

YOUNG ADULT ADVOCACY GUIDE

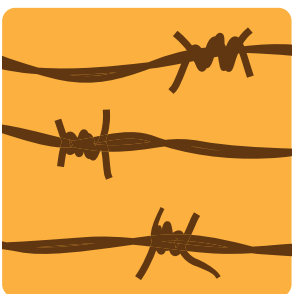


Presbyterian Mission
**Presbyterian Ministry
at the United Nations**



Presbyterian Mission
**Office of
Public Witness**





MESSAGE

Dear Reader,
The challenges of our time can seem daunting, from climate change to a world recovering from the covid pandemic. It may seem more so for young people who've been given the task of solving these problems.

Since its existence, the Church has been addressing these intractable issues, from eradicating poverty, hunger, and the exploitation of the earth and its people.

Our denomination, Presbyterian Church (USA), has been engaging in the Matthew 25 Vision that calls upon the church to care for the most vulnerable and to seek flourishing of all God's people, specifically to fight poverty, racism, seek climate justice, gender justice, to embrace peacemaking, and human dignity for all people.

We invite you to be part of this community working for justice, doing so as people of faith. Each of us can identify ways we can be involved, both individually and collectively, with our churches and communities by focusing on areas where our passions lie and where we can be most effective.

And in turn we pray that you will grow as you discern how to respond to God's call to walk alongside the world's people and restore the Shalom God intends for all people and creation!

In Christ,

Jimmie Hawkins

Jimmie Hawkins
Director of the PC(USA)
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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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INTRODUCTION

This curriculum is meant to introduce participants — whether in a group or individually — to the topic of advocacy. Young people will spend some time thinking about what advocacy means, how it can take shape in their own lives, how it fits into a life of faith and ways in which they can get involved in advocacy in the world around them. This introductory lesson to the Young Adult Advocacy Curriculum will prepare participants to begin to talk about more specific advocacy issues in later lessons. With that in mind, as you go through this lesson, be sure to spend some time here because this will build an important foundation for the discussions to come. Plan to allot about one hour to go over each lesson with your small group.



PRAYER

God of hope, we desire to make your hope known across the earth.

God of love, we want your love to exist in spaces of hurt.

God of freedom, we long for your freedom to exist for all who are currently bound in systems of oppression.

God of peace, with everything we do, we strive to spread your peace, which surpasses all understanding.

Help us to spend our lives loving as you love.

Help us to spend all of our days advocating as you advocate for those in need.

Amen.

- ❖ *Group: Leaders, begin your small group time by leading your group in prayer using this prayer or feel free to pray on your own or invite a group member to pray for the group.*
- ❖ *Individual: Begin your time of reflection in prayer! You may read this prayer or just spend some time in silence. Feel free to take some time to write out your own prayer about advocacy as well.*



OPENING QUESTION

What do you think it means to advocate for another person? How would you advocate for a friend?

- ❖ *Group: Leaders, during this time, it is important to give each person in your small group an opportunity to share their response to this question. This will begin to engage their personal experience with the topic.*
- ❖ *Individual: If you are going through this study on your own, take a few minutes to journal about (or draw) what comes to mind when you hear the word peacemaking.*



LESSON FOCUS

According to the Penn State Office of Educational Equity, “Social Justice Advocacy has been defined as organized efforts aimed at influencing public attitudes, policies and laws to create a more socially just society guided by the vision of human rights that may include awareness of socio-economic inequities, protection of social rights as well as racial identity, experiences of oppression and spirituality.”

In other words, advocacy is all about defending and protecting those who have been oppressed and marginalized. Throughout the next few weeks, we will spend our time diving into five different advocacy issues: Climate Justice, Racial Injustice, Equality for Women, Migration/Refugees and Peacemaking. We will learn about the injustices done in each of these categories and then learn what it means to advocate for those who have been directly affected by these injustices.



QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- At this point, what do you think advocacy means?
 - Which topic are you most excited to learn about right now?
 - Do you feel called to get involved with a particular advocacy issue at this point? If so, which one?
 - How have you seen people in your life participate in advocacy issues?
 - How have you seen the church be an advocate for those who have been oppressed or marginalized?
 - What do you think it means to create a more socially just society?
 - Spend time brainstorming what you think some basic human rights are.
- ❖ *Group: Leaders, spend some time going through these questions with your small group. You do not need to move through the questions in any particular order, but try to get to as many of them as possible. The main point of this section is to encourage your group to begin thinking critically about what advocacy is and why it is important for us to take part in it.*
 - ❖ *Individuals: Spend some time journaling your responses to as many of these questions as you can. When you're done, feel free to discuss them with a family member or a friend, too!*



READ

At the United Nations' 65th Commission on the Status of Women, one leader declared, "Advocacy is worship and worship is advocacy."

Keep in mind, advocacy refers to defending and protecting those in our communities and world who have been oppressed or marginalized. It is all about caring for those around us and giving voice to the voiceless. And worship, as you know, is a way of responding to and participating in God's love in the world. Worship can look like going to church or singing or praying or journaling or a lot of other things. Even advocacy can be a form of worship. Let's spend some time thinking about what we think this means.



REFLECT

- What do you think this quote means?
 - What do you think it looks like for advocacy to be worship?
 - What do you think it looks like for worship to be advocacy?
 - Do you think one is more important than the other? Why or why not?
 - Why do you think advocacy is a form of worship?
 - When have you encountered worship that looks like advocacy or advocacy that looks like worship?
 - How can you practice worship as advocacy in your life?
- ❖ *Group: Leaders, spend some time going through these questions with your small group.*
 - ❖ *Individuals: Spend some time journaling your responses to these questions. When you're done, feel free to discuss them with a family member or a friend, too!*



READ

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and



you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.' Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'You who are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels, for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and did not take care of you?' Then he will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' And these will go away into eternal punishment but the righteous into eternal life."

Matthew 25:31–46

- ❖ *Group/Individuals: Take some time to read this passage from the Gospel of Matthew either aloud or silently. You are welcome to read any version, but we always recommend the NRSV as that is what we read together in church!*

Note: The Presbyterian Mission Agency is currently following a Matthew 25 vision and is encouraging churches to become Matthew 25 churches. This vision calls us to actively engage in the world around us, so our faith comes alive and we wake up to new possibilities. The Matthew 25 vision has three main focuses: to build congregational vitality, to dismantle structural racism and to eradicate systemic poverty. For more on this Matthew 25 vision, visit presbyterianmission.org/ministries/matthew-25.



REFLECT

- What stood out to you from this passage from Matthew 25?
 - What challenged you from this passage? What do you feel like it was challenging you to do?
 - I'm sure you've heard this passage before, but now, reading it through the lens of advocacy, did you hear it differently than you have before? How so?
 - Who is the sick or the thirsty or the hungry or the naked or the imprisoned in your world right now? How is God calling you to care for them?
 - What does this passage teach you about advocacy?
 - How did Jesus practice advocacy in his ministry?
 - How do you think we, as Christians, are called uniquely to advocate in this world just like Jesus did?
- ❖ *Group: Leaders, spend some time going through these questions with your small group. You do not need to move through the questions in any particular order, but try to get to as many of them as possible. The main point of this section is to encourage your group to begin thinking critically about what advocacy is and why it is important for us to take part in it.*
 - ❖ *Individuals: Spend some time journaling your responses to as many of these questions as you can. When you're done, feel free to discuss them with a family member or a friend, too!*



CLOSE IN PRAYER

God who knows my name,
Give me the strength and courage to name injustices
In the world, in this society and in my own life.
Grant me a new vision to see your work here on earth.
Grant me new ears to hear the voices of all your children.
As I learn, grow and am fed in your spirit,
Lead me to new understanding and compassion.
Help me speak the truth of your righteousness
In all that I say and do.
In the name of the One who named justice in his life and resurrection, I pray,

Amen.

A prayer from Advocacy as Discipleship: A People Called to Witness

WHAT'S NEXT: HOW TO GET INVOLVED

- **Learn more and get involved:** There is a lot to learn about advocacy and there are many ways to get involved (which we will be learning in the weeks to come. For now, this is a great place to start: presbyterianmission.org/get-involved.
- **Advocate online:** We can do such great advocacy right from our phones and laptops. You can communicate with legislators via email, Twitter, Facebook, etc., or share about advocacy issues on social media!
- **Do some reading:** There is a lot of material to dive into that discusses advocacy, but why not turn to Scripture to see what the Bible has to say about advocacy? We recommend The Poverty and Justice Bible.
- **Attend Ecumenical Advocacy Days:** The PC(USA)'s Office of Public Witness helps host an annual gathering of Christian advocates and activists on Capitol Hill. On top of that, their website contains a ton of great information about advocacy as a whole. You can learn more here: <https://advocacydays.org>
- **Stay in the know:** It is helpful to start off by signing up for PC(USA) Office of Public Witness's action alerts to different advocacy issues and ways to get involved. You can do so here: capwiz.com/pcusa/mlm/signup.
 - ❖ *Group/Individuals: At this point, we would love to encourage you and your small groups to find ways to get involved in advocacy in your communities, churches and wider world. With that, we have provided you with resources to get more involved and will provide you with more specific resources for each advocacy issue in the coming weeks.*



Lesson Plan: PEACEMAKING

INTRODUCTION

This curriculum is meant to introduce participants — whether in a group or individually — to the topic of peacemaking. The objective is to think about how we are called to create a space of peace in a world that often turns to violence and destruction.



PRAYER

God Listen to “Instrument Of Peace” by The Porter’s Gate. It is available on Spotify, Apple Music or you can listen to it on YouTube at [youtube.com/watch?v=d0ZYPpqcIP0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d0ZYPpqcIP0).



OPENING QUESTION

What is the first image that comes to mind when you hear the word peacemaking?

- ❖ *Group: Leaders, during this time, it is important to give each person in your small group an opportunity to share their response to this question. This will begin to engage their personal experience with the topic.*
- ❖ *Individual: If you are going through this study on your own, take a few minutes to journal about (or draw) what comes to mind when you hear the word peacemaking.*



LESSON FOCUS

Simon Doong, a former young adult volunteer at the Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations and the Associate for Peacemaking with the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, shares that “peacemaking is not simply the absence of conflict. It is when all people live in a world free of violence and where conflicts and disagreements are resolved without the use of violence.” Additionally, he reminds us that “peacemaking is central to our faith as Christians, intersects with other justice issues in our world, and is an endeavor that is strengthened when done in community with others.”

In other words, all of our advocacy has peacemaking at its core. In all that we do, in all of our work, in all of our giving voice to the voiceless, we are working to create peace.

Unfortunately, it is no secret that there is a lot of violence in our world today. At any given moment, we can turn on local, national or international news to hear about the violence all across the world. In fact, every day it seems to be getting worse.

As Doong points out, “there are many examples of conflict and violence in various areas of our world: gun violence, wars in Russia and Ukraine, police brutality, the Israel-Palestine conflict, anti-Asian hate, the Korean Peninsula and the list goes on. But there are also many examples of people trying to overcome conflict through dialogue and understanding. It isn’t easy work, and it doesn’t always make news headlines. But it’s important and necessary to transform our world so that everyone can live their lives to the fullest as God has called them.”

As Christians, as advocates, it is our call to be a part of this hard, but necessary work. Again, Doong names this reality of our faith, sharing that “peacemaking is integral to each believer’s personal calling, an inner response to God, who loves the whole world and whose Spirit calls for and empowers the making of peace. Peace is mentioned 250 times in the NRSV translation of the Bible. We are called to be peacemakers in our world as followers of Jesus, the Prince of Peace. This includes advocacy and action.”

Today, we will be diving deeper into what this looks like and how we can be better informed and get more involved.



PEACEMAKING



QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Where do you see violence happening, in an attempt to resolve conflict, in the world around you? What does this look like?
- Can you think of any times when you saw conflict resolved without the use of violence? What did this look like?
- How do you think this work of peacemaking connects to all of the advocacy issues discussed throughout this curriculum?
- Doong points out that peacemaking is strengthened when it is done in community. How do you think we, as Christians, are called to participate in peacemaking in community? What do you think this could look like in our schools, churches and workplaces?
- We just learned that peace is mentioned 250 times in the NRSV translation of the Bible. Why do you think this is significant?
- When you think about the stories in Scripture, how do you see God revealed as the Prince of Peace? What do you think this means for us as Christians called to live in the image of God?

- ❖ *Group: Leaders, spend some time going through these questions with your small group. You do not need to move through the questions in any particular order, but try to get to as many of them as possible. The main point of this section is to encourage your group to begin thinking critically about peacemaking and why it is important for us to be participating in this hard work in all that we do.*
- ❖ *Individuals: Spend some time journaling your responses to as many of these questions as you can. When you're done, feel free to discuss them with a family member or a friend, too!*



READ

In his 1958 essay titled "An Experiment in Love," Martin Luther King Jr. shares that "the use of violence in our struggle would be both impractical and immoral. To meet hate with retaliatory hate would do nothing but intensify the existence of evil in the universe. Hate begets hate; violence begets violence; toughness begets a greater toughness." Instead, he writes that "we must meet the forces of hate with the power of love; we must meet physical force with soul free. Our aim must never be to defeat or humiliate the white man, but to win his friendship and understanding."

Martin Luther King Jr., "An Experiment in Love." Found in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King Jr.* Edited by James M. Washington. New York: HarperOne Publishers. 1986.



REFLECT

- Martin Luther King Jr. was known for his use of nonviolence and peacemaking throughout the civil rights movement. Based on what you know about him, what can you learn about peacemaking?
- King describes the opposite of hate as "the power of love." How do you think peacemaking is "the power of love"?
- Often, in our world, we do see hate begetting hate. In your own life or in the world at large, how have you seen this play out?
- How do you see violence and conflict employed to try to defeat, destroy and humiliate the other?
- How do you see peacemaking as an attempt to create friendship with and strive for understanding of the other? What do you think this could look like?
- Do you think it is important for us to find inner peace before we can express outer peace? Why or why not? How do you think inner peace plays a role in peacemaking?

- ❖ *Group: Leaders, spend some time going through these questions with your small group.*
- ❖ *Individuals: Spend some time journaling your responses to these questions. When you're done, feel free to discuss them with a family member or a friend, too!*



PEACEMAKING



READ

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."

Matthew 5:9

- ❖ *Group/Individuals: Take some time to read this passage from the verse from the Gospel of Matthew either aloud or silently. You are welcome to read any version, but we always recommend the NRSV as that is what we read together in church!*



REFLECT

- These words literally come from Jesus' lips. In the Sermon on the Mount, he proclaims that we are called to be peacemakers. How does this shape your understanding of what it looks like to be involved in this advocacy issue?
 - How do you think God desires for us to be peacemakers in our world today?
 - Why do you think it is so challenging to be a peacemaker in our world? As opposed to what Jesus asks of us here, what does the world often tell us to do?
 - Do you think society wants us to be peacemakers? Why or why not?
 - Do you think you can get things done and be a peacemaker? Why or why not?
 - How is God calling you to be a peacemaker in your specific context? Spend some time brainstorming in your group.
- ❖ *Group: Leaders, spend some time going through these questions with your small group.*
 - ❖ *Individuals: Spend some time journaling your responses to as many of these questions as you can. When you're done, feel free to discuss them with a family member or a friend, too!*



CLOSE IN PRAYER

May God bless you with discomfort
At easy answers, half-truths and superficial relationships,
So that you may live deep within your heart.
May God bless you with anger
At injustice, oppression and exploitation of people,
So that you may work for justice, freedom and peace.
May God bless you with tears
To shed for those who suffer from pain, rejection, hunger and war.
So that you may reach out your hand to comfort them
and
To turn their pain into joy.
And may God bless you with enough foolishness
To believe that you can make a difference in the world,
So that you can do what others claim cannot be done
To bring justice and kindness to all our children and the poor.

Amen.

Benediction of St. Francis

- ❖ *Group: close your small group time by leading your group in prayer using this prayer or feel free to pray on your own or invite a group member to pray for the group.*
- ❖ *Individuals: Close your time of reflection in prayer! You may read this prayer or just spend some time in silence. Feel free to take some time to write out your own prayer about peace as well.*

WHAT'S NEXT: HOW TO GET INVOLVED

- **Learn about peacemaking:** Peacemaking is a complex topic and there is a lot to learn! The Presbyterian Peacemaking Program has great resources to offer: presbyterianmission.org/ministries/peacemaking/resources.
- **Dive into what Scripture has to say about peacemaking:** Remember, the Bible has a lot to say about what peace is and what it should look like. As Christian advocates, it is important to spend some time in Scripture, too. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has a resource called "The Biblical Witness to Peacemaking" where you can find daily Scripture readings centered around peacemaking. You can access this resource here: presbyterianmission.org/resource/the-biblical-witness-to-peacemaking.
- **Attend a peacemaking conference or seminar:** The Presbyterian Peacemaking Program offers a number of opportunities to study peacemaking efforts around the world. Check out the PC(USA) Travel Study Seminars and Mosaic of Peace Conference. Both of these opportunities can be found here: presbyterianmission.org/ministries/peacemaking.
- **Call attention to injustices and violence:** Peacemaking often starts with naming the injustices in our world. It is important to raise awareness about the conflicts going on in the world around us. You can do this by sharing on your social media accounts, protesting or advocating in your local communities
 - ❖ *Group/Individuals: At this point, we encourage you and your small groups to find ways to get involved in peacemaking in your communities, churches and wider world.*



Lesson Plan:

MIGRATION/REFUGEES

INTRODUCTION

This curriculum is meant to introduce participants — whether in a group or individually — to the topic of migration/refugees. We will spend some time thinking about how we are called to welcome our neighbors who have been forced to flee their homes and we will think creatively about how to create spaces of belonging for them in our communities.



PRAYER

Most Faithful God,

You came into this world as a child. A child that fled violence and threat, seeking safety in a foreign land. You sought justice for your children who were slaves, bringing them to freedom in a new land. You offer the possibility of miracles. May we be brave enough to catch that Holy Spirit and let her lead us as participants in miraculous acts that can take someone out of fear, uncertainty, instability and violence and secure a place they can call home. A place that offers dignity, security, freedom and opportunity. A place that offers a life of fullness. That is the very miracle, walking with the widow, the orphan, the homeless and loving them freely, not constrained by fear of the other or fear of not enough. You call us to live differently. May we have faith in you to love without fear; to love without constraint; to love rejoicing in the abundance.

The Rev. Dr. J Herbert Nelson, II, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

- ❖ *Group: Leaders, begin your small group time by leading your group in prayer using this prayer or feel free to pray on your own or invite a group member to pray for the group.*
- ❖ *Individual: Begin your time of reflection in prayer! You may read this prayer or just spend some time in silence. Feel free to take some time to write out your own prayer about advocacy as well.*



OPENING QUESTION

What is the first image that comes to mind when you hear the word refugee?

- ❖ *Group: Leaders, during this time, it is important to give each person in your small group an opportunity to share their response to this question. This will begin to engage their personal experience with the topic.*
- ❖ *Individual: If you are going through this study on your own, take a few minutes to journal about (or draw) what comes to mind when you hear the word refugee.*



LESSON FOCUS

Remember that in our first lesson we learned that in Matthew 25 we are called to welcome the stranger. This is exactly what we will spend our time learning how to do today. As Christians, we are called to be like Jesus. And often, this looks like welcoming the outcast, creating spaces of belonging for those who have nowhere else to go, and being curious about those who are different from us.

Unfortunately, our world today often depicts refugees in a negative light. They are portrayed as a burden to avoid and be wary of rather than people who have been forced to leave the place they call home. But the reality is that forced migration is what leads to there being refugees in our world. And furthermore, what makes someone a refugee has nothing to do with how they got to their new country and has everything to do with what happened in the country they're fleeing. That being said, in our own country, we often build biases against refugees — especially those who are



MIGRATION/REFUGEES

poor or people of color — rather than being curious about the story behind how they got to where they are today.

Imagine having to leave your home. Most of us currently live in a place where we are loved and accepted. A sense of belonging is very important to one's well-being. Where you live now, think about being able to speak the language, knowing the customs, how to get to school/work and your friend's home and who to call in an emergency. Now imagine having to leave this to enter a new place where you don't know the language, you don't fit in, you don't understand cultural expectations and the education system is completely different than what you are used to. Imagine feeling like a stranger everywhere you go. Often, this is how refugees feel in the country in which they are seeking asylum. In fact, many refugees don't ever experience racism until they start a life in their new country. That is a lot to deal with all at once. The question for us then becomes how can we make this transition for refugees easier? How can we make sure they feel like they are wanted and belong in their new home.



QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What stood out to you from this mini lesson about refugees?
- Have you ever thought about what it is like to be a refugee in a foreign country? How does this new insight change your perspective?
- How do you often hear refugees talked about in your community? Is the language used to talk about them positive or negative? Are they usually described as a burden or someone to be curious about?
- How do you think racism affects refugees?
- How do you think we can make this transition for refugees easier? How can we work to make sure they feel like they are wanted and belong in their new home?

- ❖ *Group: Leaders, spend some time going through these questions with your small group. You do not need to move through the questions in any particular order, but try to get to as many of them as possible. The main point of this section is to encourage your group to begin thinking critically about refugees and why it is important for us to take part in advocating for them.*
- ❖ *Individuals: Spend some time journaling your responses to as many of these questions as you can. When you're done, feel free to discuss them with a family member or a friend, too!*



READ

"For the past several years the world has seen the highest recorded number of forcibly displaced individuals since World War II. At the beginning of 2021, there were more than 82.4 million people who were forcibly displaced from their homes due to human rights abuses, famine, conflict or persecution, of which more than 26.4 million people are known as refugees. Even as the number of displaced was rising, the U.S. adopted increasingly restrictive policies." People don't grow up hoping to become a refugee. And even though there are 146 countries that have agreed to the U.N. Convention on refugees, it is not always easy to find a country that will welcome you as a refugee and allow you to live there. Even as the number of displaced was rising, the U.S. adopted increasingly restrictive policies."

From the "We Choose Welcome Action Guide" found here: presbyterianmission.org/resource/choose-welcome-action-guide.

Watch - What does it mean to be a refugee?

[TED-Ed video](#)

- ❖ *Group/Individuals: Watch this video either individually or with your group. You can find it on YouTube at youtube.com/watch?v=25bwiSikRsl.*



MIGRATION/REFUGEES



REFLECT

- When you have thought about refugees before, did you imagine people who chose to leave their home or who were forced to leave? How does being forced to leave one's home change your understanding of what it looks like to be a refugee?
- We just read that 82.4 million people were forcibly displaced from their homes at the beginning of 2021. Does this number surprise you? Why or why not?
- In addition to the reasons listed above, there are other reasons that people feel forced to feel their homeland. More and more famine and other natural disasters are pushing people to leave their homes. Can you think of any other reasons why people may be forced to leave their homes?
- Some people think that famine and other climate-caused disasters should be added to the refugee definition. What do you think about this proposal? Why or why not?
- How do some of these facts change your perspective on the refugee crisis?
 - ❖ *Group: Leaders, spend some time going through these questions with your small group.*
 - ❖ *Individuals: Spend some time journaling your responses to these questions. When you're done, feel free to discuss them with a family member or a friend, too!*



READ

"Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.' Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, 'Out of Egypt I have called my son.'"

Matthew 2:13–15

- ❖ *Group/Individuals: Take some time to read this passage from the Gospel of Matthew either aloud or silently. You are welcome to read any version, but we always recommend the NRSV as that is what we read together in church!*



REFLECT

- What stood out to you from this passage from the Gospel of Matthew?
- In thinking about forced migration and refugees, how did you hear this reading differently than you have before?
- Have you ever thought about the fact that the Holy Family were refugees? Jesus himself was a refugee. What does knowing this change for you?
- How does the word "flee" strike you in this passage?
- How does your faith inspire you to get involved in advocacy for refugees?
 - ❖ *Group: Leaders, spend some time going through these questions with your small group. Feel free to stick with one or two questions if the conversation really takes off, but try to get through as many as possible.*
 - ❖ *Individuals: Spend some time journaling your responses to as many of these questions as you can. When you're done, feel free to discuss them with a family member or a friend, too!*



MIGRATION/REFUGEES



CLOSE IN PRAYER

God, you call us to love our neighbor as we love you. You call us to welcome the stranger. You commission us to create spaces of belonging for all people. As we begin to learn how to care for the refugees in our midst, teach us how to remind them that they are beloved even in the strange place they find themselves in. Give us hearts to love and ears to listen to the stories of our new friends who have been forced to leave the place they call home. And in building relationships, give us the creativity to co-create a new home in our communities for them.

Amen.

- ❖ *Group: Leaders, close your small group time by leading your group in prayer using this prayer or feel free to pray on your own or invite a group member to pray for the group.*
- ❖ *Individuals: Close your time of reflection in prayer! You may read this prayer or just spend some time in silence. Feel free to take some time to write out your own prayer about the migration issues as well*

WHAT'S NEXT: HOW TO GET INVOLVED

- **Befriend refugees in your schools, churches and communities:** We need people involved at the advocacy level who are willing to speak up for people who can't speak for themselves. There are also a lot of young people coming into this country as refugees and many of them are struggling to catch up in their education, so joining school systems can be a lot for them. Becoming friends with the refugees in your community is a huge part of advocacy. Think about how you can create spaces of welcome for refugees in your schools and churches.
- **Pay attention to your language:** As advocates, we have to think about the way we talk about people. We need to stop talking about refugees themselves as being vulnerable and instead start talking about refugees as being made vulnerable.
- **Get involved in a nonprofit:** There is a whole network of refugee-serving nonprofits across the country — some of which partner with schools. Start looking for them in your community and get involved!
- **Attend Ecumenical Advocacy Days:** The PC(USA)'s Office of Public Witness helps host an annual gathering of Christian advocates and activists on Capitol Hill. On top of that, their website contains a ton of great information about advocacy as a whole. You can learn more here: <https://advocacydays.org>
- **Stay in the know:** Register to receive action alerts and information to stay in the loops about migration issues in the world today. You can sign up here: interfaithimmigration.org/take-action.
- **Educate yourself about migration advocacy:** These are some great places to start.
 - interfaithimmigration.org/resources/toolkits
 - pda.pcusa.org/page/world-refugee-day
 - presbyterianmission.org/resource/choose-welcome-action-guide.
- ❖ *Group/Individuals: At this point, we would love to encourage you and your small groups to find ways to get involved in migration advocacy in your communities, churches and wider world.*



INTRODUCTION

This curriculum is meant to introduce participants — whether in a group or individually — to the topic of racial justice. It is important to note that we will be talking and thinking about racial justice broadly. Throughout this lesson, we will be thinking about how racism affects all people of color, including, but not limited to, African Americans, Indigenous people, Asian Americans, Latinx people, etc. While racism occurs all over the world, each of our communities are directly affected by different types of racism. Because of this, we will spend some time individually thinking about the different communities we are a part of and think about the ways in which we notice racial injustice in the world directly around us.



PRAYER

Our hearts and minds
long for a world where justice is real. May each of us,
with our different experiences,
our unique identities,
learn to take strong steps
of courage and compassion
to bring such a world into being.

Amen.

A prayer from the "White Privilege": One-session adult study, part of the Racism Study Pack from The Thoughtful Christian.

- ❖ *Group: Leaders, begin your small group time by leading your group in prayer using this prayer or feel free to pray on your own or invite a group member to pray for the group.*
- ❖ *Individual: Begin your time of reflection in prayer! You may read this prayer or just spend some time in silence. Feel free to take some time to write out your own prayer about women's equality as well.*



OPENING QUESTION

What comes to mind when you think about racism?

- ❖ *Group: Leaders, during this time, it is important to give each person in your small group an opportunity to share their response to this question. This will begin to engage their personal experience with the topic.*
- ❖ *Individual: If you are going through this study on your own, take a few minutes to journal about what comes to mind when you think about racism.*



LESSON FOCUS

Racial justice is a broad category. It's easy for us to fall into the trap of limiting our understanding when thinking about who racism affects. But the challenge comes in thinking about the ways in which racism affects a multitude of people in our communities. And while we will not be able to dive deeply into how racism affects each of these groups of people differently, we encourage you to keep in mind all people of color as we talk about racism broadly. More so, we encourage you to consider the reality that there are vast particularities based on different cultures and contexts even within these different racial subgroups. Keep all of this in mind as we move forward together.



RACIAL JUSTICE

It is also important to note that race is a categorical construct developed by white people. According to Dr. Willie Jennings, this is important because this is what he calls “a Christian problem.” “We created the racial logic that now shapes the western world.” Categories of “Black,” “white,” “Asian,” “Native American” did not exist until we created racial categories. This is crucial to remember when thinking about race today.

Additionally, we often talk about racism in the past tense. We learn about the civil rights movement, we read about Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King Jr. and the Trail of Tears, but that is often where our discussions about racism stop. But this is simply not an issue that exists only in the past. Racism is a very present reality, and our world has made that more evident in the past few years as we have seen anti-Asian acts of violence, a massive increase in police brutality, and the murder of Black women and men across the country. Its consistency has been hard to ignore and difficult to deny. And yet, so many still do.

Today’s lesson is a call to confront the reality of racism. It contains a broad discussion on our knowledge of racism as well as a dive into the particularities of racial justice. Our goal is that we become better allies with people of color in both our local and global communities.



QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What did you learn about racism in school?
- What did you learn about racism at home?
- What did you learn about racism in church?
- What do you wish you had learned about racism in these different places?
- Do you think of racism as a present-day issue? Why or why not?
- How have you had conversations with people of color about their perceptions on the role racism has played in their lives?
- What do you want to learn about racism?
- What do you feel you need to know in order to become a better advocate for racial justice in your community?

❖ *Group: Leaders, spend some time going through these questions with your small group. You do not need to move through the questions in any particular order, but try to get to as many of them as possible. The main point of this section is to encourage your group to begin thinking critically about racism and why it is important for us to take part in advocating for and giving voice to all people of color.*

❖ *Individuals: Spend some time journaling your responses to as many of these questions as you can. When you’re done, feel free to discuss them with a family member or a friend, too!*



READ

“Caught in the powerful currents of a history that moves through us, we inhabit a social world constricted through whiteness that has left us with limited options for imagining how we might be with each other.”

Dr. Willie Jennings



REFLECT

- What do you think Jennings means when he says, “We inhabit a social world constricted through whiteness”?
- How do you think your social world affects your view on racism?
- Think about your local community. Think about your schools, your sports teams, your churches and your literal neighborhoods. Where do you see racism in those spaces? Is there a [insert race] neighborhood vs. a white neighborhood?
- Why do you think Jennings believes that we have “limited options for imagining how we might be with each other”?
- Are most of your friends the same race as you? If so, why do you think that is?



RACIAL JUSTICE

- How do you think we, as Christians and advocates, are called to imagine how we might interact and engage with each other?
 - ❖ *Group: Leaders, spend some time going through these questions with your small group.*
 - ❖ *Individuals: Spend some time journaling your responses to these questions. When you're done, feel free to discuss them with a family member or a friend, too!*



READ

"There is no longer Jew or Greek; there is no longer slave or free; there is no longer male and female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus."

Galatians 3:28

- ❖ *Group/Individuals: Take some time to read this passage either aloud or silently. You are welcome to read any version, but we always recommend the NRSV as that is what we read together in church!*



REFLECT

- Surely many of you have heard this verse from Galatians before, but in light of today's conversation, what stood out to you?
- Colorblindness refers to the tendency to see all races as equal without acknowledging the particularities of the experiences of different races, cultures and ethnicities. Why do you think colorblindness is problematic? How do you think this verse could be used to teach colorblindness as a solution to racism?
- On the other hand, what is helpful in thinking about the truth that we are all one in Christ Jesus? How can this actually teach us that we all belong to one another while also acknowledging our differences?
- Why do you think, as Christians, we are specifically called to advocate for racial justice?
- What do you think advocating for racial justice can and should look like in your communities? Spend some time brainstorming as a group.
 - ❖ *Group: Leaders, spend some time going through these questions with your small group. Feel free to stick with one or two questions if the conversation really takes off, but try to get through as many as possible.*
 - ❖ *Individuals: Spend some time journaling your responses to as many of these questions as you can. When you're done, feel free to discuss them with a family member or a friend, too!*



CLOSE IN PRAYER

Liberation theologian Fr. Gustavo Gutiérrez writes that a neighbor is “not he whom I find in my path, but rather he in whose path I place myself, he whom I approach and actively seek.”

God, today we ask for opportunities to seek out our neighbor. Place us in the path of the neighbors we may not otherwise come in contact with. And in doing so, may we be more curious about the other, learn their stories and create more fruitful spaces of belonging.

Amen.

- ❖ *Group: Leaders, close your small group time by leading your group in prayer using this prayer or feel free to pray on your own or invite a group member to pray for the group.*
- ❖ *Individuals: Close your time of reflection in prayer! You may read this prayer or just spend some time in silence. Feel free to take some time to write out your own prayer about the racial justice as well.*

WHAT'S NEXT: HOW TO GET INVOLVED

- **Start with your local communities:** Pay attention to the ways in which you can be an advocate for racial justice in your local communities. Racism will look a little bit different in every community, so take some time to familiarize with how it exists in your neighborhoods. Notice where people of color live in your communities. How is their part of the neighborhood different from your own? On top of this, get involved in racial justice advocacy that is already happening at the schools and churches in your area.
- **Be aware of your land:** The truth is, someone owned your land before you did. Spend some time learning about which Indigenous people lived on your land before you. You can find out about this here: native-land.ca.
- **Educate yourself:** It is important to learn and keep learning about racial justice issues because it is much broader than you could probably ever imagine. There are many great places to start, but here is a good spot: pcusa.org/racial-justice-resources.
- **Get outside of your circle:** Sometimes it can be hard to see racism if we stay within our inner circles. This is the whole point of privilege. Sometimes we have to be very intentional about paying attention to racism. This can happen physically in our own communities, or we can do this online. Social media allows us to connect with people of all races, cultures and ethnicities all over the world we may never connect with otherwise. Follow people of color on social media and take some time to learn about their experiences, and in doing so, learn how to be a better advocate.
- **Learn about different cultures:** Once again, racism is far broader than you would probably imagine. Each “race” that we refer to is home to countless different cultures. As advocates, it is important to get to know those different cultures. It is important to get to know the individuals within each race. So, travel and ask questions and read and learn and listen to people’s stories. Just take some time to notice the diversity within race.
 - ❖ *Group/Individuals: At this point, we would love to encourage you and your small groups to find ways to get involved in racial justice advocacy in your communities, churches and wider world.*



INTRODUCTION

This curriculum is meant to introduce participants — whether in a group or individually — to the topic of climate change and environmental justice. Young people will spend some time thinking about why paying attention to our changing earth is important, how it fits into a life of faith, and ways in which they can get involved in caring for the world around them.



PRAYER

May the deep blessings of earth be with us. May the fathomless sounding of seas surge in our soul.

May boundless stretches of the universe echo in our depths to open us to wonder, to strengthen us for love, to humble us with gratitude, that we may find ourselves in one another, that we may lose ourselves in gladness, that we give ourselves to peace.

Amen.

From Praying with the Earth: A Prayerbook for Peace — John Philip Newell.

- ❖ *Group: Leaders, begin your small group time by leading your group in prayer using this prayer or feel free to pray on your own or invite a group member to pray for the group.*
- ❖ *Individual: Begin your time of reflection in prayer! You may read this prayer or just spend some time in silence. Feel free to take some time to write out your own prayer about Creation care as well.*



OPENING QUESTION

Paint a picture of your favorite part of Creation.

- ❖ *Group: Leaders, during this time, it is important to give each person in your small group an opportunity to share their response to this question. This will get them thinking about why the earth is so important to them personally. You can have them explain their answer to this question out loud to the group or, if you would like to include an activity, bring some coloring supplies and have them literally draw a picture for the group.*
- ❖ *Individual: If you are going through this study on your own, take a few minutes to journal about (or draw) your favorite part of Creation.*



LESSON FOCUS

In the world we live in, climate change is one of the most pivotal issues that the whole world is facing. According to the United Nations, “with the polar ice caps melting, global sea levels rising and cataclysmic weather events increasing in ferocity, no country in the world is safe from the effects of climate change.” Throughout our lifetime, we have all seen the effects of climate change. The majority of us have been affected by one or more treacherous natural disasters. In fact, as the world continues to warm, these sorts of events are becoming less surprising and much more normal — though no less tragic.

The reality is, humans are responsible for much of this. For centuries, humanity has dominated the earth, taken advantage of its resources, and caused immense damage to the original beauty of Creation. It is now up to us to do what we can to reverse the effects of all of this destruction.



CLIMATE ACTION

And as we will discover in this lesson, God literally commissions humanity to do just this. In Genesis 1, God lets humanity know that the earth and all that is in it is “good” and then God asks humans to be responsible for and take care of the earth that God created. This is what it means to be the image of God on earth. And this is what we must do today in order to seek environmental justice.

Luckily, participating in climate change advocacy is something which we can all get involved in from our very own homes. We don’t have to move very far to have a very real impact on our planet. Throughout this lesson we will dive deeper into our Christian call to participate in this advocacy issue and will provide lots of opportunities to get involved in environmental justice work.



QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- When you hear the phrase “climate change,” what comes to mind?
- How do you hear your friends, churches, communities or schools talk about climate change and environmental justice?
- Before we begin, is there any way you already are or already feel called to work for environmental justice in your life? (There is no wrong answer here!)
- How have you or someone you love been affected by the negative impacts of climate change? (Think hurricanes, tornadoes, forest fires, etc.).
- What do you think have been some of the primary causes of climate change?

- ❖ *Group: Leaders, spend some time going through these questions with your small group. You do not need to move through the questions in any particular order, but try to get to as many of them as possible. The main point of this section is to encourage your group to begin thinking critically about what advocacy is and why it is important for us to take part in it.*
- ❖ *Individuals: Spend some time journaling your responses to as many of these questions as you can. When you’re done, feel free to discuss them with a family member or a friend, too!*



READ

Often, it seems that the world is in the state that it is in right now because we have forgotten that the earth is sacred. We have forgotten that God declared over and over again that the created world is “good.” And we have forgotten what it looks like to take care of this piece of God’s Creation.

Because of this, it can be helpful to listen to the voices of the faith traditions in our world that care deeply about the sacredness of Creation.

In his book *Sacred Earth, Sacred Soul: Celtic Wisdom for Reawakening to What Our Souls Know and Healing the World*, Celtic Christian theologian John Philip Newell writes: “In Celtic wisdom the sacred is as present on earth as it is in heaven, as immanent as it is transcendent, as human as it is divine, as physical as it is spiritual. The sacred can be breathed in, tasted, touched, heard and seen as much in the body of the earth and the body of another living being as in the body of religion. It is the true essence of all life.”



REFLECT

- What stood out to you from this passage?
- Have you ever thought about the earth as sacred? Why or why not?
- What do you think it means to view the earth as sacred? How do you think the sacred is present on earth?
- How would our world change if we treated Creation like it was sacred?
- How does this passage change your understanding of advocacy for environmental justice and Creation care?



CLIMATE ACTION

- How does this passage change your understanding of the Christian commission to take care of the earth and all that is in it?
 - ❖ *Group: Leaders, spend some time going through these questions with your small group.*
 - ❖ *Individuals: Spend some time journaling your responses to these questions. When you're done, feel free to discuss them with a family member or a friend, too!*



READ

"Then God said, 'Let us make humans in our image, according to our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over the cattle and over all the wild animals of the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.' So God created humans in God's image, in the image of God God created them; male and female God created them.

"God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.' God said, 'See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the air and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.' And it was so. God saw everything that God had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day."

Genesis 1:26–31 (NRSV)

"God spoke: 'Let us make human beings in our image, make them reflecting our nature so they can be responsible for the fish in the sea, the birds in the air, the cattle, and, yes, Earth itself, and every animal that moves on the face of Earth.' God created human beings; God created them godlike, reflecting God's nature. God created them male and female.

"God blessed them: 'Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Earth! Take charge! Be responsible for fish in the sea and birds in the air, for every living thing that moves on the face of Earth.' Then God said, 'I've given you every sort of seed-bearing plant on Earth and every kind of fruit-bearing tree, given them to you for food. To all animals and all birds, everything that moves and breathes, I give whatever grows out of the ground for food.' And there it was.

"God looked over everything God had made; it was so good, so very good! It was evening, it was morning—Day Six."

Genesis 1:26–31 (The Message)

- ❖ *Group/Individuals: Take some time to read this passage from Genesis either aloud or silently. Instruct your small group to pay special attention to the differences in the NRSV translation versus The Message interpretation.*



REFLECT

- What stood out to you from these readings of Genesis 1? Did you notice anything that you haven't noticed before?
- What differences did you spot between the NRSV translation and The Message translation of this passage?
- The NRSV says that God commissioned humans to "have dominion over" Creation whereas The Message commissions humanity to "be responsible for" the earth. How do you hear these two commissions differently?
- We hear, in this passage, that God gives Creation to humanity. Why do you think God does this and what do you think this looks like?
- What do you think is the main command or commission from God to us in this text?
- How does this text apply to our thinking about Creation care and environmental justice today?



CLIMATE ACTION

- ❖ *Group: Leaders, spend some time going through these questions with your small group. Feel free to stick with one or two questions if the conversation really takes off, but try to get through as many as possible.*
- ❖ *Individuals: Spend some time journaling your responses to as many of these questions as you can. When you're done, feel free to discuss them with a family member or a friend, too!*



CLOSE IN PRAYER

Creator, forgive us for our sins against you and your Creation.

In your name, may we turn from our sins and work toward a new Creation, one in which all creatures are freed from the bondage of greed and accumulation and are able to flourish into their creatureliness.

May this church be a site of redemption, resilience and hospitality; an extension of your love to all who are affected by the climate crisis.

In this land, this structure, this community, this worship, may we love you more fully by seeking justice for our neighbors.

Amen.

Using Creation Justice Ministries Earth Day Sunday 2022 Materials

- ❖ *Group: Leaders, close your small group time by leading your group in prayer using this prayer or feel free to pray on your own or invite a group member to pray for the group.*
- ❖ *Individuals: Close your time of reflection in prayer! You may read this prayer or just spend some time in silence. Feel free to take some time to write out your own prayer about the earth as well.*

WHAT'S NEXT: HOW TO GET INVOLVED

- **Get involved:** There are so many ways to get involved with Creation care. Take a look at what your local church and community is doing or take a look at how to get involved with organizations like Presbyterians for Earth Care: <https://presbyearthcare.org>.
 - **Each year the U.N. hosts the climate change conference (COP).** You too can get involved and attend virtually. Find out more about the COP here: <https://unfccc.int>
 - **Find ways to care for the earth in your day-to-day life:** recycle, reuse, stop buying single-use plastic, try to cut back on driving, order things online a bit less, use a reusable water bottle, etc. There are so many ways to get involved with some little life changes, so brainstorm what steps you can take at home.
 - **Get educated:** There is a lot to learn about what both scientists and the church are saying about climate change. The United Nations' SDGs website has a lot of great information about facts and figures and if you are looking for a faith perspective, check out PMUNs Engaging our World: Sunday School Resource for UN Sustainable Development Goals: <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/resource/engaging-our-world/>
- ❖ *Group/Individuals: At this point, we would love to encourage you and your small groups to find ways to get involved in Creation care and environmental justice in your communities, churches and wider world.*



INTRODUCTION

This curriculum is meant to introduce participants — whether in a group or individually — to the topic of gender equality. Young people will spend some time thinking about what gender equality means and specifically how women are forced to exist in the world because of the gender roles that have been assigned to them.



PRAYER

God, you created all of humanity in your image and likeness.
This means that you created all humanity equally.
You see each of us as equal image-bearers of your love.
And yet, we confess that we often fail to treat humanity in this way.
We confess that we at times support or leave unchallenged systems that prop up men as superior.
Help us to see, with new eyes, the beauty of each gender.
Help us to celebrate women and destroy the barriers in spaces where women have been denied.
Help us to create a world where women's voices are heard and where women thrive.

Amen.

- ❖ *Group: Leaders, begin your small group time by leading your group in prayer using this prayer or feel free to pray on your own or invite a group member to pray for the group.*
- ❖ *Individual: Begin your time of reflection in prayer! You may read this prayer or just spend some time in silence. Feel free to take some time to write out your own prayer about women's equality as well.*



OPENING QUESTION

What do you think gender equality looks like? Do you think being a woman means you are treated differently in the world? Why or why not?

- ❖ *Group: Leaders, during this time, it is important to give each person in your small group an opportunity to share their response to this question. This will get them thinking about what gender equality might look like in their day-to-day lives and equip them to begin thinking about what gender equality looks like in the world at large. If they seem to be stuck, another way of asking this question is: How has your gender impacted how you've been treated?*
- ❖ *Individual: If you are going through this study on your own, take a few minutes to journal your responses to these questions and maybe chat about them with a family member or a friend after!*



LESSON FOCUS

According to U.N. Women, gender equality “refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys.” They continue to say that “equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women’s and men’s rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a women’s issue but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centered development.”



EQUALITY FOR WOMEN

The inequality between women and men and boys and girls has great and lasting implications all over the world. What we see in our own country pales in comparison to what this inequality looks like around the globe. We could go on and on about the ways in which women are treated unjustly, but to name just a few, the U.N. notes that “women tend to suffer violence at the hands of their intimate partners more often than men; women’s political participation and their representation in decision-making structures lag behind men’s; women and men have different economic opportunities; women are over-represented among the poor; and women and girls make up the majority of people trafficked and involved in the sex trade.”

It is now up to all of us to put an end to this inequality and fight for gender equality in all areas of life across the globe.



QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What do you think about when you think about gender equality?
- Where do you see women’s inequality in your churches, homes, schools or workplaces?
- Why do you think women’s equality is not just a women’s issue, but an issue for men and people of all genders?
- What is the difference between equity for women and prioritization of women that is equal to that of men? Why do you think this distinction is important?
- The U.N. named a few examples of inequality between women and men. Can you name other examples? Did any of the things named surprise you? Why or why not?

- ❖ *Group: Leaders, spend some time going through these questions with your small group. You do not need to move through the questions in any particular order, but try to get to as many of them as possible. The main point of this section is to encourage your group to begin thinking critically about what women’s equality is and why it is important for us to take part in it.*
- ❖ *Individuals: Spend some time journaling your responses to as many of these questions as you can. When you’re done, feel free to discuss them with a family member or a friend, too!*



WATCH

The Road to Gender Equality - Malala’s story | Nations United.

- ❖ *Group: Watch this video either individually or with your group. You can find it on YouTube at [youtube.com/watch?v=4jnSFAECLzM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4jnSFAECLzM). Please note that parts of this video may be graphic for some viewers as it does share the story of Malala being shot by the Taliban. With that, we recommend viewing this video before sharing it with your group.*



REFLECT

- What surprised you about this video?
- How does Malala’s experience open your eyes to the experience of women and girls in other parts of the world? How is her experience different from your own?
- Malala says, “I have the right to education, I have the right to play, I have the right to sing, I have the right to go to market, I have the right to speak . . .” Does it surprise you that women need to fight for these rights? What does this tell you about the need to advocate for gender equality?
- How does Malala’s experience as a whole shape your understanding of advocacy for women’s equality in your own community and the world at large?

- ❖ *Group: Leaders, spend some time going through these questions with your small group.*
- ❖ *Individuals: Spend some time journaling your responses to these questions. When you’re done, feel free to discuss them with a family member or a friend, too!*



EQUALITY FOR WOMEN



READ

“When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. They had been saying to one another, ‘Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?’ When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. But he said to them, ‘Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.’ So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

“Now after he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons. She went out and told those who had been with him, while they were mourning and weeping. But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they would not believe it.”

Mark 16:1–11

- ❖ *Group/Individuals: Take some time to read this passage from the Gospel of Mark either aloud or silently. You are welcome to read any version, but we always recommend the NRSV as that is what we read together in church!*



REFLECT

- What stood out to you from this passage?
 - What role do women play in this passage?
 - In the Gospel of Mark, when Jesus rose from the dead, he appeared to women first and he commissioned them to go out and tell people what they had seen. What do you think is significant about this?
 - What do you think is the role of Mary Magdalene at the end of this passage? What do you think her role says about gender equality?
 - A lot of scholars identify Mary Magdalene as the first preacher because of her role in this passage. What do you make of the fact that people didn’t believe her?
 - How does this passage impact your understanding of gender equality? Specifically, how does this affect your understanding of gender equality within the church?
- ❖ *Group: Leaders, spend some time going through these questions with your small group. You do not need to move through the questions in any particular order, but try to get to as many of them as possible. The main point of this section is to move into a time of thinking critically about what advocacy is and why it is important for us to take part in it.*
 - ❖ *Individuals: Spend some time journaling your responses to as many of these questions as you can. When you’re done, feel free to discuss them with a family member or a friend, too!*



EQUALITY FOR WOMEN

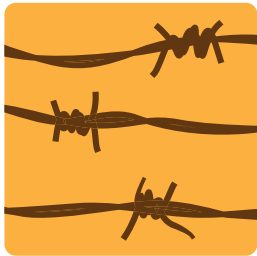


CLOSE IN PRAYER

For today's closing prayer, we recommend listening to "Daughters of Zion" by The Porter's Gate. It is available on Spotify, Apple Music or you can listen to it on YouTube at The Porter's Gate – Daughters of Zion (feat. Casey J & Urban Doxology) (Official Live Video).

WHAT'S NEXT: HOW TO GET INVOLVED

- **Get educated:** Most of us are unaware of just how much women and girls are affected around the world by gender inequality. In order to advocate, it is important to be more aware of what exactly is going on. Here's a great place to begin your research: unwomen.org/en.
- **Read stories about women around the world:** Obviously we only know our own experience, but it is important to learn the stories of other women around the world. Malala's story is a great place to start and luckily, she wrote a great book titled *I Am Malala: The Woman Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban*.
- **Be a delegate at the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW):** Each year the Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations (PMUN) gathers a delegation from across the world to take part at the CSW to promote gender equality and empower women and girls around the world. You can learn more about CSW here: youtube.com/watch?v=pdPF2yICd9Y.
- **Advocate on social media:** It is important to simply bring awareness to this topic. Use your social media platforms to bring awareness to the ways in which women and girls are treated unjustly around the globe.



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