



COMPANION RESOURCE

First Presbyterian Church of Greensboro, NC, is a large, predominantly Caucasian congregation. We were established in 1824 with twelve founding members. Four of them were enslaved, including three by the founding pastor, the Rev. William D. Paisley.

By April of 1859, another fourteen enslaved communicants had been added to the rolls, with another twenty-three baptized or admitted into the life of the church over the next seven years. With the end of the Civil War and the emancipation of all enslaved persons, the formerly enslaved members of First Presbyterian Church withdrew from the congregation and in 1867 founded Saint James Presbyterian Church. For 150 years First Presbyterian Church and Saint James Presbyterian Church shared this history, shared this story

CONTINUES ON BACK



Service of Reconciliation, First Presbyterian and Saint James Presbyterian, in 2017.

ACTIVITIES & EVENTS

FORMED

A Race Task Force, approved by the Session

READ AND DISCUSSED

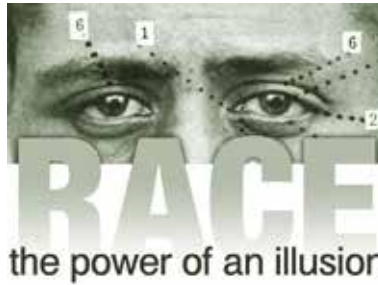
- *Facing Racism: A Vision of the Beloved Community*
- *The Secret Game* and had author, Scott Ellsworth, speak to congregation and community
- *Waking Up White* and had author, Debby Irving, speak to congregation and community
- *The 1619 Project*
- *Born a Crime* by Trevor Noah

VIEWED AND DISCUSSED

- [Race: The Power of an Illusion](#) – PBS series
- *Glory Train* – local theatre production
- *Green Book* – film
- *Emanuel* – film about the shooting at Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, SC, and hosted panel discussion with survivor

ATTENDED

- [Racial Equity Institute](#) workshop
- First Night services at Saint James Presbyterian Church
- Montreat conference on social justice
- Civil Rights Pilgrimage
- Tours of Civil Rights sites, local and national including International Civil Rights Museum in Greensboro



SPONSORED

- Table at annual MLK Breakfast
- Advocacy Training Day with PC(USA) Office of Public Witness
- [30-Day Racial Equity Journey](#)

ACKNOWLEDGED

- Created and presented series on Greensboro's historical incidents including the 1979 Massacre
- Heritage Proclamation written by the Race Task Force and adopted by the Session
- [Joint worship service](#) with Saint James Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Church with dedication of plaque acknowledging the history of racism in First Presbyterian Church

COMMITTED

- Became a Matthew 25 Congregation

RESOURCES



POLICIES

- PC(USA)'s "Facing Racism: A Vision of the Beloved Community" policy and study guide
- PC(USA) Matthew 25, Dismantling Structural Racism

DOCUMENTARY

- "Race: The Power of an Illusion"

BOOKS

- *The Secret Game* by Scott Ellsworth
- *Waking Up White* by Debby Irving
- *Born a Crime* by Trevor Noah

FPC WEBSITE

- 30-Day Racial Equity Journey
- Heritage Proclamation

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1 When were you first aware of race?

2 What is your first memory of race and what impact does this memory have on you today?

3 Race is the idea that the human species is divided into distinct groups on the basis of inherited physical and behavioral differences. Genetic studies in the late 20th century refuted the existence of biogenetically distinct races, and scholars now argue that “races” are cultural interventions reflecting specific attitudes and beliefs that were imposed on different populations in the wake of western European conquests beginning in the 15th century. (*Encyclopedia Britannica*) Do you agree?

4 Why are many white churches reluctant to talk about social justice today?

5 Describe the racial progress you have seen in your lifetime.

6 What opportunities does your church provide to discuss systematic racism?

7 What's your take on critical race theory and white privilege which seem to be the focus of much of white America's distaste for racial reconciliation?

8 What do you think is the hardest part of the reconciliation process?

9 Why should people of faith engage in social justice endeavors?

10 Has your church adopted the Matthew 25 vision? What has changed as a result?

without acknowledgment, reconciliation, or healing. Early in 2016 one of the Sunday school classes at First Presbyterian Church started a study to examine the impact of racism on our society and personal lives, our church, our community, our state, and country. This led to a recognition of the historical relationship between First Presbyterian Church and St. James Presbyterian, a relationship that was unknown to many. As Bryan Stevenson, the founder and executive director of the Equal Justice Initiative, shared in his speech in Greensboro's Bryan Series, "if you don't know your history you can't really begin to understand what your obligation is, what you should fear and what you should celebrate."

We have thoroughly examined our beliefs as Christians and the role of the church in alleviating the continued presence of racism in our society today. We have held numerous classes and workshops, film and book discussions, lunches, dinners and outings, study groups, family activities, etc. But this is a journey, and it continues as we strive to find ways to live and be as God created human beings, a diverse family, to live together and love one another as God loves us.

"A Journey Towards Racial Healing" is the story of First Presbyterian's journey thus far. Included in this resource guide is a list of activities we have done and participated in as well as questions to facilitate further discussion.

Our journey toward racial healing is not over. Our journey began with faith – faith in the dignity and the worth of every human being – and will continue with this as our guide. Our hope is that this documentary encourages other congregations to join us in this important endeavor. Church leaders and members are called to work to build circles of trust and accountability and to step out together in faith on this undertaking. It is not an easy thing to acknowledge and do, but one which we are called to take as followers of Jesus Christ. As John Lewis says, in Jon Meacham's book, *His Truth is Marching On*, "What can we do? What can you do? We have to try, we have to seek. We have to speak up."

We pray that this film leads to honest, open, and productive discussions and a possible way forward for others who seek to do the important work of racial healing.



Heritage Proclamation approved by First Presbyterian's Session and displayed at an entrance to the sanctuary.