

# WHITE PRIVILEGE

## let's talk

A Resource for Transformational Dialogue

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*“As an extension of our ongoing commitment to Sacred Conversations on race, it is time that this still largely white denomination wrestles with its investment in whiteness, and learns all it can about the manifestations and impact of White Privilege. This curriculum, written by five gifted authors with decades of experience teaching about race and privilege, is presented to enable such dialogue to take place at every level of the Church.”*

—The Rev. John C. Dorhauer, UCC General Minister and President

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## Overview of *White Privilege: Let's Talk*

*"In partnership with a Holy Spirit who envisions a future in which the United Church of Christ matters, and in response to the UCC still being over ninety percent white almost 25 years into our commitment to be a multi-racial and multi-cultural church, I call all covenant settings to engage in a safe, meaningful, substantive, and bold conversation on privilege."*

—The Rev. John C. Dorhauer, UCC General Minister and President

*White Privilege: Let's Talk—A Resource for Transformational Dialogue* is an adult curriculum from the United Church of Christ that's designed to invite church members to engage in safe, meaningful, substantive, and bold conversations on race.

This is a downloadable resource in PDF format that's free of charge and can be used by any church regardless of size or budget.

*White Privilege: Let's Talk* is a collaborative work of the following five authors, ordained clergy with numerous years of experience teaching about race and privilege:

The Rev. Traci D. Blackmon

The Rev. John C. Dorhauer

The Rev. Da Vita D. McCallister

The Rev. John Paddock

The Rev. Dr. Stephen Ray

Divided into four focused parts, each one introduces a different aspect of the dynamic of white privilege:

1. The Spiritual Autobiography Told Through the Lens of Race
2. Whiteness as the Norm: Five Loci of Insights on the Binary of Light/Dark and Black/White
3. The Cash Value of Whiteness or Whiteness as a Tax-Exempt Status
4. On Becoming an Ally

In all four parts, each author contributes a different view of the subject matter presented based on their unique personal experiences. The materials include questions for discussion and reflection.

Free download. Available September 1, 2016.

To see the *White Privilege: Let's Talk* free webinar series from the Center for Progressive Renewal, [click here](#).

### *Rev. Traci Blackmon*



The Rev. Traci Blackmon is acting executive minister of the UCC Justice and Witness Ministries and the first female pastor of the 156-year-old Christ The King United Church of Christ in Ferguson, MO. She is a prominent civic leader and gifted preacher well known for racial justice work in her St. Louis community. She became one of the new voices for civil rights in America, thrust into the national spotlight after the Michael Brown shooting in Ferguson in 2014.

### *Rev. John C. Dorhauer*



The Rev. John C. Dorhauer is the ninth general minister and president of the United Church of Christ. He has served as the conference minister of the UCC's Southwest Conference, as associate conference minister in the Missouri Mid-South Conference, and as a local church pastor in churches in rural Missouri. He has a Master of Divinity degree from Eden Theological Seminary and a Doctor of Ministry degree from United Theological Seminary, where he studied white privilege and its effects on the church.

### *Rev. Da Vita D. McCallister*



The Rev. Da Vita D. McCallister is the associate conference minister for leadership and vitality in the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ. She is a mother, ordained minister, entrepreneur, philanthropist, writer and advocate for youth and young adults. She has served the Fund for Theological Education, the national setting of the United Church of Christ, and the United Methodist Church.

## *Rev. John Paddock*



The Rev. John Paddock is the Rector of Christ Episcopal Church in Dayton, Ohio. He has a Master of Divinity degree from The Episcopal Theological Seminary in Virginia and a Doctor of Ministry degree from United Theological Seminary in Dayton. His thesis title was “Reframing the Dialogue on Racism in America in a Parish Setting.”

## *Rev. Stephen Ray*



The Rev. Stephen Ray is the Neal F. and Ila A. Fisher Professor of Systematic Theology at Garrett Theological Seminary in Evanston, IL. He is an ordained minister of the United Church of Christ and has served as pastor of churches in Hartford and New Haven, CT., and in Louisville, KY. He was also an associate professor of African-American studies and director of the Urban Theological Institute at Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia; associate professor of theology and philosophy at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary; and lecturer at Yale Divinity School and Hartford Seminary.

# Outline

## **PART ONE**

### **The Spiritual Autobiography Told Through the Lens of Race**

Five writers explore the impact of race on their own backgrounds and family history. Deeply personal and emotional, these autobiographies bring large social issues into focus in the lives of five people of faith with very different life histories.

*Chapter 1: John Paddock*

*Chapter 2: John Dorhauer*

*Chapter 3: Da Vita McCallister*

*Chapter 4: Traci Blackmon*

*Chapter 5: Stephen G. Ray*

## **PART TWO**

### **Whiteness as the Norm: Five Insights on the Binary of Light/Dark and Black/White**

This section of the curriculum digs deeply into the effects of whiteness understood as “normal.” It explores language, liturgy, church customs, and our ideas about Jesus. The five writers interpret how each of these reinforces a sense of the world and the church as oriented toward whiteness.

*Chapter 1: Whiteness as the Norm: Five reflections on how this is evidenced and experienced in America*

*Chapter 2: Binary: Lightness and Darkness*

*Chapter 3: Iconography: The Investment of Whiteness in Narrating History*

*Chapter 4: The White Jesus*

*Chapter 5: Lightness and Darkness as Experienced in the Genealogy and Liturgy of the Church*

## **PART THREE**

### **The Cash Value of Whiteness or Whiteness as a Tax-Exempt Status**

This section of the curriculum provides a wealth of factual information—both historical and current—on the economics of white privilege and their effects on every significant aspect of American life, from housing to buying power and wealth accumulation, education, and employment.

*Chapter 1: The Cash Value of Whiteness or Whiteness as a Tax-Exempt Status*  
*Stephen G. Ray*

*Chapter 2: How Education Advantages Whites*  
*John Dorhauer*

*Chapter 3: How Housing Practices Advantage Whites*  
*Traci Blackmon*

*Chapter 4: How Income and Wealth Disparities Advantage Whites*  
*John Paddock*

*Chapter 5: How the Medical and Health Industry Advantages Whites*  
*Da Vita McCallister*

## **PART FOUR**

### **On Becoming an Ally**

This section provides hopeful and helpful information, from the personal perspectives of the writers, on how to be (and how not to be) an effective ally in the struggle for racial equity. You will find profound psychological insight along with practical steps you can your church can take right now. Each writer approaches this subject very differently, and users of the curriculum will find much to discuss and debate in this section.

*Chapter 1: Da Vita McCallister*

*Chapter 2: John Paddock*

*Chapter 3: Traci Blackmon*

*Chapter 4: John Dorhauer*

*Chapter 5: Stephen G. Ray*

## *Excerpts*

“God’s whiteness was deduced from Sunday School books, and The Ten Commandments with Charlton Heston as Moses, and the statues of Mary that adorned every Catholic home in my neighborhood. Then there were the stained glass windows. Stained glass was common in the church of my youth and either the glass depicted no image, or a cross, or a white Jesus. One popular reproduction was Jesus sitting on a rock surrounded by children, all white children, sitting with an Afro-Semitic Palestinian who is falsely portrayed as white. It’s easy to miss such an irony if one sees oneself included. Not out of any maliciousness, but simply, inclusion calms our fears.”

—Traci Blackmon, from Part 1, **“The Spiritual Autobiography Told Through the Lens of Race”**

“I am a white man.” Scales fell from my eyes, and for the first time I was able to see my life and being in a whole new light . . . through an entirely new lens, if you will. I, John Paddock, have race. By that I mean something far more than being conscious of my skin color when I’m with a group of blacks. In the same way that a tinted lens will color everything seen through it, seeing the world through the lens of race changed the way I see everything.”

—John Paddock, from Part 1, **“The Spiritual Autobiography Told Through the Lens of Race”**

“Whiteness as norm is a useful way to describe the ways that our material world is shaped, so that the mental maps along which we place the variety of human beings who constitute our world place whiteness at the unquestioned center, with other hues at varying distances from it.

“. . . in our racialized church settings, liturgical practices which are deemed white (e.g. hymnody rooted in the classical or folk traditions of Europe) become the basis from which practices rooted in other polyphonies are invited into a space in the worship experience. As generous as the invitation may seem, it is important to note who claims the role of host and who visitor. This dynamic of host/guest is important for this curriculum because it focuses our attention on which bodies/cultural practices ‘belong’ and which are being granted space.”

—Stephen G. Ray, from Part 2, **“Whiteness as the Norm: Five reflections on how this is evidenced and experienced in America”**

“Every trip to the movie theater, to the mall and to the grocery store reminded me that whiteness was the norm and my presence could and often would be viewed as problematic. I remember my mother giving me the same speech each time I entered a store by her side: “Keep your hands in sight and DON’T touch anything.” I didn’t recognize at the time that she was teaching me how to perform in White Spaces. I thought this behavior was simply the polite way to behave in society until I noticed other children had either not been given this speech or were not required to adhere to it. Those children were White.”

—DaVita McCallister, from Part 2, **“Whiteness as the Norm: Five reflections on how this is evidenced and experienced in America”**

“When I walk into a church, I never have to ask: “Why doesn’t Jesus look like me?” And I don’t even consider the fact that Jesus being white is not reflective of his true racial identity as a Middle Eastern Jew. I grew up believing that he could, that he should, be white.”

—John Dorhauer, from Part 2, “**Whiteness as the Norm: Five reflections on how this is evidenced and experienced in America**”

“Perhaps the most difficult realization for white allies is that your likely implication in the system, because of decisions you have made and one made for you, is inescapable. The first dimension of this inescapable implication is the reality that you do not choose to be white, it is imputed to you. Because of the way your body presents itself to the world you are deemed white and accorded all that comes with that, most of which are privileges and perks denied to Blacks. As we have shown throughout this curriculum these privileges are social, economic, legal, and in every case existential. The important thing to note here is that it is a matter of social assessment and not personal choice. What is possible is to choose how you will inhabit this socially imputed status. What sort of white person will you be?”

—Stephen G. Ray, from Part 4, “**Becoming an Ally**”

“When whites commit to working on their privilege, there can exist a subtle, unspoken, yet very powerful assumption about that work which is another manifestation of privilege. The assumption is that by doing this work, whites are engaged in saving, rescuing, or freeing people of color. Whites can begin to see themselves as saviors of a sort.

“It is important to identify this tendency, and to come to some new understandings about the work that whites are doing when confronting the manifestation and impact of privilege – and then working to dismantle the systems that distribute that privilege based on skin color.”

—John Dorhauer, from Part 4, “**Becoming an Ally**”