



# Courageous Conversations

A Lenten Antiracism Journey

DISCUSSION GUIDE

FOR YOUTH AND ADULT EDUCATION/FAITH FORMATION GROUPS

Thank you so much for your interest in the *Join the Movement toward Racial Justice* Courageous Conversations Lenten Antiracism Journey. We are so grateful for your engagement in this faith-rooted practice of deep listening and brave speaking toward greater understanding and transformation.

In addition to using the Courageous Conversation prompts for discussion with your friends, family, and community members or as journaling/reflection prompts for yourself, you can use them as a Lenten practice for a weekly faith formation group. This practice could be meaningfully engaged by adults and/or youth (age 13+). Below you'll find a brief outline for how you might structure a discussion group.

### Preparation:

Set aside 45-90 minutes each week for shared discussion. Let participants know they can access the daily materials on the [Join the Movement website](#) or via social media ([Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#)) if they are interested, but they need not have done anything ahead of time to participate. As the facilitator, choose 1-3 of the Courageous Conversation prompts to engage each week.

### Materials Needed:

Candle(s) or other objects to create a Lent altar [optional]; journals [optional]; paper and writing implements [optional]

### Set Up:

Set up chairs in a circle or around a table with the candle(s)/altar at the center. If you are using them, place paper and writing implements at each seat.

NB: This discussion group would also easily be adapted to Zoom or other online group forums.



## Session Outline:

*Times provided are for a 60-minute discussion group.*

*Simply extend or reduce discussion time if you are hoping for a shorter or longer session.*

### **Centering Time (5 minutes)**

“I look at the anatomy of trees as one of nature’s examples of successful organizing that realizes that our power is in our ability to both be fiercely centered and grounded but also infinitely reaching towards our unique sources of energy, light and growth.”

– Morgan Mann Willis

*One of the most important capacities we can grow as part of our antiracism practices is the ability to center (and recenter) ourselves. Practicing grounding ourselves in breath, prayer, and intentions helps us develop the ability to return to that centered place when we experience distress or harm. It also helps us to reconnect to the “why” of our practice, to what keeps us coming back, even when things are difficult or overwhelming.*

- Once folks have gathered, invite everyone to take some deep breaths and ground themselves in their intentions for this place and time.
- Light the candle(s) on your altar.
- Offer a Lent prayer or blessing. Here are some places to find beautiful resources for this time of centering:
  - [Black Liturgies Project](#) by Cole Arthur Riley
  - [Lent Resources](#) from enfleshed
  - [Prayers and Rituals from Reimagining Worship](#): Liturgies in the Context of Empire from the Council for World Mission

### **Conversation Covenant (10 minutes)**

*In order for conversations to be courageous, it is important to create a container that can hold them. In the UCC, we are a people of covenants, meaning we seek to make and hold promises with one another, guided and held by the Holy One, that help us grow, change and flourish as God’s beloved ones. So, before you delve into discussion, take some time to talk about why you are engaging in this practice and how you want to be in conversation with each other. Give each person a chance to give voice to their hopes for this time and their personal goals for how they want to show up. Then make some collective agreements to help you foster a brave space for your conversations.*

*Here are some we suggest:*

- Use “I” statements
- Speak truths
- Embrace differences and complexities
- Lean in with curiosity
- Expect discomfort
- Address impacts
- Respect confidentiality
- Foster reciprocity
- Practice self-care

\*For more description of these suggestions,  
check out our [Conversation Covenants document](#).

*Once you've discussed these covenants, offer a sign to each other that you will hold them, with the help of God. In subsequent gatherings, take a moment to re-read your covenants and invite a moment of check in about how you are doing at keeping them and if any more should be added.*

### **Discussion (40 minutes)**

“I have come to believe over and over again that what is most important to me  
must be spoken, made verbal, and shared,  
even at the risk of having it bruised or misunderstood.  
That the speaking profits me, beyond any other effect.  
...My silences have not protected me. Your silence will not protect you.  
But for every real word spoken,  
for every attempt I had ever made to speak those truths  
for which I am still seeking,  
I had made contact with others...bridging our differences.”

– Audre Lorde, “The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action”

*There are a lot of different ways you can structure your conversation, but the simpler the better. Things to consider: (1) cater to different learning styles and personalities or foster a more contemplative atmosphere, invite participants to us their paper and writing implements to do a free write for about 2 minutes in response to the question. Then move into a verbal discussion. (2) If your group is large or if you have a lot of internal processors/introverts, have folks turn to a neighbor to share their thoughts initially in pairs or trios, and then bring some of what they talked about to the larger group. Or discuss one prompt in pairs or trios and another prompt as a large group.*

- Read the scripture passage provided with one of the Courageous Conversation prompts you want to discuss. Invite participants to notice what might be courageous about the conversation Jesus is having in the passage.
- Read the Courageous Conversation prompt aloud and invite participants to discuss for a while.
- Encourage folks to take some deep breaths to recenter, and maybe even some gentle stretches or other embodiment practices. Here are some great [embodiment exercises from Capacitar](#) that you could engage.
- Follow with another prompt. (You can decide whether or not you want to read the scripture passages provided with each prompt, or just one). Expect to only have time to engage 1-2 (maybe 3) prompts in a 60-minute session.

### Closing Blessing (5 minutes)

“Being an antiracist requires persistent self-awareness, constant self-criticism, and regular self-examination.” – Ibram X. Kendi

*Cultivating self-reflection is an important part of practicing antiracism. Just as we opened our time intentionally to create a brave and grounded container for conversation, it is important to close intentionally, to offer a moment for review and reflection, and send folks on their way with a sense of closure, at least for that moment. We won't solve racism in one conversation (!) but we can take a moment to recognize and honor the end of this particular conversation, even as our learning and practice continue.*

- Invite participants to call to mind or use their journals, or paper and writing implements to write down (1) one thing they learned, (2) one thing they are curious about, and (3) one thing they are grateful for from the gathering's conversations. If you have time, you can invite participants to share one of those things with the group.
- Using the breath prayer provided with one of the Courageous Conversation prompts you discussed, invite participants to inhale and exhale the prayer 3 or more times and to carry that prayer with them until you gather again.

