this work, and that the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ be revealed in your conversations yet again.

Peace + Justice,

Jen Kidwell, *Director of Youth and Adult Discipleship at Silver Spring UMC*

Yves Pierre

Rev. Stacey Cole-Wilson, *Executive Minister of Justice and Service for the Baltimore-Washington Conference*

## Communication Principles for Antiracist Conversation

Welcome into this sacred space. Before you begin your study, reflect: *Why are you here in addition to discussing Ibram X. Kendi's Book How to be an Antiracist?*

1. To **Be and Build a Beloved Community (An Antiracist Church)** rooted in Mark 12: 29-34: “Which commandment is the first of all?” <sup>29</sup> Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; <sup>30</sup> you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ <sup>31</sup> The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” <sup>32</sup> Then the scribe said to him, “You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that ‘he is one, and besides him there is no other’; <sup>33</sup> and ‘to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength,’ and ‘to love one’s neighbor as oneself,’—this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.” <sup>34</sup> When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” After that no one dared to ask him any question.
  
2. To **Respectfully Communicate** with one another using Eric Law’s Respectful Communication Guidelines
  - R – take Responsibility for what you say and feel without blaming others
  - E – use Empathetic listening
  - S – be Sensitive to differences in communication/cultural styles
  - P – Ponder what you hear and feel before you speak
  - E – Examine your own assumptions and perceptions
  - C – keep Confidentiality
  - T – Tolerate ambiguity because we are not here to debate. There are no “winners” or “losers.”
  
3. To **Live with Cultural Humility** using the Intercultural Humility Pledge adapted by Kristina Gonzalez as our foundation for these acts:
  - I will exercise cultural humility,
  - listen for understanding,
  - assume positive intent,
  - examine my own biases and assumptions,
  - respect different forms of expression and
  - seek relationships because this is how Jesus lived.
  
4. To **Include all participants in the study** by utilizing the Power of Mutual Invitation. Invite someone to share by name. This is especially important if your group is meeting

virtually. In most video conferencing platforms, participants appear on screens in different orders. Leaders must invite participants to share, especially if doing a “round table” sort of response. If you do not know an individual's name, ask them. The person can pass your invitation or accept it. If the invitation is accepted, the individual has the floor to share on the topic at hand as agreed upon with the facilitator at the beginning of the session. This continues until all are given the opportunity to share as desired. This allows for inclusivity of voice and additional honoring of personhood.

## Session 1

### Introduction – Chapter 3

Opening Prayer (consider using this prayer to open each session of the study):

*Gracious and Merciful God, you've created us in your image without any hierarchy of human value. You have called us your children. You have made us family and therefore we exist as a beloved community. So, we pause in this moment to honor you. We acknowledge your presence and unlimited power which makes us One. Center us in your will so that we are focused on what you desire of us even now. Interpret our individual and collective yearnings and move us until our actions align with yours. Call us by name and reveal your Divine Image at work in each of us. Heal us. Speak through us and enable us to “see” one another as you see us so that we may wholly glorify Your Name. Good Shepherd, guide us in this study and make this time holy. In the name of Jesus the Christ, we pray. Amen.*

Scripture: Psalm 32 (focus verses: 1-5)

Read the scripture aloud. *Pause*. What jumps out at you in this passage?

Think about a time in your life when you did the real work of confession, with a person you had wronged and/or with God. How did you feel before, during, and after the conversation or the prayer?

In the introduction, Kendi shares a story about a speech he gave in high school that he now reflects on as a regurgitation of racist ideas he had internalized in his youth. Coming to grips with our own racism is difficult. Throughout this book, Kendi will use personal stories to illustrate how “the heartbeat of racism is denial, and the heartbeat of antiracism is confession.” (235).

*Pause and reflect in light of the Psalmist's words*

How might Kendi's definitions of "racist" and "antiracist" help us move beyond paralysis when rehashing past errors or mistakes, and move into positive action?

### Questions for Discussion and Reflection

*(Pause and reflect after reading each question and before beginning discussion. When questions call for brainstorming, focus on concrete action items that arise in the discussion.)*

1. In chapter 1, Kendi describes his parents' participation in the Black liberation movement in theology and culture in the early 1970s. His father meets theologian James Cone and asks him what his definition of Christian is. What is your definition of Christian? How does it relate to Cone's definition of a Christian as: "A Christian is one who is striving for liberation?"
2. In chapter 2 "dueling consciousness," Kendi uses the exploration of this term, coined by W.E.B. Dubois as documented in the *Souls of Black Folk*, as a jumping off point for exploring the ways that racism and the lies of white supremacy shape the warring internal monologues of people of many racial identities in America. What did you take away from these passages?
3. In chapter 2, Kendi referenced Enlightenment philosopher David Hume's and Thomas Jefferson's quotes (32) on their views of Africans. Much - though not all - of the negative literature about Africans and others that came out of the Enlightenment Era was supported and upheld by the Church. How has that stance by the Church affirmed white supremacy in America and in the world? How do we honor the ideals of the *imago Dei* - God's image in each of us - and center that in the overarching mission of the Church?
4. Many of us have probably heard sermons over the years to the tune of "God loves all of us: white, brown, black, purple, or green...it doesn't matter what color our skin is!" What positive message is this trying to communicate? How does it miss the mark in teaching about race, and what it means for God - and for us - to love all people as they are? While God *does* love all of us, how can human love affirm our beautiful differences and acknowledge the reality of how these differences shape our experiences?
5. Many Americans are taught that race is an observational category, not a power category. Think about where you are in your journey of shifting your understanding about what race *is*. If you were to explain race to an alien visiting earth for the first time, how might you do it? What are some other categories we use that might be taught