

SUNDAY SCHOOL & SOCIAL JUSTICE MINISTRIES
2020 Summer Series

A 5-part summer series highlighting Biblical text addressing social justice issues using the literary work of Rev. Adam Taylor as a framework: Mobilizing Hope: Faith-Inspired Activism for a Post-Civil Rights Generation

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Welcome to the 2020 Sunday School and Social Justice Video Series!

We are excited to share in this five-part Bible study series that addresses social justice issues. This series reflects a collaboration between the Alfred Street Baptist Church Sunday School and Social Justice ministries. Upon completion of a Sunday School Bible study with a social justice theme, the partnership between the Sunday School and Social Justice ministry was organic. However, the partnership became more timely as the COVID-19 pandemic and racial tensions of 2020 placed a spotlight on social injustice. The goal of this series is to view social justice through a Biblical lens and present steps that can be taken as disciples to exercise active faith. The series will be guided by the literary work, [*Mobilizing Hope: Faith-Inspired Activism for a Post-Civil Rights Generation*](#), of Rev. Adam Taylor, who was one of the founding members of the Alfred Street Baptist Church Social Justice ministry.

This series addresses social justice issues specific to the five pillars of the Social Justice ministry: Criminal Justice Reform, Education Reform, Racial Justice and Reconciliation, Voter Education and Empowerment, and Economic Justice. Further, the series includes five videos and corresponding worksheets to guide your Bible study. Each [video](#) concludes with a Call to Action, which has been compiled on the following Social Justice Board. We believe in the collective power of our voices and action; however, we also have a role to play as individuals to hold our society accountable for social justice. Our challenge to you is to complete the Social Justice Board on the following page by the conclusion of the series and encourage someone else to take the actions outlined as well. The actions include civic engagement, increased education on the social justice issues presented, and advocacy that can be done from home. If you have already completed the activity outlined, take a few moments to share the activity with others and encourage them to complete it. As you complete and share these activities, you are invited to share with us what actions you have taken on this form (<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1r-TXle7pnkfxlhkKAS-siXGnrR6ae9EiAs9EFQxJTyA/edit>) so that we can track the number of individual acts taken to promote social justice.

Additionally, at the conclusion of this series, Rev. Taylor will provide a concluding webinar on August 29, 2020, where he will address the current state of our union regarding social justice, provide insight on additional ways we can engage as transformed nonconformists to further a more just society, and answer questions submitted during the series. Therefore, as you report your acts taken to promote justice, please submit any questions for Rev. Taylor on the [form](#).

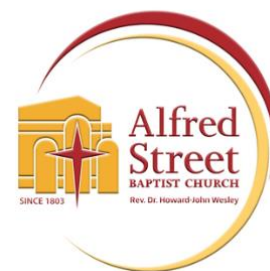
We look forward to engaging in this series with you.

Many Blessings,

Alfred Street Baptist Church Sunday School and Social Justice Ministries

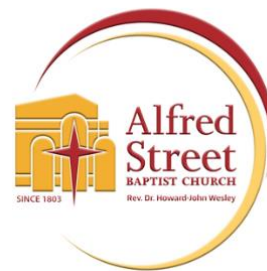
Sunday School + Social Justice

Social Justice Board



Education Reform	Criminal Justice Reform	Racial Justice and Reconciliation	Voter Education and Empowerment	Economic Justice
<p>READ: News article about local school district, school announcements, or school policy Search Local Public School</p>	<p>WATCH: Documentary 13th by Ava DuVernay or read related articles on film</p>	<p>ACTIVATE: Join or support a racial justice organization (i.e. NAACP or National Urban League)</p>	<p>VERIFY: Voter registration status and complete absentee ballot application, if applicable</p>	<p>WATCH: <i>Self-Made: Inspired by the Life of Madame C.J. Walker</i>, a Netflix miniseries</p>
<p>WRITE: Pledge to participate in education reform</p>	<p>READ: Book or Article on <i>How to Dismantle the "New Jim Crow"</i> by Michelle Alexander</p>	<p>READ: <i>Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People</i> by Mahzarin R. Banaji and Anthony G. Greenwald or watch presentation</p>	<p>CONTACT: A representative regarding an issue of concern</p>	<p>READ: <i>The Broken Ladder</i> by Keith Payne or feature in The Psychology of Inequality</p>
<p>LISTEN: Educational podcast, local radio stations, NPR program 1A</p>	<p>WRITE: Note of encouragement to someone who is or has been incarcerated</p>	<p>FOLLOW: Social justice advocate/group and share information with others Sample listing</p>	<p>LEARN: Names of local, state, and Congressional representatives</p>	<p>WRITE: 3 new goals to build personal and generational wealth for your family/community</p>
<p>VOTE: Input date of next local school board elections in planner and vote</p>	<p>LISTEN: Podcast on criminal justice reform</p>	<p>COMPLETE: Implicit bias survey by Harvard University</p>	<p>COMPLETE: 2020 Census</p>	<p>LISTEN: Song about poverty and economic inequality</p>

Sunday School + Social Justice Summer Series Part 1



Scripture Highlight: Isaiah 58

Suggested Reading: *Mobilizing Hope: Faith-Inspired Activism for a Post-Civil Rights* by Rev. Adam Taylor, Chapters 1-2

Video Location:

Opening Question: In this information age, why are social justice issues important?

The Hebrew words of **mishpat** (to govern or judge) and **tsedaqah** (righteousness, or the way things ought to be) show up over 1,000 times in the Bible. When you combine these words together, you get a deeper, more holistic definition of justice which is to restore right relationship between ourselves and God, our neighbors, and creation.

How does injustice affect your relationship with God, your neighbors, and creation?

Isaiah 58:6-12 (KJV)

6 Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?

7 Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?

8 Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rereward.

9 Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity;

10 And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon day:

11 And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.

12 And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in.

Isaiah 58:6-12 outlines there is a difference between the “superficial ritual” of fasting versus granting true justice and mercy. Committing acts of justice and mercy (verses 6-7) are connected to many rewards outlined in verses 8-12.

Acts of compassion or charity, while connected, are not the same as justice. Compassion or charity tends to meet or alleviate immediate needs and suffering while justice gets to the root causes of people’s needs and suffering. Our liberation and wholeness is connected to the liberation and wholeness of others. Only after we have fed the poor and broken the chains of injustice will our *light shine as the noontday* and we will be known as *repairers of the breach, restorer of streets with dwellings*.

Consider acts of compassion/charity and justice. What is an act of compassion or charity that you can transform into justice?	
Act of Compassion/Charity	Justice

As outlined in Isaiah 58, we are called to be concerned for those who are most vulnerable and marginalized: foreigners, widows, orphans, and the poor (Exodus 22:22; James 1:27; Psalm 68:5; Psalm 146:9; Job 29:12; Psalm 82:3; Jeremiah 7:5-7).

Kingdom Ethics by Glen Stassen and David Gushee outlines 4 themes of injustice addressed by Jesus:

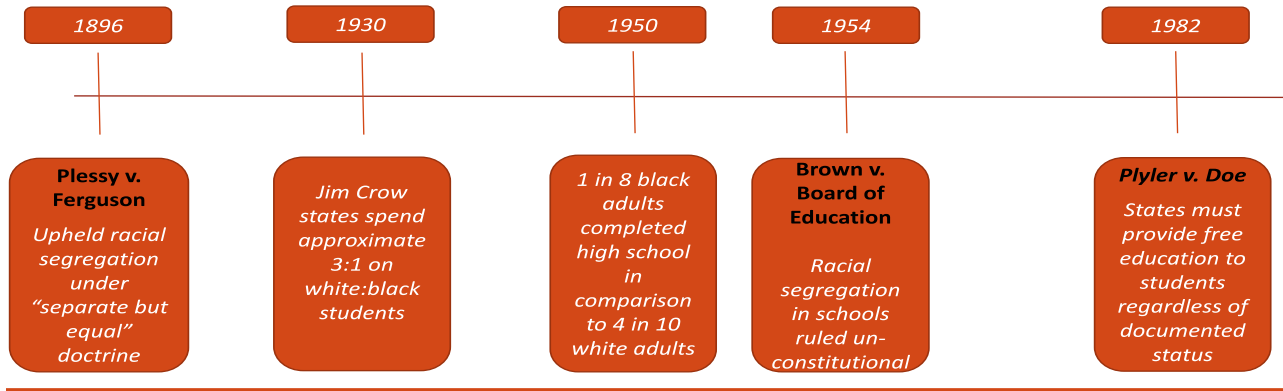
- Injustice of greed and exploitation (Mark 11:17)
- Domination (Mark 5:1-20)
- Violence (Matthew 5:38-40)
- Exclusion from community (Matthew 15:1-9)

<i>Reflecting on these four themes of injustice, how have you seen these themes of injustice present over the past three months?</i>	
Theme of Injustice	How Themes Have Presented
Injustice of greed and exploitation	
Domination	
Violence	
Exclusion from community	

What can you do to address at least one of these root causes of injustices? _____

Social Justice Pillar Highlight: Education Reform

Historical View of Education Reform in Legal System



In the field of education reform, we have historically seen all four elements of injustice outlined above. Exemplary, the Civil Rights movement addressed education inequities, such as the segregated school system with unequal pupil spending. However, *Brown v. Board of Education* marked a civil rights victory, with the Supreme Court ruling racial segregation in schools was unconstitutional. Also, in *Plyler v. Doe*, the Court ruled it is unconstitutional for a state to deny students access to public elementary or secondary education based on their immigration status. Yet, the work of education reform has not been completed, which is why education reform is a pillar for our Social Justice Ministry at Alfred Street Baptist Church.



Social Justice Ministry: Education Reform

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." Hosea 4:6 KJV

LEARNING

Proverbs 4:7

Wisdom is key.

A growth mindset is a strong predictor of achievement (Claro, Paunesku, & Dweck, 2016).

EXPERIENCE

James 2

Treat all equitably.

While some experience a rich array of curriculum offerings taught by highly experienced teachers in small classes supported by extensive resources, others attend schools where buildings are crumbling, classes are overcrowded, instructional materials are inadequate, and staff are often transient and underprepared (Darling-Hammond, 2018).

ACCOUNTABILITY TO GOD

2 Timothy 2:15

More than a test score...

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15, KJV).

RESOURCES

Proverbs 3:27

Share what is good.

Continued inequities deriving from our school funding systems results in the best supported students in our highest spending states and districts experiencing school spending about 10 times greater than our most poorly supported students (Darling-Hammond, 2018).

NEXT!

Nehemiah 4:6

Take action.

When schools, parents, families, and communities work together to support learning, students tend to earn higher grades, attend school more regularly, stay in school longer, and enroll in higher level programs (Van Roekel, 2008).

Call to Action

READ: News article about local school district, school announcements, or school policy

LISTEN: Educational podcast, local radio stations, NPR program 1A

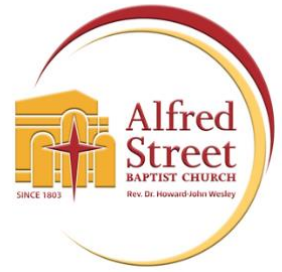
WRITE: A pledge to participate in education reform

VOTE: Input date of next local school board elections into planner and vote

Reflecting on Isaiah 58, why are you motivated to pursue justice?

How will you promote justice in the field of education reform? Which item(s) from the Call to Action will you complete over the next week?

Sunday School + Social Justice Summer Series Part 2



Scripture Highlight: Matthew 5:1-12

Suggested Reading: *Mobilizing Hope: Faith-Inspired Activism for a Post-Civil Rights* by Rev. Adam Taylor, Chapter 3

Video Location:

Opening Question: In your view, was Jesus political?

Consider a **Holistic Jesus**, a Savior that calls on his disciples to advance evangelism and social justice, seek both personal righteousness as well as communal righteousness, and develop a personal, loving relationship with God and with neighbors and strangers alike. How do you believe a Holistic Jesus would respond to oppressive forces in society?

Matthew 5:1-12 (KJV)

1 And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him:

2 And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

3 Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

5 Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

6 Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

7 Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

8 Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

9 Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

10 Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus outlines the “character, priorities, values, and norms of the new age Jesus came to inaugurate” to participate in the kingdom of God on earth. Our current society can seem to reward those who act contrary to these Beatitudes. Does the world reward the meek with an inheritance on earth? Does the world grant mercy to those in our criminal justice system? As we can see some present deviations from these principles, Jesus challenged the norms of His time. Specifically, Jesus outlined these attitudes as bringing blessings that come with advancing the kingdom of God.

As a follower of Jesus, it is important that we do not distort or narrowly define His identity and purpose. Historically, there have been at least six ways people often misread or overly restrict Jesus’s message and ministry: bling bling Jesus, apocalyptic Jesus, privatized Jesus, Che Jesus, apolitical Jesus, and Constantinian Jesus.

<i>Distorted Views of Jesus</i>	
Distorted View	Description
<i>Bling bling</i> Jesus	Views God as a heavenly ATM machine dispensing material blessings to reward those that tithe and are faithful
Apocalyptic Jesus	Argues that if the world is in decay and heading toward destruction, there is little point in making the world a better place; often based on misreading the book of Revelation
Privatized Jesus	Views a relationship with Christ as a private possession and the penultimate goal of Christianity, thus ignoring the call to also advance righteousness and justice in the world
Che Jesus	Named after Cuban revolutionary figure Che Guevara; focuses exclusively on the radical lens of liberation with Jesus’s sole purpose being defending and emancipating the poor and marginalized
Apolitical Jesus	Belief that engagement in politics will corrupt or undermine faith and that the church is called to be the primary or exclusive instrument of God’s righteousness and justice
Constantinian Jesus	Overly fuses faith with politics, with risk of Christianity being co-opted by politics

However, a Holistic Jesus balances faith and politics and challenges the need to identify with only one view of Jesus. Following a Holistic Jesus means embracing an active faith, disrupting injustice, and is constantly making all things new. Moreover, this view embodies the Beatitudes and refuses to get trapped in the narrow categories and confining labels of our culture.

<i>Selecting two distorted views of Jesus, what is an example of how you have seen these views expressed in society? How can these views be reconciled with a Holistic Jesus?</i>		
Distorted View of Jesus	Examples	Recommendation to Reconcile with Holistic Jesus

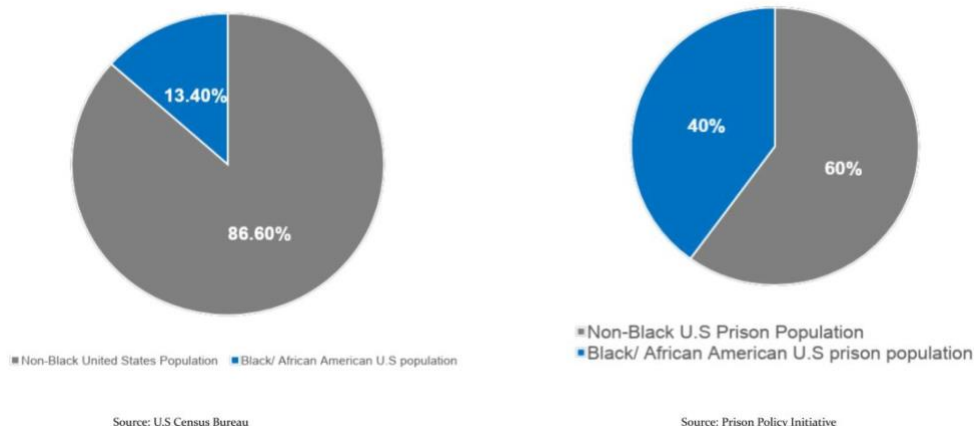
Social Justice Pillar Highlight: Criminal Justice Reform

A holistic view of Jesus is a dynamic view of Jesus that impacts all aspects of society. Jesus stated, *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy*. Consider how does this relate to our criminal justice system. Have we adopted a worldly view of “blessed are the merciful” or “blessed are the punitive”?

The United States is home to 5% of the world’s population and 25% of the world’s prison population. Of that number, African Americans are disproportionately incarcerated. African Americans comprise 13.40% of the U.S. population, but they make up 40% of the prison population. Once an individual has a criminal record, it can have a long-term impact. In 2010, 1 out of every 13 African Americans were subject to laws that restricted their voting rights because of past criminal system involvement. In a July 2018 report, the Prison Policy Initiative estimated that formerly incarcerated people face a higher rate of unemployment. Reviewing data from 2008 – the most recent year available – 27.3% of formerly incarcerated people were unemployed compared to 5.8% of the general population. Black women faced a great barrier to employment after incarceration – having an unemployment rate of 43.6%.

However, we have seen models regarding how criminal justice reform efforts can change societal norms. Since the 1880s, convicted felons in California, including those convicted of non-violent crimes, were prohibited from serving on juries. This is notable considering research shows that black men in California are imprisoned at a rate of 10 times more than white men. However, In October 2019, the California governor approved Senate Bill 310 or “The Right to a Jury of Your Peers”. Under this new law, people with previous felony convictions can now serve on a California jury if they are not on parole or probation, and they are not registered felony sex offenders.

Percentage of African Americans in the United States and Incarcerated



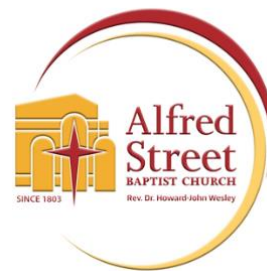
Call to Action



Reflecting on a holistic view of Jesus, how are you motivated to challenge societal norms, including in the criminal justice system, to promote the kingdom of God as outlined in Matthew 5:1-12?

How will you promote criminal justice reform? Which item(s) from the Call to Action will you complete over the next week?

Sunday School + Social Justice Summer Series Part 3



Scripture Highlight: Colossians 1:20 and Galatians 3:26-28

Suggested Reading: *Mobilizing Hope: Faith-Inspired Activism for a Post-Civil Rights* by Rev. Adam Taylor, Chapter 8

Video Location:

Opening Question: Where do you think we are as a nation in terms of racism and racial disparities?

Imago Dei, to be made in God's image, means human life is sacred and that every person has equal dignity and worth. Anything that assaults, undermines, or distorts that dignity or worth is a form of injustice. Racism mars the image of God, the divine imprint that is within every person.

Think of one way you have seen or experienced racism. How did this experience contradict or disfigure humans being made in God's image?

Galatians 3:26-28 (KJV)

26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

In writing the letter to the church at Galatia, Paul addresses the false teaching undermining the doctrine of justification by faith. False teachers argued that Gentiles must become Jewish converts and submit to Mosaic Law before becoming Christians (Galatians 1:7; 3). However, Galatians 3:28 provides there is a oneness through Jesus Christ. While the text acknowledges racial, social, and gender classifications, these differences do not undermine the spiritual equality among individuals before God. While we are spiritually equal, there are challenges that arise in managing our diversity. In outlining the ideal of the beloved community, drawing upon Dr. Martin Luther King's vision Rev. Adam Russell Taylor writes:

The beloved community is not achieved by erasing the diversity that is often a byproduct of our race and ethnicity, but instead seeks to build a society in which neither punishment nor privilege is viciously tied to racial or ethnic differences and our diversity becomes respected and celebrated.

<i>There are two elements outlined in the beloved community above. Consider each element and identify one way you can promote each.</i>	
Element of beloved community	Promotion
Neither punishment nor privilege is viciously tied to racial or ethnic differences	
Our diversity becomes respected and celebrated	

The question of reconciling racial disparities is addressed in Colossians 1:20.

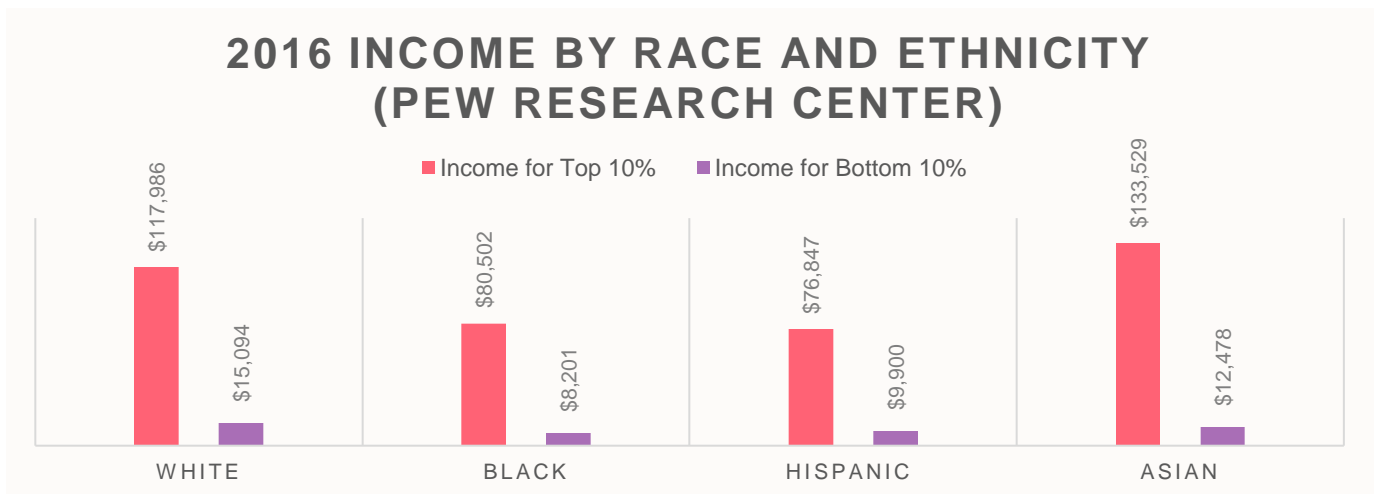
Colossians 1:20 (KJV):

20 And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.

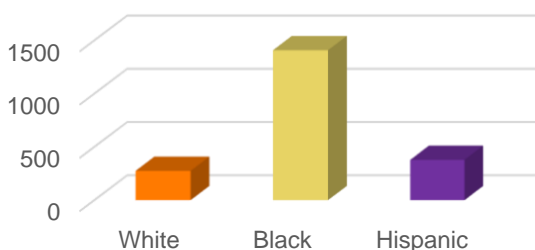
Reconciling racial disparities restores the world into alignment with God’s original plan. Thus, there is restoration between God and His people, restoration among people, and restoration between people and God’s creation. Reconciliation requires a “willingness to acknowledge wrongs done, extend forgiveness, and make restorative changes that help build trust that true justice and peace dwell together” (Center for Reconciliation at Duke University, footnote 16). Realizing our full God-given potential requires having access to opportunities that enable our gifts to flourish. Enjoying basic civil and human rights enables us to exercise agency. With these rights come responsibilities to advance the common good.

Social Justice Pillar Highlight: Racial Justice and Reconciliation

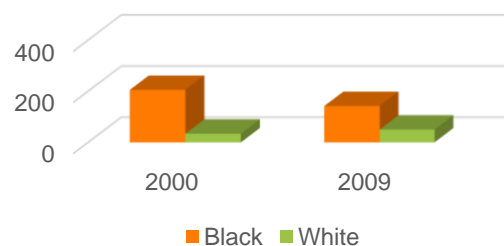
Racism is deeply entrenched in the fabric of America, grounded in the country’s origin and persisting through modern-day society. The history of racism can be divided into four specific eras: 1) the Slave Trade and Slavery; 2) Segregation; 3) the Civil Rights Movement, and 4) Contemporary America. Racial prejudice is embedded in many of our institutions, including the government, corporate entities, education systems, media, the criminal justice system, and housing. It can be direct, indirect, intentional, covert, structural, or unplanned.



Average Rate of Incarceration by Race/Ethnicity (Per 100,000)



Imprisonment Rate of Women by Race/Ethnicity (Per 100,000)



Discrimination based on race deprives individuals of their true expression of their humanity. Many Americans on a conscious level deny having racial biases, as well as how and to what degree racism has impacted the country. Thus, some social and political activists, practitioners, and researchers increasingly advocate for effective methods to overcome racism by understanding the nature, the causes, and the consequences of racism in American society.

Racial healing can be pursued individually, communally, and across society. To achieve racial healing, we must acknowledge our commonalities as one human race as well as the historical and present impact of racism. Further, we must build transformative relationships. Imperative to racial healing, racial reconciliation is defined as the restoration of friendly race relations, which also requires achieving greater justice. There are six methods of racial reconciliation that have been highlighted below.

Methods of Racial Reconciliation	
Method	Overview
Narrative Change	Promoting positive narratives in media, journalism, entertainment, commemorative structures, and school curricula, to transform people's negative, unsubstantiated beliefs and behaviors toward others.
Racial Healing & Relationship Building	Directing efforts to make amends for past ills and their remnants, promoting respectful intergenerational relationships irrespective of race and ethnicity, and valuing the humanity of others.
Separation	Evaluating and selecting methods to reduce segregation and poverty in communities and promote equitable access to work opportunities, education, and healthcare.
Law	Assessing discriminatory outcomes of civil and criminal laws and resulting policy in addition to advocating for solutions that will produce a more just application of the law.
Economy	Examining constraints to equal economic opportunities and promoting initiatives that support economic equality.
Reparations	Acknowledging the economics of slavery and segregation followed by assessing appropriate mechanisms to compensate the descendants of slaves and eradicate racial injustice.

Social contact and education are two critical elements in reducing prejudice. Select one method of racial reconciliation and identify how you can uniquely use this method: _____

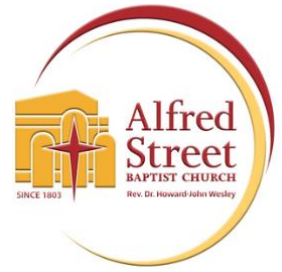
Call to Action



Reflecting on Galatians 3:26-28, what efforts will you take to promote racial reconciliation?

How will you promote racial justice and reconciliation? Which item(s) from the Call to Action will you complete over the next week?

Sunday School + Social Justice Summer Series Part 4



Scripture Highlight: Romans 13; Luke 18:1-8

Suggested Reading: *Mobilizing Hope: Faith-Inspired Activism for a Post-Civil Rights* by Rev. Adam Taylor, Chapters 3 and 10

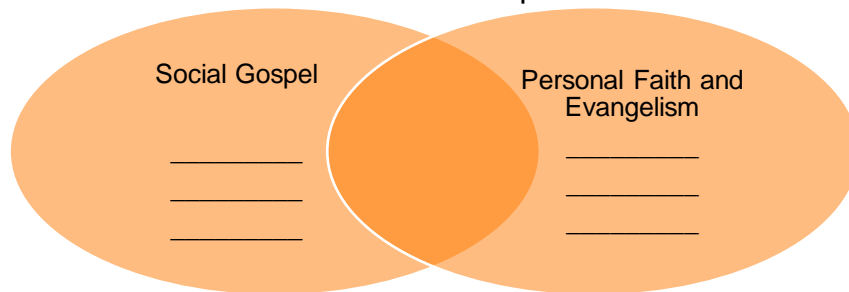
Video Location:

Opening Question: On a scale of 1-5, how much does your faith shape your political beliefs?

1 2 3 4 5

Can you identify at least two areas where your faith influences your position on a political issue?

The **intersection of faith and politics** includes a spectrum that has emerged between an often times more theologically liberal emphasis on promoting a social gospel and a more conservative emphasis on personal faith and evangelism. What are some political issues that you believe are currently addressed primarily as a social gospel issue or personal faith and evangelism issue? How can these issues be reconciled and transcend both positions?



Romans 13:1-7 (KJV)

1 Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

2 Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.

3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same:

4 For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.

5 Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.

6 For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing.

7 Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

Romans 13:3-4 outline two functions of government: (1) exercise authority over citizens to restrain evil and (2) promote the common good. In exercising authority to restrain evil, modern societies have created structures, such as police forces, the military, and court systems. Further, in advancing the common good, governments address deficits unaddressed by a free market, such as creating greater access to health care, providing social safety net programs, and creating environmental protections. While we submit to governmental authority to provide these two functions, these powers are not granted without accountability measures for citizens to uphold. The American governmental system has essential checks and balances of the voting structure and advocacy mechanisms to facilitate a government that does not exercise these powers in a vacuum. However, whenever there are deficiencies in a governmental system, we have a biblical model of how we can appeal to governmental authority to address injustice in Luke 18:1-8, the Parable of the Widow.

Luke 18:1-8 (KJV)

1 And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;

2 Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man:

3 And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary.

4 And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man;

5 Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.

6 And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith.

7 And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?

8 I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

This parable outlines the story of a widow, who was one of the most vulnerable members of her community during Jesus's time. The widow had been victimized and was seeking justice. While we do not know what injustice she faced, we know that she was persistent in advocating her cause. She was so persistent that an unjust judge, who did not fear God or regard man, granted her justice due to her sheer will and out of self-interest. This parable provides at least 2 lessons: (1) although injustices may not be corrected immediately, persistence can motivate even the unjust and self-interested to enact justice, and (2) even the most disenfranchised and marginalized members of society can make a difference and obtain justice. In the Letter from a Birmingham Jail, Dr. King distinguishes between just and unjust law:

A just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law, or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law. To put it in the terms of St. Thomas Aquinas, an unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal and natural law. Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust.

– Letter from a Birmingham Jail by Martin Luther King, Jr.

It is important to note when and how we should refuse to submit to authority that is unjust and corrupt. Even more, we should never underestimate the power we possess, particularly when we act collectively. We exercise power through our money, assets, authority, relationships and connections, information and knowledge, spiritual identity, and culture and traditions. As a matter of discipleship, we have a responsibility to be good stewards of that power. In *Mobilizing Hope*, there are 5 areas of stewardship noted for our consideration:

Types of Stewardship	Consideration
Financial stewardship	Looking at your personal budget as a moral document, what does it say about your values and what you are willing to sacrifice on behalf of others and just causes?
Civic stewardship	With imperfect candidates on a ballot, are you using your best judgment to select a candidate that is most qualified and who embodies your values? If you are not exercising your right to vote, are you content with your nonvote representing passive approval of whomever is elected?
Consumer stewardship	Look at one product in front of you – such as your phone, computer, or television. How knowledgeable are you regarding the production of this product, where the product comes from, the working conditions where the product is made, and the values of the company who makes the product?
Environmental stewardship	How has God’s creation been impacted by your lifestyle choices today, including the rising threat of climate change?
Relational stewardship	In being called to love our neighbor as ourselves, what do your relationships say about your commitment to this value?

Using a system of 1(most diligence) to 5 (least diligence), how would you rank your stewardship in the five areas outlined in <i>Mobilizing Hope</i>? How can you improve in each area, with emphasis on the area you are least diligent (ranked 5)?		
Type of Stewardship	Ranking	Ways to Improve in this Area of Stewardship
Financial stewardship		
Civic stewardship		
Consumer stewardship		
Environmental stewardship		
Relational stewardship		


Social Justice Pillar Highlight: Voter Education and Empowerment

Through civic engagement, people strengthen their skills and voices to cultivate positive change and improve conditions for humanity as a whole. A civically engaged population requires informed concern, motivation, and active participation. Some examples of civic engagement include volunteering, political activism, and voting. Social change comes from seemingly small acts of civic engagement that advocates for specific action from elected officials.

Like the Persistent Widow, African-Americans advocated for the right and ability to vote. Black men gained the right to vote under the 15th Amendment in 1870. However, black women were not equally afforded this right. Consequently, advocates such as Sojourner Truth and Fredrick Douglass led a decades-long campaign for women's voting rights beginning at the Convention at Seneca Falls in 1848 and ending with the enactment of the 19th Amendment in 1919. Having the right to vote, African Americans yet faced many barriers to voting, including violence and intimidation. Through persistent advocacy, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was passed to address barriers imposed at the state and local levels to preclude African Americans from voting.

Civic disengagement implicitly gives "license to the people in power to carry out decisions in our name" (Adams at p. 86). The inconvenient truth is that many people do not vote. The United States has one of the lowest voter turnout rates in the world. In 2016, 43 percent of eligible voters — nearly 100 million people — did not cast a ballot in the presidential election. Only 59.6% of non-Hispanic, Black people voted in 2016. Yet, there is hope as 2018 marked the first time since 1982 that the voter turnout rate in midterm elections surpassed 50% and reflected the most racially and ethnically diverse ever in a midterm election.

While the Presidential elections are important, it is important to vote in off-year elections. Voting in all elections minimizes voter suppression as state boards of elections routinely purge inactive voters. Further, state and local officials are elected during off-year elections. These locally elected officials like city and county executives make decisions that directly impact communities, including hiring and firing police chiefs. As President Obama once stated, "don't boo, vote." Activism and voting go hand in hand.



**SAVE THE DATE:
2020 General Election
Tuesday, November 3rd**

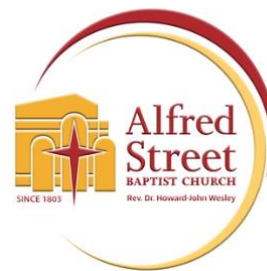
Call to Action



Reflecting on the Parable of the Widow in Luke 18:1-8, what action can you take on today to exercise good civic stewardship?

How will you promote voter education and empowerment? Which item(s) from the Call to Action will you complete over the next week?

Sunday School + Social Justice Summer Series Part 5



Scripture Highlight: Mark 12:28-31 and 1 Samuel 17:38-40

Suggested Reading: *Mobilizing Hope: Faith-Inspired Activism for a Post-Civil Rights* by Rev. Adam Taylor, Chapters 5 and 6

Video Location:

Opening Question: What are some similarities and differences between a typical Fortune 500 company CEO and Jesus?

Similarities: _____

Differences: _____

Rugged individualism is defined by the often selfish pursuit of one's goals and interests while discounting our interdependence and a more communal mindset. Constructively, rugged individualism promotes entrepreneurship, innovation, and the American dream. Yet, rugged individualism can result in isolation and weakening of communities. How does rugged individualism comport with Christ's mandate to love our neighbors as ourselves and to be our brother's and sister's keeper?

Mark 12:28-31 (KJV)

28 And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all?

29 And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:

30 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.

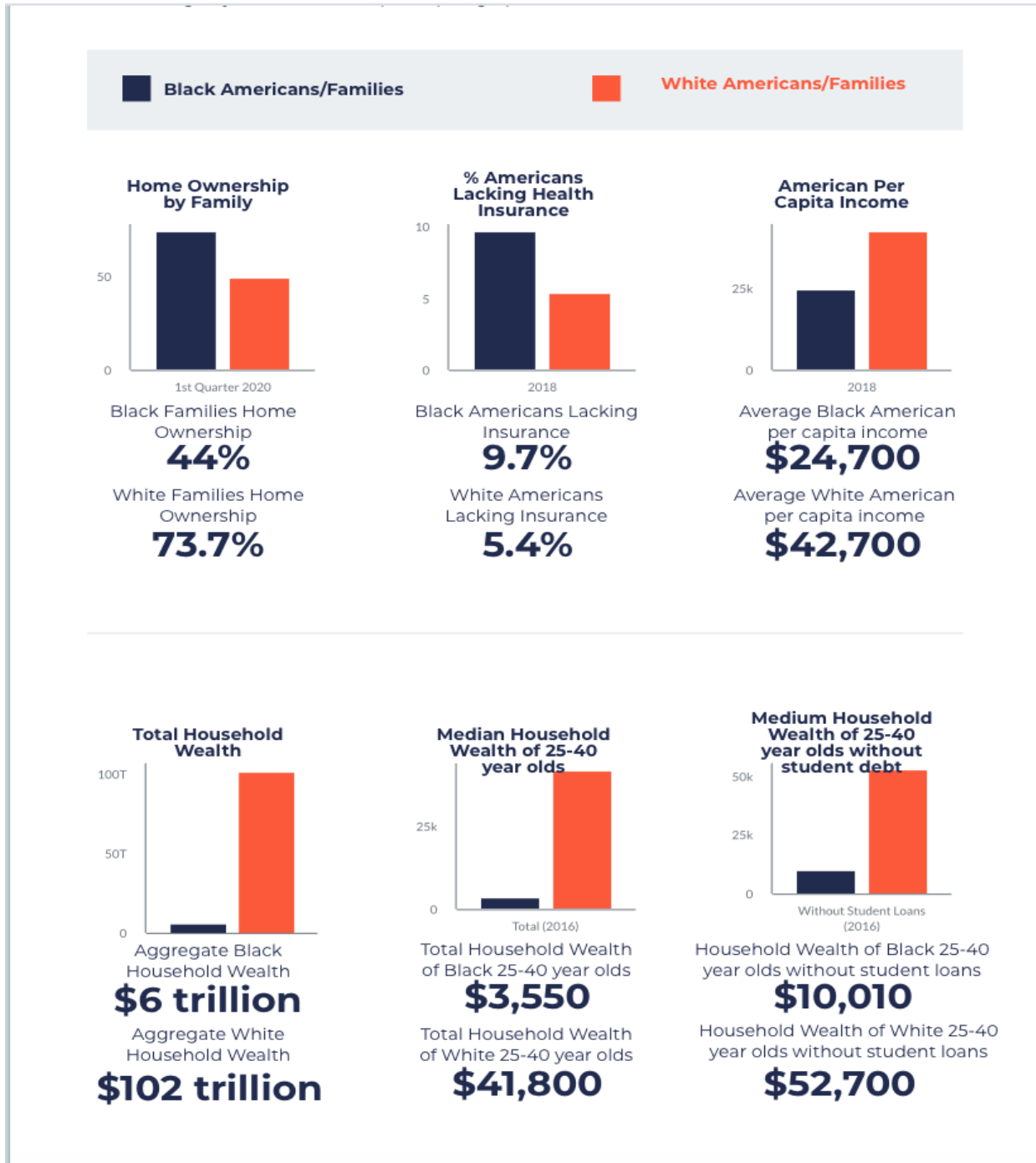
31 And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these

When asked by one of the teachers of the law which commandment was the greatest in Mark 12:28, He replied with two commandments. First, Jesus instructed to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, mind, and strength. Next, He outlined what has become known as the “Golden Rule”: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. While often stated you should treat someone the way you would like to be treated, there is *mutuality* and *interdependence* outlined in the text. As outlined in *Mobilizing Hope*, our vertical relationship with God empowers and calls us into a horizontal relationship with others. Our faith is not a private possession for our singular benefit but rather as a contagious, public good.

<i>Our well-being is connected to others through mutuality and interdependence. How have these two principles impacted your vertical relationship with God and horizontal relationship with others over the past week.</i>	
Relationship	Impact of <i>Mutuality</i> and <i>Interdependence</i> on these Relationships
Vertical Relationship	
Horizontal Relationship	

Social Justice Pillar Highlight: Economic Justice

Economic justice has been defined as “a set of moral principles for building economic institutions, the ultimate goal of which is to create an opportunity for each person to create a sufficient material foundation upon which to have a dignified, productive, and creative life beyond economics” (Galea). However, there are several facts and figures demonstrating economic inequality outlined below.



In order to adequately address pervasive economic injustices, we must find ways to enact both macro- and micro- level changes. On a macro-level, individuals can get involved with an organization that promotes and enacts large-scale policy and legislation for economic justice. For reference, the Community Action Partnership contains an aggregate listing of Community Action Agencies that direct funding for greater opportunity (<https://communityactionpartnership.com/find-a-cap/>). On a micro-level, individuals can commit to support Black-owned businesses or volunteer to support local organizations who regularly assist low-income and minority populations to overcome challenges related to economic injustice.

While the task of achieving social justice is large, we can be encouraged by the story of David and Goliath.

1 Samuel 17:38-40 (KJV)

38 And Saul armed David with his armour, and he put an helmet of brass upon his head; also he armed him with a coat of mail.

39 And David girded his sword upon his armour, and he assayed to go; for he had not proved it. And David said unto Saul, I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them. And David put them off him.

40 And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag which he had, even in a scrip; and his sling was in his hand: and he drew near to the Philistine.

In 1 Samuel 17, David “reconfigured the battlefield” by using his gifts and activating his faith in battle against Goliath with only a sling-shot and five stones. There are many modern Goliaths, such as economic injustice, voter suppression, poverty, criminal justice system inequality, and education inequality. Yet, as outlined in *Mobilizing Hope*, we can conquer our modern-day Goliaths. In these battles, we can conquer Goliaths by transforming and overcoming the following barriers in the following ways:

Inertia	• Palpable sense of urgency
Fear	• Hope
Apathy	• Anger (righteous indignation)
Self-doubt	• Agency
Isolation	• Solidarity

Call to Action



Reflecting on 1 Samuel 17:38-40, how will you use your gifts to combat a modern-day Goliath?

How will you promote economic reform? Which item(s) from the Call to Action will you complete over the next week?

Sunday School + Social Justice Summer Series Notes

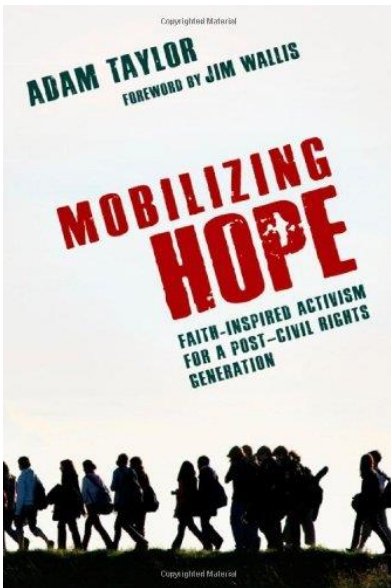




About the Author:

Rev. Adam Russell Taylor is the executive director of Sojourners and author of *Mobilizing Hope: Faith-Inspired Activism for a Post Civil Rights Generation*. Taylor previously led the Faith Initiative at the World Bank Group and served as the Vice President of Advocacy at World Vision U.S. and the Senior Political Director at Sojourners. He has also served as the executive director of Global Justice, an organization that educates and mobilizes students around global human rights and economic justice. Taylor is a graduate of Emory University, the Harvard University Kennedy School of Government, and the Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology. Taylor

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Book Overview: Martin Luther King Jr. read the words of the apostle Paul to the church in Rome--"Be transformed by the renewing of your mind"--as a call not to retreat from the world but to lead the world into the kingdom of God, where peace and justice reign. In King's day the presenting problem was entrenched racism; the movement of God was a revolution in civil rights and human dignity. Now Adam Taylor draws insights from that movement to the present, where the burden of the world is different but the need is the same.

Jim Wallis writes in the foreword, *Mobilizing Hope* "is a story of how Adam and many of his cohorts are shaping the next strategies for faith-based social change; a theology for social justice; a spirituality for young activists; a handbook for those who want to experiment with activism and search out their own vocation in the world; and a strategy manual that draws lessons from past movements for change."

See what today's transformed nonconformists are doing at home and abroad to keep in step with the God of justice and love, and find ways you can join the new nonconformists in an activism of hope.

Alfred Street Baptist Church Sunday School Ministry

Mission: The Sunday School Ministry is committed to moving members from *Membership to Discipleship*. “Information and Explanation are Foundational to our teaching, but Transformation is the Goal!” Therefore, we focus on teaching believers to obey him in every aspect of their lives and to develop a relationship with Christ that leads to becoming fully committed followers of Christ.

Goal: Jesus gives us a clear and concise ministry goal in Matthew 28:19-20 (KJV): *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.* Contact: sundayschool@alfredstreet.org

Values

Family: open, safe space where people can collectively study the Bible across all demographics without barriers

Equipping: providing sound, Bible-based instruction that promotes growth as a disciple and responds to current events

Discipleship: growing individually and collectively as disciples ready to recruit new disciples and lead/serve in the body of the church and beyond

Classes

Adult Division:

Saturday Adult Sunday School
Adult I Sunday School Class
Adult II Sunday School Class
Adult III (Young Adult) Sunday School Class
Moms and Babies Sunday School Class
Men’s Ministry Sunday School Class

Youth Division

Middle School Sunday School Class
High School Sunday School Class

Childrens Division

Preschool School Sunday School Class
Kindergarten-1st Grade Sunday School Class
2nd-3rd Grade Sunday School Class
4th-5th Grade Sunday School Class

ALFRED STREET BAPTIST CHURCH

SOCIAL JUSTICE MINISTRY

Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley, Senior Pastor



OUR MISSION

The Social Justice Ministry of Alfred Street Baptist Church works to address the root causes of modern day injustice. The ministry seeks to serve as a clearinghouse to raise awareness and share information, convener of social justice events and action, and catalyst to increase commitment within Alfred Street Baptist Church to advance justice in the Washington D.C. area, nation, and world.

5 PILLARS



VOTER EDUCATION EMPOWERMENT

To provide resources and educational opportunities to all eligible citizens to ensure that all who want to participate civically know their rights and that they're prepared to engage in both local and national electoral processes. We do this through canvassing, voter registration drives, candidates forums and political education on voter suppression, gerrymandering, the Census, and restoring rights initiatives.

Jeremiah 1:9-10



EDUCATION REFORM

To increase awareness around the state of our education system, specifically where inequity is concerned by (1) addressing issues like inequitable distribution of resources and funding, local and federal education legislation, the achievement gap, the school-to-prison pipeline and others; and (2) collaborating with church and community partners to highlight educational opportunities and resources like scholarships, career trainings and professional development.

Proverbs 3:14, James 1:15, Proverbs 1:5, Mark 9:36-37, and Matt 18:14



RACIAL JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION

Through strategic community partnerships and alliances, promote justice and equality by (1) providing the church, ministry members and the broader community with opportunities to expand our understanding of racism as a central root cause of systemic inequality and oppression; and (2) fostering critical conversations and practices to facilitate healing and reconciliation.

Romans 9:22-24, Romans 1:16, 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, Micah 6:8, and Galatians 3:28



CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

To create opportunities to educate the church and local community about the impact unjust criminal sentencing policies and mass incarceration have on black people and people of color, while also highlighting and addressing the complexities associated with returning citizens' reentry into society.

Proverbs 31:8-9, Leviticus 19:15, Psalm 106:3, Luke 6:37 (returning citizens), and Romans 3:23



ECONOMIC JUSTICE

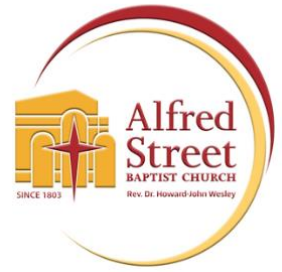
To address the root causes of economic inequality in our communities by (1) reviewing official policies to assure they provide for equal allocation of resources; and (2) creating opportunities for deepened education and practice around economic justice to aid in the dismantling of systems that allow issues like job insecurity, homelessness, food insecurity and hunger to persist in our society.

Proverbs 31:8-9, Proverbs 14:31, and James 5:4



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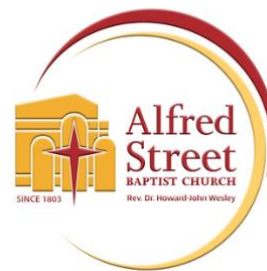
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Sunday School + Social Justice Summer Series Acknowledgements



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