

# THE CHURCH CRACKED OPEN

## Reflection & Action Guide

By Stephanie Spellers

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## A Word from the Author

What would it take for dominant-culture Christians to examine our lives, the lives of our churches, and the oppressive systems and assumptions that shape us all? Fervent prayer. The grace of God. Commitment. Community. In offering *The Church Cracked Open*, this companion Reflection & Action Guide, and my website ([www.churchcrackedopen.com](http://www.churchcrackedopen.com)), I hope you have even more help for unmasking and naming reality, revisiting the dream of what God created us to be, and taking more decisive steps toward wholeness, reconciliation, justice, and love for God, for each other, and for ourselves.

## Guide Contents

For each chapter of the book, you'll find here an accompanying set of tools for reflection and action. Each set is organized with some combination of the following. *Note: not every chapter has a full set of Terms, Concepts, Actions, and Scriptures, so it's alright if you don't see one of these headings in the materials for a particular chapter.*

- **Entering In:** A common question for stirring your initial reflections on the chapter
- **Terms to Know:** Definitions worth considering, along with reflection questions for each
- **Concepts to Explore:** Key concepts and ideas in the chapter, along with reflection questions for each
- **Actions to Take:** Concrete ways to practically explore or apply material from the chapter, sometimes with charts and links to related resources
- **Scripture to Dwell In:** Select scripture passages, cited in full from the New Revised Standard Version (you're warmly encouraged to explore other translations). I've adapted the Dwelling in the Word<sup>1</sup> process for bible study, which recommends reading a passage three times and considering simple questions about God and God's activity after each reading.

As you move through this guide, you will notice that I've provided page numbers from *The Church Cracked Open*, so you can refer easily back and forth to the print version of the book. This will also help you to track down citations, which I've only provided here for material not cited in the book.

If you're using an e-reader, I've also provided relevant text so you can search for the passage with relative ease.

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<sup>1</sup> Dwelling in the Word was created by Church Innovations. Learn more about the process and about the group at [http://test2.churchinnovations.org/?page\\_id=102](http://test2.churchinnovations.org/?page_id=102).

## Ways to Engage

Now that you know the guide's content, here are some strategies for engaging the material that follows:

### What?

Feel free to use as much or as little of this material as you wish. Your choice depends on your focus or that of your group. For instance ...

- **Intuitive and personal journey:** You may choose to focus on the “Entering In” and “Scripture to Dwell In” sections of the guide.
- **Relevant terms and ideas:** You might reflect with the “Terms to Know” and “Concepts to Explore” sections of the guide.
- **Practical action:** It might be wise to highlight the “Actions to Take” section for each chapter that features one.
- **Holistic journey:** You could work with the full suite of guide content for each chapter. It will take more time, but you will engage heart and head, personal and institutional, societal and spiritual.
- **Go with the Spirit:** Feel free to engage whatever reflections and prompts most resonate for you or to make up your own.

And remember: Not every chapter features a full set of Terms, Concepts, Actions, and Scriptures, so don't be alarmed if you don't see one of these section headings in the materials for a particular chapter. There will be plenty to explore.

### Who?

- Individual
  - If you're alone, feel free to pull out your journal – maybe even get a new one just for this journey.
  - If you've completed the book, this guide is a helpful way to review some of the most important material, this time with help dropping deeper in your learning and exploration.
  - You can also alternate by reading a chapter and then using the guide to reflect and act as you go.
- Small Group/Congregation
  - Read the “What?” outline above and decide as a group or as a facilitation team what strategy works best for you.
  - If you need help organizing a small group, managing facilitation, or dealing with other elements of getting started and moving forward, check out the Episcopal Church's resource for “Building Intentional Small Groups” at <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/way-of-love/building-intentional-small-groups>.

## When & How?

The answer entirely depends on your schedule, group size, hopes, and expectations. Please take care to narrow your reflection focus (see “What?” above). Don’t attempt to get through all the companion material and reflection questions for each chapter if you’re meeting for a shorter time or with a larger group. Otherwise, you will feel rushed, and no one will have the chance to share meaningfully. It’s also worth noting one more time: Not every chapter has a full set of Terms, Concepts, Actions, and Scriptures, so don’t be alarmed if you don’t see one of those headings in the materials for a particular chapter.

Here are a few suggestions for groups discerning the best pace for their journey:

- *Seasonal Book Group* (45 minutes - 1 hour): *The Church Cracked Open* is not intended to be a particularly long or dense text, so you could read it in a seasonal book group that meets weekly for 45 minutes to 1 hour. If you go this route ...
  - Depending on the group size, you might choose two of the options under “What?”. Start with check-ins using the “Entering In” question(s). Then discuss “Terms to Know” or “Concepts to Explore” OR work on one of the “Actions to Take” as a group.
  - Ideally, you should take 10 weeks/sessions for the 10 chapters.
  - If you’ve got seven sessions, you may choose to double up with two chapters in one session. Here are some suggestions for possible pairings:
    - Introduction and Chapter 1
    - Chapters 2 and 3
    - Chapter 8 and Conclusion
- *Monthly Book Study Group* (90 minutes - 2 hours): With more time, you can build relationships, learn together, and move toward action.
  - Opening Prayer (3 minutes)
  - Check-ins: Begin with brief check-ins using the “Entering In” question(s) (15 minutes)
  - Terms: Facilitator introduces each of the “Terms to Know” and invites clarifying conversation (15-20 minutes)
  - Concepts: Choose a few of the “Concepts to Explore” to reflect on as a group (15-20 minutes)
  - Actions: Choose one of the “Actions to Take” and reflect as a group (20-25 minutes). If it makes sense, invite each person to name their personal commitment to action or practical exploration.
  - Scripture: Choose one “Scripture to Dwell In” (20 minutes). Share in pairs for the first two questions, and engage as a group for the final question.
  - Closing Prayer (2 minutes)

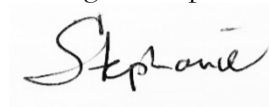
- *Reflection as Part of Ongoing Group Meeting* (30 minutes): If you're in a group that meets regularly for another purpose (like a Vestry or other committee or leadership team), you could start or end your sessions by reflecting on a chapter. It only takes about 30 minutes if you focus on only *one* of these options:
  - *Option 1:* Invite each person to respond briefly to the "Entering In" question(s)
  - *Option 2:* Invite each person to choose *one* of the "Terms to Know" or "Concepts to Explore" that grasped their attention, and reflect briefly on the accompanying question.
  - *Option 3:* Choose one or two of the "Terms to Know," "Concepts to Explore," or "Actions to Take," and invite the group to reflect with it together for the full time
  - *Option 4:* Engage in "Scripture to Dwell In" as a group. Share in pairs for the first two questions, and engage as a group for the final question.

Feel free to share stories and images about how you're engaging at #churchcrackedopen. And stay tuned to [www.churchcrackedopen.com](http://www.churchcrackedopen.com) for additional resources, conversations, and whatever else the Spirit chooses to bring to life.

Before proceeding, I have to offer special thanks for my colleagues Jerusalem Greer and Melanie Mullen, who brought the savvy, honest feedback and structural recommendations to make this guide as user-friendly as possible. I appreciate you both!

Throughout this project I've attempted to share hard stories and challenging questions with tenderness and hope. I have no doubt fallen short of the mark, but please trust that every page of the book and of this guide is written with a heart filled with love and an abiding trust in God's amazing grace, which holds us especially when we've been cracked open.

With great hope for what's next,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephanie". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

## INTRODUCTION: On Being Cracked Open

### Entering In

1. Having read this chapter, what words or phrases stand out for you? How does what you've read relate to your personal life? How does it connect to your faith and ministry?

### Concepts to Explore

2. (pg. 1) The author speaks regularly of feeling “cracked open” or seeing institutions being “cracked open.”

*Reflect:* Have you ever felt cracked open by life? Have you seen an institution or organization crack open? How did it feel? What was happening? What was the result?

3. (pg. 3) “Wilderness Time” is a web series about the contemporary church’s experience of uncertainty, disruption, and wilderness wandering. Go to [www.wildernesstime.org](http://www.wildernesstime.org) and locate the first episode, “Welcome to the Wilderness.” In it, Dr. Michael Chan, assistant professor of Old Testament at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, MN, introduces biblical wilderness narratives as lens for understanding our current experience of disruption and hope for deliverance. Watch the video or listen to the podcast (<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/welcome-to-the-wilderness/id1519237916?i=1000478468255>). (37 minutes)

*Reflect:* What wilderness scripture passages and images most resonate for you?

### Actions to Take

4. (pg. 2) In “Leading Beyond the Blizzard: Why Every Organization Is Now a Startup” (find it at <https://journal.praxislabs.org/leading-beyond-the-blizzard-why-every-organization-is-now-a-startup-b7f32fb278ff>), Andy Crouch, Kurt Keilhacker, and Dave Blanchard warn that the current time of disruption is less like a winter storm or a blizzard, and instead more like an extended winter or even an ice age. In response, they advise organizations to function like startups rather than traditional institutions in maintenance-mode:

A typical pitch deck for a business or nonprofit begins with a clear audience or set of stakeholders with a clear need, and a fundamental vision for how that need can be addressed in ways that enhance human flourishing. Call these the first three or four slides of your deck. You do not have to discard these slides — they represent, we pray and believe, a calling given you by God. But the rest of your deck — the part that describes the strategies, tactics, financial models, and partners you can mobilize — is functionally different.

*Prompt:* Imagine you're looking through the slide deck for your ministry.

- What slides would you keep? In other words, what's your fundamental vision and essential calling from God, as a ministry?
- What slides have changed or should change? In other words, how are your strategies, tactics, financial models and partners shifting? What limits have you hit?

## Scripture to Dwell In

Read the following passage three times. After each reading, reflect on one of the following questions. Note: If you're in a group, you might reflect on the first two questions in pairs or (if online) by sharing brief responses in the chat; for the final question, participants might share as a group.

1. What phrase or image grabs your attention?
2. What do you see Jesus doing here? What do you see the woman with the alabaster jar doing here?
3. What do you long to be or to do, given your encounter with Jesus and with this woman?

Mark 14:3-9

<sup>3</sup>While he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at the table, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment of nard, and she broke open the jar and poured the ointment on his head. <sup>4</sup>But some were there who said to one another in anger, "Why was the ointment wasted in this way?" <sup>5</sup>For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor." And they scolded her. <sup>6</sup>But Jesus said, "Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has performed a good service for me. <sup>7</sup>For you always have the poor with you, and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish; but you will not always have me. <sup>8</sup>She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial. <sup>9</sup>Truly I tell you, wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her."

## CHAPTER 1: The Reality of Disruption and Decline

### Entering In

1. Having read this chapter, what words or phrases stand out for you? How does what you've read relate to your personal life? How does it connect to your faith and ministry?

### Terms to Know

2. **Euro-tribal churches** (pg. 13): Alan Roxburgh's term to describe Episcopal, Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, and similar denominations/faith traditions that trace to England, Scotland, Ireland, and Northern Europe following the Reformations of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and the spread of colonial empires. (Note: Oxford Dictionary defines a tribe as "a social division in a traditional society consisting of families or communities linked by social, economic, religious, or blood ties, with a common culture and dialect, typically having a recognized leader.")

*Reflect:* Do you find Roxburgh's term "Euro-tribal churches" in any way helpful? What does it stir you to see differently or more clearly? Have you ever noticed these traditions acting as tribes? In what ways?

3. **Empire** (pg. 13): One country exercising power over another country, through colonial settlement but also through military domination, political sovereignty, or indirect means of control.

*Reflect:* What relationship do you see between empire and Christianity?

4. **Colonialism** (pg. 14): The policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically.

*Reflect:* What relationship do you see between colonialism and Christianity?

5. **Racism** (p. 21): A belief that race is a fundamental determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race; also the systemic oppression of a racial group to the social, economic, and political advantage of another.

*Reflect:* How does this connect with or contradict your own understanding of racism?

6. **White supremacy** (pg. 21): The ideology, culture, and related systems that together assert the superiority of White ideas, creations, actions, and humanity, thus ensuring the prosperity and dominion of White people and White cultures.

*Reflect:* How does this relate to your own understanding of White supremacy? How would you describe the relationship between White supremacy and America?

7. **Whiteness** (pg. 22): The umbrella that covers, protects, and elevates light-skinned people (and others it chooses to welcome) while leaving non-White people vulnerable to violence, subjugation, and exploitation. Whiteness is not the same as White racial identity; people of different racial backgrounds can participate in Whiteness, and any person can resist systems of White racial superiority and domination.

*Reflect:* Does this make sense to you? How could someone who is not White participate in Whiteness? How could a White person resist Whiteness?

### Concepts to Explore

8. (pg. 11) Many leaders claim that “dominant American Christianity has been displaced, pushed out of our buildings, away from our moorings, and out of the center . . . if there’s any center left at all”?

*Reflect:* Do you agree or disagree with this observation? Why?

9. (pg. 16) Churches are often torn between the desire to be welcoming and the desire to maintain and protect the traditions they love. “When you love something—especially something bound up with the sacred—it’s difficult to imagine why anybody else would not love it, too. In that model, segregation is nearly inevitable.”

*Reflect:* Why do you imagine this would be true? Have you ever seen a church protecting its culture and traditions and as a result blocking relationship with groups who do not share that culture? What happened?

10. (pgs. 19-20) So much of life has changed since the outbreak of the COVID pandemic.

*Reflect:* During this time, what discoveries have you made about being church? Have you noticed new and perhaps preferable ways to worship, serve and form disciples?

11. (pgs. 21-22) Since the death of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, people around the world have experienced an awakening around racism.

*Reflect:* Since that tragic moment, what discoveries have you made about racism and racial identity? What do you see differently/more clearly? What are you doing differently?

### Actions to Take

12. The Episcopal Church every year posts statistics about church membership and attendance. For decades, the Episcopal Church and other majority White denominational groups have experienced a downward trend.

*Prompt:* Look at the Episcopal Church's "Fast Facts" for 2015-2019, which are available here: <https://www.generalconvention.org/fast-facts>). As you look at this summary, why do you imagine fewer people are claiming membership in or attending these churches?

13. The Episcopal Church also offers extensive neighborhood-based demographic stats for every congregation in the U.S. If you are Episcopalian, you can locate your diocese and then congregation. If you're not, you can still hunt for relevant data by entering the Episcopal congregation nearest you or by entering an address for the area you want to study.

*Prompt:* Go to <https://www.generalconvention.org/study-your-neighborhood> and explore your congregation's neighborhood. Take special note of the racial, socio-economic, age, and linguistic groups around you. Compare to the racial, socio-economic, age, and linguistic make-up of your congregation. Are there any surprises? Do you see particular challenges? Opportunities for new relationship?

### Scripture to Dwell In

The Lenten readings in 2020 (Lectionary Year A) painted a portrait of a wandering, wrestling, uncertain people. In other words, they sound a lot like today's church. Choose one of the passages below. Read it three times. After each reading, reflect on one of these questions. If you're in a group, you might reflect on the first two questions in pairs or (if online) by sharing brief responses in the chat; for the final question, participants might share as a group.

1. What phrase or image grabs your attention?
2. What do you see God doing here? What do you see people doing here?
3. What do you long to be, to do, or to see differently given what you see here of God and God's people?

Third Sunday of Lent  
Exodus 17:1–7

From the wilderness of Sin the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed by stages, as the LORD commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. The people quarreled with Moses, and said, “Give us water to drink.” Moses said to them, “Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?” But the people thirsted there for water; and the people complained against Moses and said, “Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?” So Moses cried out to the LORD, “What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me.” The LORD said to Moses, “Go on ahead of the people, and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink.” Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. He called the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarreled and tested the LORD, saying, “Is the LORD among us or not?”

Fourth Sunday of Lent  
Psalm 23

- 1 The LORD is my shepherd; \*  
I shall not be in want.
- 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures \*  
and leads me beside still waters.
- 3 He revives my soul \*  
and guides me along right pathways for his Name's sake.
- 4 Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I shall fear no evil; \*  
for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
- 5 You spread a table before me in the presence of those who trouble me; \*  
you have anointed my head with oil,  
and my cup is running over.
- 6 Surely your goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, \*  
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

Fifth Sunday of Lent  
John 11:17-22, 28-37

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him." ...

When Martha had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, and told her privately, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. The Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there. When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

Maundy Thursday  
John 13:1-5, 33-35

Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. ...

Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Good Friday  
Psalm 22:1-11

- 1 My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? \*  
and are so far from my cry  
and from the words of my distress?
- 2 O my God, I cry in the daytime, but you do not answer; \*  
by night as well, but I find no rest.
- 3 Yet you are the Holy One, \*  
enthroned upon the praises of Israel.
- 4 Our forefathers put their trust in you; \*  
they trusted, and you delivered them.
- 5 They cried out to you and were delivered; \*  
they trusted in you and were not put to shame.
- 6 But as for me, I am a worm and no man, \*  
scorned by all and despised by the people.
- 7 All who see me laugh me to scorn; \*  
they curl their lips and wag their heads, saying,
- 8 "He trusted in the LORD; let him deliver him; \*  
let him rescue him, if he delights in him."
- 9 Yet you are he who took me out of the womb, \*  
and kept me safe upon my mother's breast.
- 10 I have been entrusted to you ever since I was born; \*  
you were my God when I was still in my mother's womb.
- 11 Be not far from me, for trouble is near, \*  
and there is none to help.

## CHAPTER 2: New Hope for Beloved Community

### Entering In

1. Having read this chapter, what words or phrases stand out for you? How does what you've read relate to your personal life? How does it connect to your faith and ministry?

### Terms to Know

2. **Beloved community** (pg. 34): A community animated by a non-clinging, self-emptying, persistent love that drives the members to pursue wholeness and kindness. In it, the individual and the collective strive and sacrifice for the sake of the flourishing of the greater whole and for the end of all forms of domination and oppression that diminish the children of God.

**Beloved community** (pg. 25): A community of people who help one another to grow into all that they were created to be; where each person is as committed to the other's flourishing and to the flourishing of the whole as they are to their own; and where the members are willing to sacrifice their own comfort and even lives for the sake of the other and for the dream they share.

*Reflect:* Have you ever seen beloved community or anything approaching it? What was happening? What made it possible?

### Concepts to Explore

3. (pg. 25) Vida Scudder wrote in *The Church and the Hour*: "This is the hour of opportunity; this is the hour of the Church. In the last fifty years she has accomplished a great preparation, by her rediscovery of the purpose of Jesus. Few and hesitant, however, have been her attempts to realize that purpose, to strive boldly, through profound labors of readjustment and reconstruction, to establish the Kingdom of God, the kingdom of love, on earth . . ."

*Reflect:* Scudder wrote these words in 1917. How do they resonate for you today?

4. (pg. 27) Martin Luther King Jr. said the ultimate goal of the Civil Rights struggle was freedom, dignity, and justice for the oppressed *and* for the oppressor.

*Reflect:* Do you agree? Should oppressed peoples be concerned about the lives of their oppressors?

5. (pg. 29) Philosopher Josiah Royce says beloved community is only possible through atonement: an act of spiritual sacrifice or reparation undertaken by an individual or group for the community as a whole. Such an act may function to shock the conscience of the opponent so much it cracks them open and makes way for God's spirit to intercede.

*Reflect:* Consider the witness of nonviolent resisters like Mahatma Gandhi and Civil Rights leader Fannie Lou Hamer. Consider Jesus, whose suffering and death are described in scripture as "an atoning sacrifice for our sins" (1 John 2:2). Do you believe atonement can actually work to achieve overall healing? What are the possibilities for atonement? What are the dangers?

6. (pg. 33) Christopher Duraisingh presents a continuum of faith communities: on one end, the Tower of Babel, where all people gather in one place, speak one language, and stand apart from or try to homogenize anything different. On the other end is Pentecost, where communities and individuals discover the blessing of many voices, languages, and gifts interacting in mutually transforming community, where everybody is changed and enriched.

*Reflect:* Where would you place your church or ministry on that continuum? What do you dream for your church?

### Scripture to Dwell In

Choose one of the passages below. Read it three times. After each reading, reflect on one of the following questions. Note: If you're in a group, you might reflect on the first two questions in pairs or (if online) by sharing brief responses in the chat; for the final question, participants might share as a group:

1. What phrase or image grabs your attention?
2. What do you see God doing here? What do you see people doing here?
3. What do you long to be, to do, or to see differently given what you see here of God and God's people?

John 15:12-17

<sup>12</sup>Jesus said, "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup>No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. <sup>14</sup>You are my friends if you do what I command you. <sup>15</sup>I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. <sup>16</sup>You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. <sup>17</sup>I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another."

Acts 2:42-47

<sup>42</sup>They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. <sup>43</sup>Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. <sup>44</sup>All who believed were together and had all things in common; <sup>45</sup>they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. <sup>46</sup>Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, <sup>47</sup>praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

1 Corinthians 12:12-13

<sup>12</sup>For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. <sup>13</sup>For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:14-26

<sup>14</sup>Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. <sup>15</sup>If the foot would say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. <sup>16</sup>And if the ear would say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. <sup>17</sup>If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? <sup>18</sup>But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. <sup>19</sup>If all were a single member, where would the body be? <sup>20</sup>As it is, there are many members, yet one body. <sup>21</sup>The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."

<sup>22</sup>On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, <sup>23</sup>and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; <sup>24</sup>whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, <sup>25</sup>that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. <sup>26</sup>If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.

## Galatians 3:27-29

<sup>27</sup> As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. <sup>28</sup> 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. <sup>29</sup> And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.

## 2 Corinthians 5:18-20

<sup>18</sup> All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; <sup>19</sup> that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. <sup>20</sup> So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

## Ephesians 2:11-22

<sup>11</sup> So then, remember that at one time you Gentiles by birth, called "the uncircumcision" by those who are called "the circumcision"—a physical circumcision made in the flesh by human hands— <sup>12</sup> remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. <sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. <sup>14</sup> For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. <sup>15</sup> He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, <sup>16</sup> and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it.

<sup>17</sup> So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; <sup>18</sup> for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. <sup>19</sup> So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, <sup>20</sup> built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. <sup>21</sup> In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; <sup>22</sup> in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.

## CHAPTER 3: The Origins of the Nightmare

### Entering In

1. Having read this chapter, what words or phrases stand out for you? How does what you've read relate to your personal life? How does it connect to your faith and ministry?

### Terms to Know

2. **Self-centrism** (pgs. 37-38): An orientation in relation to the world that assumes I am at the center and the world rotates around me (or my group, my nation, my race, my kind), so that everything and everyone else has meaning or value only insofar as it serves the self at the center.

*Reflect:* In what ways are human beings essentially self-centric? Why do you think this is the case? Are there things human beings do that are *not* self-centric (or centered on my group, nation, race, or kind)?

3. **Doctrine of Discovery** (pg. 42): The doctrine espoused in a series of fifteenth-century papal bulls and church statements asserting the European Christian right to claim non-Christian lands and resources and to subjugate, exploit, or exterminate the peoples in these lands. Also affirmed in U.S. law and in the concept of Manifest Destiny (which justified White expansion across the American continent), the Doctrine of Discovery functioned as the firing gun that launched the colonization of most of the non-European world well into the twentieth century.

*Reflect:* Many religious communities have publicly disavowed the Doctrine of Discovery in recent years. Why would this be necessary? What else could religious groups do in order to reckon with the legacy of this doctrine?

4. **Whiteness** (pg. 44): The identity that White supremacy culture created 1) to house those who are to be protected and privileged on the basis of light skin color and 2) to differentiate them from non-White people who can then be subjugated and dominated.

*Reflect:* What is the difference between participating in Whiteness and being a White person?

## Concepts to Explore

5. (pg. 36) Jesus said, “[Y]ou shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free” (John 8:32).

*Reflect:* Name one truth you discovered in the wake of pandemic, racial reckoning, economic suffering, and systemic decline. How has knowing this truth made you feel free? How has knowing this truth made life more difficult?

6. (pgs. 39 and 40) Review the concept of self-centrism.

*Reflect:* What is the relationship between self-centrism and various forms of systemic oppression and domination (White supremacy, misogyny, environmental exploitation, consumerism, colonialism, etc.)?

7. (pg. 39) A White male friend once remarked: “When you’ve been told something is yours, part of you believes it, whether it’s possessions, position, or an identity. There’s something in you that needs to have it and keep it. If it’s threatened or limited in any way, you fear your own existence is at risk. You’ll do what you have to do to protect and keep it for yourself and for each other. It’s what every human group would instinctively do, if they were the ones on top.”

*Reflect:* Do you agree with him? Why or why not?

8. (pgs. 41- 44) Review the section on “The Age of Conquest,” which describes the Doctrine of Discovery and the European crusade to control land and peoples across the globe with the Church’s blessing.

*Reflect:* What surprised you? What disturbed you? What was especially helpful? What would you want your friends to know?

9. (pg. 46) Read again Ben Franklin’s 1751 piece about race in colonial America. Now read this excerpt from the Declaration of Independence (which Franklin also helped to craft):

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

*Reflect:* How does reading Franklin’s earlier statement impact the way you read the Declaration? In what ways do they contradict each other, if at all? How do you imagine Franklin and other founders rationalized these seeming contradictions?

10. (pg. 47) Read again Senator Thomas Hart Benton's 1846 address to Congress.

*Reflect:* Benton's words would have been relatively uncontroversial at the time, and some people would agree with him to this day. How do they sound to you? How would you respond to someone who expressed this belief to you?

11. (pgs. 49-52) Review the timeline that charts critical moments in the development of White racial domination in America, from the 1490s to this very day.

*Reflect:* What stood out most for you? What would you want to share with a friend or with members of your church?

### **Actions to Take**

12. Review the section on "The Age of Conquest" (pgs. 41- 44) and the timeline tracking White racial domination in America (pgs. 49-52).

*Prompt:* Capture a few highlights from this section. Identify one person in your life with whom you could share the most stirring points. Find time to share and ask for their reflections.

### **Scripture to Dwell In**

Choose one of the passages below. Read it three times. After each reading, reflect on one of the following questions. Note: If you're in a group, you might reflect on the first two questions in pairs or (if online) by sharing brief responses in the chat; for the final question, participants might share as a group:

1. What phrase or image grabs your attention?
2. What do you see God doing here? What do you see people doing here?
3. What do you long to be, to do, or to see differently given what you see here of God and God's people?

Genesis 1:26

So God created humankind in his image,  
in the image of God he created them;  
male and female he created them.

## Genesis 2:7

Then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being.

## Deuteronomy 10:17-19

<sup>17</sup>For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, <sup>18</sup>who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing. <sup>19</sup>You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

## Luke 4:16-29

<sup>16</sup>When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, <sup>17</sup>and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

<sup>18</sup>“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to let the oppressed go free,  
<sup>19</sup>to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

<sup>20</sup>And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. <sup>21</sup>Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” <sup>22</sup>All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, “Is not this Joseph’s son?” <sup>23</sup>He said to them, “Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, ‘Doctor, cure yourself!’ And you will say, ‘Do here also in your hometown the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.’”

<sup>24</sup>And he said, “Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet’s hometown. <sup>25</sup>But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; <sup>26</sup>yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. <sup>27</sup>There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.” <sup>28</sup>When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. <sup>29</sup>They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff.

## Additional Resources

Explore these extras to better understand the development and function of Whiteness.

- The Episcopal Church keeps an updated set of resources titled: “Learn-Pray-Act: Responding to Racist Violence.” The section on “Learn” features a comprehensive, manageable selection of books, articles, and media.  
<https://www.episcopalchurch.org/responding-to-racist-violence/learn/>
- Kelly Brown Douglas’s *Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and the Justice of God* is an essential read for people of faith coming to terms with Whiteness and anti-Blackness. The book traces these concepts throughout history and in contemporary life. Between dense, readable chapters she intersperses deeply personal reflections on the lynching of Trayvon Martin and her own experience as the mother of a Black son in America. The chapter and section headings from Part One suggest the scope and significance of her project:

### Chapter 1: America's Exceptionalism

- The Making of the Anglo-Saxon Myth
- The Making of America's Grand Narrative
- The Making of Cherished Property
- Stand-Your-Ground Rights

### Chapter 2: The Black Body: A Guilty Body

- Natural Law Theo-Ideology
- The Black Body as Chattel
- Theo-Ideological Legitimation
- A Religio-Scientific Foundation
- Hypersexualized Black Body
- The Dangerous Black Body
- The Criminal Black Body
- Guilty of Something

### Chapter 3: Manifest Destiny War

- Manifest Destiny
- The Religio-Science of Manifest Destiny
- Manifest Destiny: A Declaration of War
- The Warring Violence of Stand-Your-Ground Culture
- Stand-Your-Ground War and the Black Body
- Going Home

- The Smithsonian’s National Museum of African American History and Culture maintains a site called “Talking About Race.” The page on “Whiteness” – which can be found at <https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race/topics/whiteness> - includes text and videos regarding these phrases and terms:

- Whiteness
  - White racialized identity
  - White dominant culture
  - White privilege
  - White nationalism
  - White supremacy
  - Internalized dominance
  - White fragility
- The Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre has assembled a helpful page about Whiteness: <http://www.aclrc.com/whiteness>. They build on Paul Kivel's definition: "Whiteness is a constantly shifting boundary separating those who are entitled to have certain privileges from those whose exploitation and vulnerability to violence is justified by their not being white."
  - Sacred Ground is a film-based series for small groups exploring the history of race and racial identity in the United States. Available at <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/sacred-ground/>, it is open to any people, but specifically geared to help White people to talk to other White people about race.
  - Interactive U.S. maps and tools
    - Map of Native Lands: interactive United States map detailing which Indigenous peoples occupied which lands, their languages, and related treaties. <https://native-land.ca>
    - Map of Sundown Towns: entire communities that deliberately blocked Black, Chinese, Jewish, Mexican, Indigenous and even Mormon people from living in their midst. <https://sundown.tougaloo.edu/content.php?file=sundowntowns-whitemap.html>
    - Chart of voting times across America, by income: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/01/04/upshot/voting-wait-times.html>
    - Map of Confederate monuments and memorials: <https://www.splcenter.org/20190201/whose-heritage-public-symbols-confederacy#findings>
    - Map of racial terror lynching sites: <https://lynchinginamerica.eji.org/explore>
    - Timeline of 100 years of racist housing policy: <https://www.shareable.net/timeline-of-100-years-of-racist-housing-policy-that-created-a-separate-and-unequal-america/>
    - Calendar of historic events related to racial injustice: <https://calendar.eji.org/racial-injustice/jan/>
  - Scholar and priest Altagracia Perez-Bullard has assembled a comprehensive timeline tracing the history of laws regulating race in America. Find it here:

She and I further developed it, and she gave permission to share the timeline in the context of the *Church Cracked Open* Reflection & Action Guide. Her two main sources were Racial Equity Tools ([Racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/facismimmigration-timeline](https://Racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/facismimmigration-timeline)) and Alto Arizona's History of Racist US Laws (<http://www.altoarizona.com/history-of-racist-us-laws.html#jimcrow>).

## CHAPTER 4: The Church of Empire

### Entering In

1. Having read this chapter, what words or phrases stand out for you? How does what you've read relate to your personal life? How does it connect to your faith and ministry?

### Terms to Know

2. **Via Media** (pg. 57): Literally “middle way,” this Anglican principle prioritizes the balance of extremes: the ancient and the contemporary, the catholic (universal) and the vernacular (local/contextual), ideally allowing for unity without uniformity.

*Reflect:* What are the gifts of this balanced perspective? What could you lose by hewing to the middle?

3. **Vernacular** (pg. 57): A staple among Protestant Reformers, this principle maintains that worship and faith expressions should honor and rise from the local language and culture.

*Reflect:* Name an example of an element of worship in your community that expresses the vernacular.

4. **Triangular Trade** (pg. 59): The three-pronged venture that involved building, stocking, and sending English ships from cities like Liverpool; trading and purchasing captured Africans in coastal West Africa (especially Ghana); and sailing to the Americas, where Africans were sold into slavery and forced to work to provide cotton, sugar, and other commodities that returned enormous wealth and resources to England.

*Reflect:* Plenty of nations and peoples participated in slavery. What strikes you as unique about the English practice and trade?

5. **Episcopocrat** (pg. 69): Kit and Fredrica Konolige’s term combining “Episcopal” and “aristocrat,” due to what they describe as the unique “set of attitudes and mores, fertilized by a distinctly Anglophiliac and Episcopal atmosphere of feeling, [that] has been adopted by non-Episcopalians as the standard for upper-class conduct (in law, government and business). The influence of the distinctly Episcopalian institutions—the prep schools, the men’s colleges, and the metropolitan clubs—can hardly be overstated.”

*Reflect:* Does the Konolige’s term in any way align with how you, people you know, or any other groups might view Episcopalians?

## Concepts to Explore

6. (pg. 55) The 1662 English Book of Common Prayer featured prayers for the monarch and clergy vows of obedience to the state. It also urged the faithful to be “sober,” to tend their “duty,” and to lead a “quiet and peaceable life.”

*Reflect:* Look at the prayer book or primary liturgical resource for your church. Notice the forms and tone of worship. Where do you see signs of the influence of empire and nationalism in your tradition’s worship?

7. (pg. 58) Consider the plea of Wahunsonacock, leader of the Powhatan Native confederation, as he addressed English leader John Smith in the early 1600s:

Why should you take by force that from us which you can have by love? Why should you destroy us, who have provided you with food? What can you get by war? . . . What is the cause of your jealousy? You see us unarmed, and willing to supply your wants, if you will come in a friendly manner, and not with swords and guns, as to invade an enemy.

*Reflect:* Why do you imagine John Smith and the settlers resorted to “extravagant violence” against Indigenous peoples like the Powhatans? What messages in Christian tradition would have encouraged their violent behavior? What messages in Christian tradition would have discouraged it?

8. In 1727, Virginia’s slaveholders sought guidance from the Bishop of London, Edmund Gibson, who served as the church’s bishop in charge of plantations. They were concerned about how and whether they were to baptize slaves. Would doing so free them, since, as Paul promised in Galatians 3:29, in Christ “there is no more slave or free” but all are one in Christ? Bishop Gibson advised them:

The freedom which Christianity gives is a freedom from the bondage of sin and satan, and from the dominion of men's lusts and passions and inordinate desires; but as to their *outward* condition, whatever that was before, whether bond or free, their being baptized and becoming Christians, makes no manner of change in it. . . . [If anything, Christianity] lays them under stronger obligations to perform those duties with the greatest diligence and fidelity, not only from the fear of man but from a sense of duty to God and fear of judgment in the hereafter.<sup>2</sup>

*Reflect:* How would his message have affected the development of slavery? How might it have affected the practice of Anglican slave masters and the direction Anglican theology?

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<sup>2</sup> As quoted in Elisabeth Evans Wray’s “The Relationship of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Virginia with the Negro Slaves 1830 to 1860: Success or Failure?”. University of Richmond Scholarship Repository, 1977, 19. Accessed July 30, 2020 at <http://scholarship.richmond.edu/masters-theses/1269>.

9. (pgs. 60-65) In the decades leading up to the Civil War, many national churches publicly struggled and waged internal battles over the institution of slavery, if not disavowing slavery altogether. The Episcopal Church was conspicuous in its silence and complicity, both in the South but also in the North.

*Reflect:* What factors would have prevented this church rejecting or broadly critiquing the institution of slavery?

10. (pgs. 67-68) Along with many White dominant traditions, The Episcopal Church has a track record of not fully honoring the gifts, voices, power, and presence of Latinx, Asian, and Asiamerican communities. Juan Oliver notes:

“The interpersonal dynamics of ‘inclusion’ always involve an ‘includer’ and an ‘included.’ In the Episcopal Church, Latinos [what we call ourselves] are always being invited, included and ministered to. ... This usually means that we are welcome guests in someone else’s house.”

*Reflect:* Have you noticed this pattern of treating Latinx, Asian, and Asiamerican groups as “guests” (and not full members) in White dominant traditions you’re familiar with? If so, what was happening? If not, can you imagine what Oliver describes here?

11. (pgs. 69-70) Note the figures below, which illustrate consistently higher rates of income and education among Episcopalians, over a roughly 40-year span.

High Income	General Population	Episcopalians
1976 (more than \$20,000/year)	21%	48%
2014 (more than \$100,000/year)	18%	36% (*highest proportion of wealthy people of any Christian group)

Completed College or Graduate Study	General Population	Episcopalians
1976 (more than \$20,000/year)	29%	45%
2014 (more than \$100,000/year)	27%	56% (highest proportion of educated people of any Christian group)

Do you see a link between these figures and the history laid out in this chapter? What challenges – and what opportunities – might this pattern represent?

## Actions to Take

12. (pg. 54) *Becoming Beloved Community* guides The Episcopal Church's work toward racial reconciliation, healing, and justice. Learn about it at [www.episcopalchurch.org/beloved-community](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/beloved-community). The vision invites people and communities to commit to an ongoing journey towards deep transformation, moving through four quadrants of a labyrinth:



The journey begins with “Telling the Truth about Our Churches and Race.”

*Prompt:* Having read this chapter, what truths do you hope your church will now seek out and then speak? How can you help your church to engage in this truth-telling?

For practical tips on truth-telling in the Church, see page 4 of “*Becoming Beloved Community Where You Are: A Resource for Individuals, Congregations & Communities Seeking Racial Healing, Reconciliation and Justice*” (available at [https://www.episcopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/11/bbc\\_where\\_you\\_are.pdf](https://www.episcopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/11/bbc_where_you_are.pdf)).

For a powerful example of church leaders engaging in and encouraging truth-telling, see the House of Bishops Theology Committee’s 2020 paper on “*White Supremacy, Beloved Community, and Learning to Listen*” (available at <https://www.diocese-oregon.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/HOB-Theo-Cmte-Report-on-White-Supremacy.pdf>).

## Scripture to Dwell In

Choose one of the passages below. Read it three times. After each reading, reflect on one of the following questions. Note: If you’re in a group, you might reflect on the first two questions in pairs or (if online) by sharing brief responses in the chat; for the final question, participants might share as a group:

1. What phrase or image grabs your attention?
2. What do you see God doing here? What do you see people doing here?
3. What do you long to be, to do, or to see differently given what you see here of God and God’s people?

## Ephesians 6:1-7

<sup>1</sup> Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. <sup>2</sup>“Honor your father and mother”—this is the first commandment with a promise: <sup>3</sup>“so that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.”

<sup>4</sup> And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

<sup>5</sup> Slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as you obey Christ; <sup>6</sup> not only while being watched, and in order to please them, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. <sup>7</sup> Render service with enthusiasm, as to the Lord and not to men and women, <sup>8</sup> knowing that whatever good we do, we will receive the same again from the Lord, whether we are slaves or free.

<sup>9</sup> And, masters, do the same to them. Stop threatening them, for you know that both of you have the same Master in heaven, and with him there is no partiality.

## Galatians 3:23-29

<sup>23</sup> Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith would be revealed. <sup>24</sup> Therefore the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith. <sup>25</sup> But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian, <sup>26</sup> for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. <sup>27</sup> As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. <sup>28</sup> 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. <sup>29</sup> And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.

## CHAPTER 5: Shards of Light

### Entering In

1. Having read this chapter, what words or phrases stand out for you? How does what you've read relate to your personal life? How does it connect to your faith and ministry?

### Concepts (and Lives) to Explore

2. (pgs. 72-76) John Jay II was among New York's elite: a wealthy, educated, young White Episcopal lawyer whose grandfather was the first chief justice of the Supreme Court. Yet, Jay defended fugitive slaves, fought for and became known as "a pertinacious and persistent friend of the negro."

He publicly observed that "[The Episcopal Church] has not merely remained a mute and careless spectator of this great conflict of truth and justice with hypocrisy and cruelty, but her very priests and deacons may be seen ministering at the altar of slavery."

*Reflect:* As you read Jay's story, what factors led him to these convictions and behaviors? How does his faith influence his life and choices? What price did alliance with Black people cost Jay? What do you imagine he gained?

3. (pgs. 76-79) Vida Scudder came from a White, privileged New England family, attended Oxford University, and taught at a premier women's college. She also championed socialism, founded settlement houses, lived side-by-side with Boston's poorest people, and struggled for the rights of workers and children.

She once said, "It is spiritual suicide for the possessors of privileges to rest, until such privileges become the common lot. This truth is what the Church should hold relentlessly before men's eyes."

*Reflect:* As you read Scudder's story, what factors led her to these convictions and behaviors? Where do you notice the influence of her faith? What do you imagine Scudder lost because she took this life path? What did she gain?

4. (pgs. 79-82) Jonathan Daniels grew up in a small town, attended Virginia Military Institute, and headed to an Episcopal seminary to prepare for priesthood. In 1965, this young White man veered off course, joined with the Civil Rights Movement in Alabama, and was killed when he took a bullet meant for a Black teenager.

Before his death, he wrote: "[S]omething had happened to me in Selma, which meant I had to come back. I could not stand by in benevolent dispassion any longer without compromising everything I know and love and value."

*Reflect:* As you read Daniels’s story, what factors led him to these convictions and behaviors? How does faith shape his choices and path? What did Daniels lose in choosing this road? What do you imagine he gained?

5. (pgs. 82-86) As a well-educated and widely admired Black Episcopal priest, Paul Washington held positions at the national church level and could have risen in the hierarchy. Instead, he crossed borders of class and privilege, joined the Black Power movement, honored poor and forgotten people, and eventually risked his ministry for the sake of women’s rights in the church.

Early in his ministry in Philadelphia, he made a radical choice: “I instructed my family: ‘When someone rings the doorbell and asks to see me, don’t come to tell me and describe him—clean or dirty, drunk or sober, white or black. Just tell me, ‘Someone is at the door to see you.’”

*Reflect:* As you read Washington’s story, what factors led him to these convictions and behaviors? Where do you notice the influence of his faith? What do you imagine Washington lost because he took this life path? What did he gain?

6. Consider your own life and the people who have shaped you. Have you known anyone like Jay, Scudder, Daniels, or Washington, someone who held strong convictions, crossed borders, surrendered privilege, and acted in distinct and powerful ways alongside others? What did you notice in that person’s life and witness? What did they teach you? How has their witness influenced you, your convictions, and your behaviors?

### **Actions to Take**

7. The four profiles above aren’t by any means the only Episcopalians who crossed over, countered the prevailing narrative of empire, and surrendered privilege for the sake of the greater whole. Here are a few figures you might get to know, as well as some important moments when significant numbers of Episcopalians stood with the oppressed:
- Charles McIlvaine, Bishop of Ohio
  - The social gospel
  - John Hines, Presiding Bishop
  - Charles Willie, leader in the House of Deputies
  - General Convention Special Program
  - Women’s ordination
  - LGBTQ ordination and same-gender marriage
  - Standing with Standing Rock
  - Black Lives Matter
  - Reparations
  - U.S.-Mexico border ministries

Choose one of the figures or movements above and learn more. What does the witness you discover inspire you to do?

## Scripture to Dwell In

Read the passage three times. After each reading, reflect on one of the following questions. Note: If you're in a group, you might reflect on the first two questions in pairs or (if online) by sharing brief responses in the chat; for the final question, participants might share as a group:

1. What phrase or image grabs your attention?
2. What do you see God doing here? What do you see Mary doing here?
3. What do you long to be, to do, or to see differently given what you see here of God and Mary?

Luke 1:46-55 (“The Magnificat” or “The Song of Mary”)

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,  
 my spirit rejoices in God my Savior;  
 for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.  
 From this day all generations will call me blessed:  
 the Almighty has done great things for me,  
 and holy is his Name.  
 He has mercy on those who fear him  
 in every generation.  
 He has shown the strength of his arm,  
 he has scattered the proud in their conceit.  
 He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,  
 and has lifted up the lowly.  
 He has filled the hungry with good things,  
 and the rich he has sent away empty.  
 He has come to the help of his servant Israel,  
 for he has remembered his promise of mercy,  
 The promise he made to our fathers,  
 to Abraham and his children for ever.

## CHAPTER 6: Lose Your Life—Kenosis

### Entering In

1. Having read this chapter, what words or phrases stand out for you? How does what you've read relate to your personal life? How does it connect to your faith and ministry?

### Terms to Know

2. **Kenosis** (pgs. 32 and 90): The act of emptying oneself. In theological terms, kenosis refers to Jesus's willing renunciation (or emptying himself) of pure divinity in order to also become incarnate as a human being, to live and love as one of us, and ultimately to suffer the death of one who is despised. Considered broadly, it is the self-emptying movement privileged systems and the people who align with them must ultimately embrace as disciples of Jesus.

*Reflect:* Identify an example of someone who practiced kenosis. Why would you say this was kenosis? What would you say is *not* kenosis?

3. **Conscientization** (pgs. 98-104): The development of critical consciousness or, in Portuguese, *conscientizacao*. Brazilian educator Paulo Freire describes it as the process by which people “*emerge* from their *submersion* and acquire the ability to *intervene* in reality as it is unveiled.” Others might say it is raising consciousness or “getting woke.”

*Reflect:* Where and how have you seen people experiencing conscientization recently?

### Concepts to Explore

4. (pgs. 90-91) Philippians 2:5-9 is called the “Kenotic Hymn” because it is thought to be an early song that predates the gospels and Paul's letters. Early Christians apparently sang it to teach one another about Jesus.

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,  
 who, though he was in the form of God,  
 did not regard equality with God  
 as something to be exploited,  
 but emptied himself,  
 taking the form of a slave,  
 being born in human likeness.  
 And being found in human form,  
 he humbled himself  
 and became obedient to the point of death—  
 even death on a cross.  
 Therefore God also highly exalted him  
 and gave him the name  
 that is above every name ...

*Reflect:* As you read this song, what does it teach you about Jesus? Why would it be especially important for new followers of Jesus to learn this? What does it teach us today?

5. (pg. 95) Jesus asked his disciples to “take up [their] cross and follow” (Matthew 16:24, Mark 8:34, Luke 9:23).

*Reflect:* How would you translate Jesus’ command for twenty-first century disciples? What cross do you imagine Jesus is asking you to take up?

6. (pgs. 97-98) Buddhist teacher Pema Chödrön speaks often about *shenpa*, a Tibetan word usually translated as “attachment,” which she defines as “getting hooked.” She says we’ve all been in uncertain situations where we feel an underlying insecurity and have to grasp onto something. Pretty soon, we’re grasping and holding onto resources, established order, narratives, people, privileges, and life itself. These impulses then lead to human aggression, craving, conflict, cruelty, oppression, and greed. Another way of putting it is, attachment leads to sin.

*Reflect:* Have you seen this pattern in your own life or in the world around you? Describe one situation where fear and insecurity led to participation in oppression, rejection, or sinful behavior.

*Reflect:* What practice or message helps you to respond differently to uncertainty? What helps you to not cling even though you really want to grasp?

7. On pages 100-104 of *The Church Cracked Open*, you’ll find a brief exploration of Tammerie Day’s four steps toward conscientization. I’ve written the reflections below to complement the book text and to enhance your engagement with the four steps.

### **Step 1: Attend to Reality** (pg. 100)

When I’m working with groups hoping to dismantle racism and move toward beloved community, I often open with a question: why do you care and what makes you take up this work? My assumption is that, especially among people with racial privilege, this is a choice. The very definition of privilege is that you don’t have to be uncomfortable or pay attention to certain issues if you don’t want to. So we begin with the stories of when and how people started to notice and care.

Inevitably, at some point, people describe a moment when they saw what was really going on and could not unsee it. Tammerie Day defines this first step as “attending to reality,” and it is simply when information or an experience penetrates and presents a contradiction to what we understood to be reality. It can be slow or startling, as when millions of us watched the murder of George Floyd unfold on film. Maybe people had heard stories about police brutality, but they explained those away with a hasty, “You must be making this up. There are always two sides. What did he do to deserve it?” After watching that video, the excuses

dried up. Something was terribly, horribly wrong. Perception tilted on its axis. People had to attend to reality as it is.

This may be one of the reasons why oppressive systems depend on segregation and isolation. If I'm not near you, I don't perceive what is simply reality to you. I don't recognize there is another way of seeing the world, one that might contradict what I thought was true. This is also why solidarity depends on relationship. Once I'm with someone who experiences oppression in ways I do not, I have the choice to listen and trust. If I attend to reality, I am opening to change.

*Reflect:* Do you recall a moment when you learned something jarring about an institution, person, or tradition that mattered to you? What was it like waking to that reality? Did you resist in any way?

## Step 2: Let Ourselves Feel (pgs. 101-102)

In the storm of politics, coronavirus, social upheaval, and the resulting cracking open of institutions and narratives, lots of us desperately want to turn off and just not feel. A sketch on the *Late Show with Stephen Colbert* helped me to laugh and think anew about that temptation (watch it here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D-043RwYOck&feature=youtu.be>).

Colbert's fake commercial starts with the usual medical ad voiceover but almost immediately goes sideways: "Are you bored and disinterested in things that used to seem important ..." like White supremacy, poverty, and death? It continues, "Ask your doctor about Notnormalzol®."

What is Notnormalzol®? "A prescription strength slap to the face that will leave you renewed and reminded" that things are *not* as they should be. Next comes a close-up of a hand smacking a face and then the inside of the human brain, as the voiceover explains: "Here's how it works: Notnormalzol® contains fast acting Slapicin®, which penetrates the outrage fatigue cortex to stimulate your dormant whatthellabellum."

Police shootings and political scandals could cause outrage fatigue – I know my "whatthellabellum" sometimes turns off so I can get through the day. Why don't more people want to stay alert to reality? Perhaps because it is hurtful and exhausting to keep feeling our own and other's pain, and to withstand the breaking and cracking apart of the foundations and structures all around.

But the truth is, not feeling also costs us, as Tammerie Day explains so well. "When we refuse our feelings, we are denying not only our own access to reality, but we are also denying the Spirit of God a key ingress to our hearts and minds."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Tammerie Day, *Constructing Solidarity for a Liberative Ethic: Anti-Racism, Action, and Justice* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) 112.

Allowing ourselves to feel and then working with those feelings takes time and help. I lean on the wisdom of William “Bill” Kondrath, a multicultural organizational consultant and author of numerous books, including *Facing Feelings in Faith Communities*. (He’s also one of my beloved professors from Episcopal Divinity School.) He has fleshed out VISIONS Inc.’s “Feelings As Messengers” resource to help individuals and organizations to understand the role feelings play in transformation processes.

### Feelings as Messengers

Feeling	Stimulus	Message	Need or Response	Infant example
<b>Fear</b> (Scared)	Real or perceived danger	There is danger. I am threatened or in peril. I find new ideas and relationships scary.	I need to get safe. I need protection, support, and/or reassurance for trying new behaviors or ways of being.	Loud noise. Infant startles and cries.
<b>Anger</b> (Mad)	Real or perceived violation	There is a violation. My boundaries have been crossed. My expectations have been smashed.	I need to set limits; to re-establish boundaries; to renegotiate expectations.	Infant is hungry or has soiled diaper. Infant cries.
<b>Sadness</b>	Real or anticipated loss	There is a loss. I am experiencing or anticipating bereavement. I liked things as they were.	I need comfort, space, and/or support to grieve, remember, and let go (as appropriate).	Significant person leaves. Infant cries.
<b>Peace</b>	Deep awareness of connectedness	I am centered. I am connected to God and myself (and others).	I need to continue to be focused, centered and/or connected.	Infant is calm, looking at mobile.
<b>Power or Agency</b>	Accomplishment or anticipated success	I am competent. I am able.	I need to continue to foster my own competence and to empower others.	Infant starts to walk on own.
<b>Joy</b>	Inner gratitude, awe, wonder	I am excited, happy.	I need to continue to relish the joy and share it as appropriate.	Infant responds to interaction.

Adapted by William Kondrath from VISIONS Inc. – [www.visionsinc.org](http://www.visionsinc.org). See also William Kondrath, *God’s Tapestry: Understanding and Celebrating Differences* (Alban Institute, 2008) and *Facing Feelings in Faith Communities* (Alban Institute, 2013).

*Reflect:* Examine the chart and then sit with these questions, individually or with a group. Kondrath offers them<sup>4</sup> as a way into reflecting on feelings and the wisdom they hold:

- What are we *afraid* will happen when we engage with those who are different?
- What *anger* do we carry when we are/were treated as *less than* by someone else?
- What *sadness* are we willing to name when we have to give up some pattern of behavior than is familiar in order to make room for new relationships and interactions?
- What *joy* may emerge when someone new brings gifts and talents to our community that we did not previously have?
- How might our community be *empowered* in new ways when each person is able to show up as fully themselves with all their diversity?

<sup>4</sup> Questions from William Kondrath, “Feelings as Entry Points to Engaging and Valuing Differences,” *Crux Magazine: Diocese of Connecticut* (October 2014, 3:1, 19-20). Accessed January 25, 2020, at <http://www.billkondrath.com/feelings-as-entry-points>.

### Step 3: Discover Alternatives (pgs. 102-103)

When your world has broken open and the feelings pour in, you need to know that's not the end. With curiosity, imagination, and companions who have been this way before, you may discover new, life-giving narratives and ways of being. Just knowing those possibilities are out there may itself spark the change. Tammerie Day explains the process this way:

The presence of alternatives, oddly enough, can contribute to arriving at a more critical awareness; often one does not become aware one is living with a particular worldview until an alternative is presented. ... To be offered an *alternative* not only increases one's range of epistemological freedom and options, but also constitutes an invitation to a different ontology, to embody a different way of being, with resultant shifts in perspectives and praxis.<sup>5</sup>

Let's make this plain: If a church member has only experienced or heard of one way of being church, why wouldn't she resist changes in worship or leadership? You're not just changing church – you're destroying it. But if she has seen other models and knows the wider church family has created room for those alternatives, her conceptual universe may be big enough to embrace the evolution of her own congregation. She can imagine that surrendering one way of being could be the first step toward embracing a different, scary, yet more vital reality.

I hope the same transformation is also possible for White people and White-identified institutions. In the summer of 2020, I put the question directly to my Facebook community: If we dismantle White supremacy – which rests at the foundation of America and of Whiteness – is there such a thing as a healthy racial identity for White people?

Dozens of friends and colleagues admitted their yearning to see White people develop a positive relationship to their racial identity, one that's not based on supremacy and oppression. They also pointed me toward the work of others who've honestly wrestled with this quandary, including William Gardiner, who wrote "Developing a Positive White Identity" – find the resource here: [https://www.uua.org/files/documents/gardinerwilliam/whiteness/positive\\_white\\_identity.pdf](https://www.uua.org/files/documents/gardinerwilliam/whiteness/positive_white_identity.pdf). Gardiner admits:

I want to have a racial identity that is not based on the oppression of people of color. I want a racial identity that is not based on the deification of whiteness or white supremacy. I know that I can't reject my white skin color – I can't take off my white skin. And white society will continue to give me unearned privilege. The challenge I face as a white person is to feel good about being white without asserting that as a white person I am superior to other people, or oppressing people of color.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Day, 113.

<sup>6</sup> William Gardiner, "Developing a Positive White Identity," Unitarian Universalist Association, p. 1. Accessed July 27, 2020, at [https://www.uua.org/files/documents/gardinerwilliam/whiteness/positive\\_white\\_identity.pdf](https://www.uua.org/files/documents/gardinerwilliam/whiteness/positive_white_identity.pdf).

A surprising proportion of my White colleagues said positive White identity just isn't possible. White is the color of the oppressor, and there is no way to have a White identity that does not participate in that domination system. Some were working toward an anti-racist identity, which made them hopeful but also quietly concerned: what kind of life can you build if ultimately you are defined by what you're not?

Boston College psychologist and scholar Janet Helms proposes at least one path for growing healthy White racial identity. She walks people through a series of developmental stages, starting with "Contact" (the beginning, when many people claim they are colorblind) to "Disintegration" (reality tilts and the emotions flood in), and through more phases. The journey culminates in "Autonomy." At this stage, Helms writes, "each person must become aware of his or her whiteness, accept it as personally and socially significant, and learn to feel good about it. Not in the sense of Klan members' 'white pride' but in the context of a commitment to a just society."<sup>7</sup>

Helms's confidence left me curious about how this clear awareness and positive feeling would look in real life. When I searched for examples, I found a void. One group of scholars conducted a study specifically hoping to find people living out Helms's vision of positive White identity. Here were their findings:

While participants in this study described experiences of their Whiteness consistent with Helms' autonomy status, such as flexibility and complexity in the analysis of and response to racial material, they did not describe gaining "comfort" with the experiential reality of race, as associated with that status. Indeed, this was seen as a continual struggle (e.g., the need for constant recognition and countering of one's own, and others' racism; attempts to establish positive cross-racial connections in seeking to establish integrated work and living communities).<sup>8</sup>

In other words, the research subjects could engage in racial analysis and action (anti-racism), but most did not develop a healthy relationship to their own White racial identity, or even describe one. They denied being White or hated or sublimated it to focus instead on relationship with non-White people and White people who share their anti-racist convictions.

That doesn't mean alternatives aren't possible. The most hopeful was William Gardiner's illustration in "Developing a Positive White Identity." He describes these steps:

- Be an accountable ally to People of Color.
- Work to change racist institutions.
- Learn to live as multi-racial people.

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<sup>7</sup> Janet Helms, "An Update of Helms's White and People of Color Racial Identity Models" in *Handbook of Multicultural Counseling*, edited by J. G. Ponterotto, J. M. Casas, L. A. Suzuki, and C. M. Alexander (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995) 181-191.

<sup>8</sup> Krista M. Malott, Tina R. Paone, Scott Schaeffle, Jennifer Cates, "Examining White Racial Identity: An Exploratory Study," Second Global Conference on Images of Whiteness - Oxford, England (July 2013). Accessed July 27, 2020, at [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/269984508\\_Examining\\_White\\_Racial\\_Identity\\_An\\_Exploratory\\_Study](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/269984508_Examining_White_Racial_Identity_An_Exploratory_Study).

- Take responsibility for our own racial identity journey.
- Learn the truth about the racist history of our country.
- Nurture a positive anti-racist white identity in children.
- Build a White anti-racist collective.
- Honor our heritage of white anti-racist resisters.<sup>9</sup>

*Reflect:* Have you ever seen a White person – or anyone with significant, systemic power – taking steps like the ones Gardiner describes above? What did they inspire you to imagine differently, in your own life? Which step looks most challenging to you?

#### **Step 4: Engage in Critical Analysis** (pgs. 103-104)

Suppose you have awakened to a radically different reality than the one you've known. You've acknowledged the sadness, grief, anger, and maybe accessed some joy and power. You've seen another way of living is possible, one that does not participate in the hurt but instead joins up with the healing.

Can you now examine the deep structures, institutions, core narratives, and values that undergird your life? Can you tell the truth about where you stand, and possibly begin to see your own participation and alignment with domination systems? This is what leaders like Tammerie Day call “stance analysis.”

For the Christian person and community with power and privilege, stance analysis goes beyond ideological criticism: these are questions that can and should be part of an individual's discerning discipleship, and which also can be part of a community's discernment of its setting and its calling. The answers may move a person or community to take a stand that causes isolation and alienation, as there is movement from a hegemonic center to embracing the pain and clarity of what can be seen and known only with the epistemological privileges of systemically oppressed people.<sup>10</sup>

At this critical stage in the journey, Day suggests considering questions like these:

- Why are things the way they are?
- Why does this injustice exist?
- Who benefits from this injustice, structurally and personally?
- What are the systems, institutions, and structures humming in the background or overhead, beyond my sight but powerfully shaping reality?
- What would Jesus have to say about this situation?

*Reflect:* What source of oppression and domination most breaks your heart or occupies your mind: elitism, racism, colonialism, heterosexism, sexism, homophobia, environmental degradation, ableism, clericalism, or another? Reflect on the questions above, applied to the manifestation of the domination system that most concerns you.

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<sup>9</sup> Gardiner, I.

<sup>10</sup> Day, 117.

## Scripture to Dwell In

Choose one of the passages below. Read it three times. After each reading, reflect on one of the following questions. Note: If you're in a group, you might reflect on the first two questions in pairs or (if online) by sharing brief responses in the chat; for the final question, participants might share as a group:

1. What phrase or image grabs your attention?
2. What do you see God doing here? What do you see people doing here?
3. What do you long to be, to do, or to see differently given what you see here of God and God's people?

### Mark 8:31-36

<sup>31</sup> Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. <sup>32</sup> He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. <sup>33</sup> But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

<sup>34</sup> He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. <sup>35</sup> For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. <sup>36</sup> For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? <sup>37</sup> Indeed, what can they give in return for their life?"

### John 12:24

Jesus said, "Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."

## CHAPTER 7: Gain Real Life—Solidarity

### Entering In

1. Having read this chapter, what words or phrases stand out for you? How does what you've read relate to your personal life? How does it connect to your faith and ministry?

### Terms to Know

2. **Solidarity** (pgs. 107 and 109): when love propels a person from self-centrism to cross borders and enter into the situation of the other, for the purpose of mutual relationship and struggle that heals us all. According to Latina theologian Ada María Isasi-Díaz, solidarity is “the union of kindreds who work together toward the unfolding of God’s kin-dom.”

*Reflect:* Name one example of a person or group you’ve seen moved toward solidarity. What factors led them to these convictions? What did it cost them? What do you imagine they gained?

3. **Stewardship of Privilege** (pg. 114): The practice of taking hold of the power of privilege and using it to disarm, dismantle, or otherwise subvert what it was designed to protect.

*Reflect:* See the Stewardship of Privilege chart on page 42.

### Concepts to Explore

4. (pg. 105) Revisit John Donne’s “Meditation 17.”

*Reflect:* What was the first (or most notable) moment you were conscious of feeling another person’s pain as if it were your own?

5. (pages 108-110) Valarie Kaur writes in *See No Stranger*: “We have drawn close to the story and lost ourselves in another’s experience, but we haven’t returned to ourselves and asked: What does this demand of me? Is it the reckoning of my privilege? Is it an expansion of whose struggles connect with mine? What will I do differently now?”

*Reflect:* What does her quote and other material in this section tell you about the relationship between kenosis and solidarity?

6. *Reflect:* Who can practice solidarity? Do you have to be White or traditionally powerful in order to practice solidarity? Remember: Solidarity is about where you stand *and* how you identify.

7. (pgs. 110-111) Christopher Duraisingh observes that “A central aspect of the story of Jesus is that he refuses to play the role of the dominant hero, but always moves to the margin and to places of solidarity with the oppressed.”

*Reflect:* Why did Jesus choose not only to release privilege but to stand with the most oppressed? Is there a spiritual power or insight only possible on the margins? What might that be?

8. (pg. 111) Kelly Brown Douglas equates the “crucified class” with whom Jesus identified to the “lynched class” who have been and are still terrorized in America. These classes are “those who were castigated and demonized, as well as those who defied the status quo.”

*Reflect:* Who are the crucified classes near you? What is your relationship with the crucified classes? How might God be inviting you to stand with (other) crucified peoples?

9. (pg. 112) Note the studies that indicate White subjects do not react as strongly when they witness a Black person in pain as when they witness a White person in pain.

*Reflect:* How might this pattern affect the overall social response to Black pain or the pain of other People of Color, given that America and its major institutions are White dominant?

### **Actions to Take**

10. Using the Stewardship of Privilege Chart (excerpted from page 114, reprinted on the next page), reflect on specific ways you could use your privilege for the sake of liberation. What commitments could you make? Where would you start?

# THE CHURCH CRACKED OPEN

## Stewardship of Privilege: Using Your Power as Jesus Used His

### *Jesus's Example*

Jesus loved extravagantly: his friends, his enemies, and God.

In Jesus, God came among human beings, lived, wept, and died with us.

Jesus embraced human life, in its most humble and painful form.

Jesus released control of his path so God could lead instead.

Jesus risked it all by coming to be among us, loving when he was not loved, being open to correction, and refusing to curse those who hurt him.

On the highways and byways of Galilee and beyond, Jesus walked with people and offered his listening ear and heart.

Jesus trusted a woman – Mary – to carry the message that he had risen from the dead.

God, in uniting divinity with humanity through Jesus, actually raised humanity and deified us (Richard Hooker).

Jesus promised to intercede on our behalf and carry our prayers to his Father.

Jesus incurred the wrath of the domination system because he stood with the oppressed.

Jesus lived simply and encouraged people to look into their bags, share their posses-

Jesus welcomes us into the relationship he shares with his Father and the Holy Spirit.

Jesus turned everything upside down, disobeyed unjust rules, and honored the least of these, in order to bring all things back into right relationship.

### *Your Opportunity*

**LOVE** the face and voice of God you see and hear in the presence of others.

**CARE** and carry each other's burdens, even though your privilege means you could just turn the other way.

**EMBRACE** uncomfortable spaces and experiences, and model vulnerability for others who share your privilege.

**SURRENDER** over-controlling behaviors and discern God's will in relationship with people who are oppressed.

**RISK** making the first move, sharing your own story, being wrong, appearing less-than-perfect, and receiving the anger of people who've been hurt by systems that protect you.

**LISTEN** with love to the stories of people who are oppressed, exploited, and have been denied privileges and resources you

**TRUST** the perspective and wisdom of people who are least respected.

**CELEBRATE** the cultures, gifts, and lives of groups who have been silenced or devalued.

**SPEAK** hard truths that people who share your privilege can hear from you.

**SUFFER** the displeasure and even the anger of the systems that privilege you, by stepping outside their bounds.

**SACRIFICE** possessions and resources for the sake of love, so that no one has too much and no one goes without.

**SHARE** privileged access and usher less privileged people into spaces and relationships that advance liberation for the whole.

**DISMANTLE** systems that reinforce domination, distribute privilege unequally, and diminish human life.

### *Your Specific Commitment*

*Note: Throughout life, you may hold power or be on the underside. Your community may also hold privileges you don't personally possess. Remember: Most have some form of privilege we can leverage to bless others and the whole.*

## Scripture to Dwell In

Choose one of the passages below. Read it three times. After each reading, reflect on one of the following questions. Note: If you're in a group, you might reflect on the first two questions in pairs or (if online) by sharing brief responses in the chat; for the final question, participants might share as a group:

1. What phrase or image grabs your attention?
2. What do you see Jesus doing here? What do you see people doing here?
3. What do you long to be, to do, or to see differently given what you see here of God and God's people?

Luke 19:1-10

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through it. <sup>2</sup>A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was rich. <sup>3</sup>He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. <sup>4</sup>So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. <sup>5</sup>When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today." <sup>6</sup>So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. <sup>7</sup>All who saw it began to grumble and said, "He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner." <sup>8</sup>Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much." <sup>9</sup>Then Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. <sup>10</sup>For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost."

John 4:5-30

<sup>5</sup>So Jesus came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. <sup>6</sup>Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

<sup>7</sup>A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." <sup>8</sup>(His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) <sup>9</sup>The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) <sup>10</sup>Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." <sup>11</sup>The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? <sup>12</sup>Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?" <sup>13</sup>Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, <sup>14</sup>but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." <sup>15</sup>The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water."

<sup>16</sup> Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back." <sup>17</sup> The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; <sup>18</sup> for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!" <sup>19</sup> The woman said to him, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet. <sup>20</sup> Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem." <sup>21</sup> Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. <sup>22</sup> You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. <sup>23</sup> But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. <sup>24</sup> God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." <sup>25</sup> The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us." <sup>26</sup> Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one who is speaking to you."

<sup>27</sup> Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you want?" or, "Why are you speaking with her?" <sup>28</sup> Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, <sup>29</sup> "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?" <sup>30</sup> They left the city and were on their way to him.

## CHAPTER 8: Discipleship—Walk in Love

### Entering In

1. Having read this chapter, what words or phrases stand out for you? How does what you've read relate to your personal life? How does it connect to your faith and ministry?

### Terms to Know

2. **Disciple** (pg. 117): One who follows, learns, and patterns their life after another.

*Reflect:* Of what and of whom are you a disciple?

### Concepts to Explore

3. (pg. 118) We are invited to reimagine a Christianity that is not built on self-centrism, empire, domination, and White supremacy. This Christianity would instead be built around the God we know in Jesus, and it would be comprised of practicing communities that follow Jesus and embody his way of love.

*Reflect:* What would a reimagined church like this no longer do? What would this church instead prioritize? How might its operations, location, finances, and membership change?

### Concepts to Explore/Actions to Take

4. The Way of Love can guide our steps as we reckon with a world and church cracked open and as we seek beloved community. Learn much more at [www.episcopalchurch.org/wayoflove](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/wayoflove).

**TURN** again and again to God (pgs. 121-122)

*As an Individual:*

- Learn, reckon internally, and keep asking:
  - What are my deepest loves and concerns?
  - What do I come to church for?
  - What place does God occupy in my life? How central is God to my choices and lifestyle?
  - How have I and my church benefited from oppression or ignored it?
- Engage in confession, repentance, (seeking) forgiveness, and reparation

*As a Congregation or Institution:*

- Tell stories and share testimony about facing reality and learning to turn toward God
- Investigate your history and complicity in colonialism, slavery, and systems of domination
- Host opportunities for confession, repentance, forgiveness, and reparation

**LEARN** Jesus's ways through scripture and holy reading (pg. 123)*As an Individual*

- Regularly read scripture and holy writings, ideally on a daily basis
- Use an app to enhance and guide your scripture reading
- Intentionally learn the life, teachings, and ways of Jesus and of the disciples who followed him before us

*As a Congregation or Institution*

- Incorporate scripture into church and organizational gatherings, including with Dwelling in the Word. You've seen one variation in this book, and there are many more. I like this handout from the Lutherans in Central/Southern Illinois: <https://www.csis-elca.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Dwelling%20in%20the%20Word%20-%20Instructions%20for%20Leaders.pdf>.
- Include scripture citations and reprint passages in publications and worship bulletins
- Participate in Forward Movement's Good Book Club each Epiphany (<https://www.goodbookclub.org>)

**PRAY** and dwell intentionally with God every day (pgs. 124-125)*As an Individual*

- Try the Daily Devotions for Individuals and Families on pages 137-143 of the Book of Common Prayer
- Carve out a consistent prayer time in the morning or before bed
- Place yourself and all that you have in God's hands throughout the day

*As a Congregation or Institution*

- Model varieties of prayer – from a book, spontaneous, and silent – so people know there's no "ideal" way to pray
- Pray as part of community gatherings, especially around decision-making, to discern directly with God

**WORSHIP** God weekly through community praise, thanksgiving, and petition (pgs. 125-127)

*As an Individual*

- Expect God to show up and bless you and your community, wherever and however you worship

*As a Congregation or Institution*

- Reduce the reliance and focus on buildings – lean into marginal spaces (homes, online, outdoors)
- Level the hierarchy of church types – equally value the many different expressions of Christian community (Cathedral, parish, mission, house church)
- Release the need for perfection or knowing it all – assume messy edges and surprises
- Reduce regulation by bishops and liturgical experts – grant permission to share the gospel in local language, culture and context
- Rely less on credentialed, ordained leaders – encourage home altars, lay preaching, and small groups
- Release attachment to the organ – celebrate acapella singing and simple accompaniment
- Counter European domination in congregational art, music, and style – lift up multicultural and multigenerational voices, offerings, and perspectives

**BLESS** one another by giving our lives away in love (pgs. 127-128)

*As Individuals, Congregations, and Institutions*

- Love the face and voice of God in others
- Celebrate different cultures and gifts
- Care and carry each other's burdens
- Embrace uncomfortable spaces and experiences
- Surrender over-controlling behaviors
- Risk making the first move, sharing your own stories, and being wrong
- Listen with love to the stories of people who do not share your privilege
- Sacrifice possessions and resources for love
- Share access to privilege

**GO** across borders to join in solidarity and heal brokenness (pgs. 128-130)

Consider the story of the Apostle Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26-40; also on page 52 of this guide, under "Scripture to Dwell In"). Reflect and get ready for action as we GO across borders, enter into solidarity, embrace mutual transformation, and forge beloved community.

- *Follow the Spirit's lead*

As the passage opens, an angel comes to the apostle Philip and tells him to get up and walk the wilderness road from Jerusalem to Gaza. Because Philip is attuned to the Spirit's agenda, not his own, he gets up and goes.

*Try It Out:* Lead a group on a Neighborhood Prayer Walk and attend with prayerful curiosity to what God is up to around you. Learn how at <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/evangelisminitiatives/neighborhood-prayer-walks>. In general, as you move in the world, remember to be on the lookout for God's activity and leading.

- *Draw near difference*

The Spirit leads Philip into the path of an Ethiopian eunuch riding in a chariot. "Ethiopian" in that day did not signify a particular nation; the writer simply means he is a dark-skinned African. As a eunuch, he was probably captured and enslaved young and castrated before puberty. He clearly holds a powerful position with the queen of Ethiopians, but as a eunuch, he would have been seen as defiled. According to Deuteronomy 23, he couldn't even enter the temple. In other words, the Ethiopian eunuch occupied the margins of gender, sexual, ethnic, and religious identity. He was the ultimate "other."

*Try It Out:* What differences and hierarchies are present around you? What is the story behind them? Where do you stand in relation to them? Analyze who is at the center, margins, and outside. Then ask *why* certain groups occupy these positions.

- *Show up*

The Spirit tells Philip to "go and join" the eunuch in the chariot. The instruction is not "send him a postcard" or "invite him to a program at the temple." The Spirit says, "Go. Offer your presence. Show up where he is." In response, Philip doesn't saunter up to the chariot at a stop light. He doesn't slow to ponder whether he will be rejected. He runs, eager and hopeful and obedient.

*Try It Out:* Don't wait for people to come to your church, program, or doors (physical or virtual). Venture into unknown environments and build relationship. If you've tried it out online, keep applying those lessons and engaging new worlds.

- *Listen and lead with curiosity*

Philip doesn't open his satchel and show off his goody bag of Christian paraphernalia. He listens and then notices the eunuch reading from the prophet Isaiah. So he asks, "Do you understand all that?" Philip leads with curiosity rather than his own knowledge. The eunuch is so grateful for the listening ear, he invites Philip into the chariot for more conversation.

*Try It Out:* So often, including when we're in uncertain spaces, we lead with expertise and steer toward our own comfort zones. Instead, lead with a listening ear and good questions – allow the other person to teach you or at least to open the doors. Think of how often Christians enter new spaces like colonizers and force their answers on others. Why not be the Christians who listen, share and receive stories, and learn from our neighbors?

- *Notice pain, injustice, yearning, and wisdom*

The eunuch shares a telling passage of scripture with Philip: “In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe this generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.” Isaiah’s words must have mirrored the Eunuch’s own despair and humiliation. We know he had just been to the temple. We also know the holiness codes declared a eunuch could not enter. What if he got to the door and was turned away? He goes on to ask Philip, “About whom is the prophet talking? Himself or somebody else?” It doesn’t take much to deduce what he’s asking: “How does the prophet know my suffering? Do you know my suffering, too?”

*Try It Out:* As you go and listen, people may share about pain and injustice. They may share deep yearning and even deeper wisdom. You can also see the unjust systems operating all around. Let your heart break and let yourself also marvel at what people have experienced, what they’ve learned, and what they say they need now.

- Connect their story, your story, and God’s story

Philip tells the eunuch the prophet is talking about Jesus and then shares what must be good news to the eunuch. I imagine Philip wove the story of Jesus’s life, suffering, death, and rising together with the eunuch’s own suffering and hope. I imagine he grieved with the eunuch and didn’t just jump to the happy ending. He eventually announces good news: The pain, oppression, and humiliation you have known? God has felt that and is with you. What’s more, God does not wish you to suffer. Through Jesus, God wants you to be free, whole, and beloved.

*Try It Out:* When you go into the world and across borders, you go as an ambassador of God’s healing and love. Carry the gospel in your heart and don’t be afraid to offer a faithful perspective about why you’re there and what the situation means to you.

- *Transgress for the sake of love*

Once the eunuch hears the good news, and it settles into his own wounded heart, he is ready to Go for himself. “Look, here’s water! What’s stopping you from baptizing me?”

Alas, there’s a long list of official reasons why he might not be baptized. Remember that Deuteronomy text? He’s a eunuch, so he is ritually impure. That water? It likely is not living, holy water. Is Philip authorized to perform this baptism? The ritual

authorities might have raised a hundred objections, but Philip is listening to a higher authority: God. Philip renounces his insider status, stands on the side of the outsider eunuch, and agrees to baptize the eunuch.

*Try It Out:* Be ready to transgress when you're following Jesus. Some rules and systems serve the good; others serve to oppress and diminish. You and your community will need to discern which is which. With Jesus, it's always best to err on the side of healing and making whole, repairing what injustice has broken, taking people down from crosses, and moving your body and your resources to stand with least of these.

- *Be converted*

The eunuch and Philip exit the chariot and walk into the waters. Technically, the eunuch is the only one who got baptized that day, but they both experienced conversion to the life and way of Jesus.

*Try It Out:* God is a God of transformation and healing. Expect that God could change something in you for the good, and that God could use you to help to heal and transform other people, too.

- *Go rejoicing where the Spirit leads next*

As soon as they come swooping out of the water, the Spirit "snatches" Philip off. The eunuch doesn't cling to Philip. He looks around and sees no sign of the apostle, so he turns to go "on his way rejoicing." The eunuch is leaving with a voice and a vocation, ready to be an ambassador of Christ's reconciliation and healing. As for Philip, God doesn't keep him around to receive accolades and gifts from the eunuch or his wealthy boss. He heads off to the new towns, more ready than ever to share the good news.

*Try It Out:* Presence in a place and depth of relationship matter, but we're not in charge of where, how, or with whom God accomplishes God's purposes. We go to serve, struggle, learn, and have our hearts broken and made new. If you're following Jesus's way, release your grip on control.

**REST** in God's grace, because the revolution is not ultimately up to us (pgs. 130-131)

As an Individual, Congregation, or Institution, consider these practices and scriptures:

- *Receive God's grace*

"My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me." (2 Corinthians 12:9)

- *Dwell in God's peace*

Jesus said: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid." (John 14:27)

- *Expect God's restoration*

Thus says the LORD: "I am going to restore the fortunes of the tents of Jacob, and have compassion on his dwellings; the city shall be rebuilt upon its mound." (Jeremiah 30:18)

- *Welcome God's agency*

I am the LORD, I have called you in righteousness,  
 I have taken you by the hand and kept you;  
 I have given you as a covenant to the people,  
 a light to the nations,  
 to open the eyes that are blind,  
 to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,  
 from the prison those who sit in darkness. (Isaiah 42:6)

- *Say "yes" to God's invitation*

Jesus said, "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30)

- *Breathe*

The spirit of God has made me,  
 and the breath of the Almighty gives me life. (Job 33:4)

## Scripture to Dwell In

Read the passage three times. After each reading, reflect on one of the following questions. Note: If you're in a group, you might reflect on the first two questions in pairs or (if online) by sharing brief responses in the chat; for the final question, participants might share as a group:

1. What phrase or image grabs your attention?
2. What do you see Philip doing here? What do you see Ethiopian Eunuch doing here?
3. What do you long to be or to do, given what you see between these two?

Acts 8:26-40

<sup>26</sup>Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Get up and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a wilderness road.) <sup>27</sup>So he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship <sup>28</sup>and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. <sup>29</sup>Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over to this chariot and join it." <sup>30</sup>So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" <sup>31</sup>He replied, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. <sup>32</sup>Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this:

"Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter,  
and like a lamb silent before its shearer,  
so he does not open his mouth.

<sup>33</sup>In his humiliation justice was denied him.  
Who can describe his generation?  
For his life is taken away from the earth."

<sup>34</sup>The eunuch asked Philip, "About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" <sup>35</sup>Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. <sup>36</sup>As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?" <sup>38</sup>He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him.

<sup>39</sup>When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. <sup>40</sup>But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he was passing through the region, he proclaimed the good news to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

## CONCLUSION: God Bless the Cracks

### Entering In

1. Having read this chapter, what words or phrases stand out for you? How does what you've read relate to your personal life? How does it connect to your faith and ministry?

### Concepts to Explore

2. Maya Angelou once said: "Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better."

*Reflect:* Having finished *The Church Cracked Open*, what do you know that you did not know before, or what do you now consider differently? What do you want to do that you have not done before, or what do you want to do differently?

3. Reflect now with Mark Bozzuti-Jones' poem "The Cross and the Crown," reprinted in its entirety, with his permission:

The Cross and the Crown  
 they say  
 and we know you can't have a child without its mother  
 Do we really know what it means to be God's people?  
 How can we be indifferent first to the slaves and all the enslaved?  
 We kick against the good and true acting masked in idolatrous ways  
 Not all who pray to God will be saved  
 We can't stand in the shadow of those who oppress the good, beautiful and true  
 can't take sides against the children  
 We want the people of God to be the people of God that is all God asks –  
 God's asks are simple  
 so put on God  
 the whole mask of God

Be disruptive and cause good trouble  
 Accept the decline, name it and tame it and face it  
 Seek the hope and embrace the new and beloved community meant for your heart and  
 this world that God calls you to love so truly

The church of this world must not rejoice solely in the demons that flee in God's name  
 — we are called to do more than that.

Your  
 longevity and depth of commitment to colonial and imperial power  
 Is just that.

Mene, mene, tekel, parsin

What does it profit if you gain the whole world and lose your soul by misleading your sisters and brothers?

Breathe the original breath and turn around and out right

The beloved community is righteous and called to sing Black Lives Matter without hesitation

Dream and be the dream and change

Speak truth to power now

Walk in justice and peace and mercy and with power and keep on rising

Let our jars be cracked open

Let our lives be poured out

Let our lives witness to those virtues, and vows, and gospel truth knowing that all we do and think and say and pray matter

Crack a little further

every single day

and let in the light

the right

the repentance

join hearts

in the wisdom and love

and life

prepared for cracked hearts

from all eternity.

*Reflect:* What words or images stand out for you in this poem? What do you hear the poet encouraging you to do?

4. Do you believe it is possible for churches and Christians steeped in White supremacy, empire, and domination systems to learn new ways of being? Can such bodies become beloved community? What makes you scared? What gives you hope? With whom could you partner?

## Actions to Take

5. Write down the steps you feel God calling you to take, given what you've read, learned, and discerned in this journey. If you are in a group, each person can write these steps on a card, read it aloud, and ask others to bless you in living into what you've promised. The group might assign buddies who check in with each other in two months to see how it's going.
  - *As an Individual:* What step is God calling me to take as an individual? How and when will I do this?
  - *As a Congregation or Institution:* What step is God calling my congregation or organization to take? How can I facilitate that movement? With whom could I partner?
6. Write your own blessing for the journey. Pray it to yourself, or share it with others, as you walk with Jesus. Feel free to post it on social media using #churchcrackedopen.