OVERVIEW
Lent—the 6-week period from Ash Wednesday through Easter—has traditionally been a time of introspection and repentance for Christians around the globe. It’s a time for a posture of humility and openness, to pause for self-examination, and to consider more closely what the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus means for people today in real time. What does this good news mean not only for you, but for the whole world? And what gets in the way of people experiencing God’s love, peace, and justice?

This year during Lent, our Sunday Teaching Series will be focusing on the fruit of the Spirit, as well as the weeds [sins] that can suffocate growth. Our short circles will take this deeper, examining not only personal weeds, but the presence and power of societal issues that are more broadly impactful and divisive. As followers of Jesus, we cannot ignore these matters. Conversations around topics like racism, sexism, sexual orientation, immigration, and creation care are critical because they impact relationships, quality of life for real people, and the credibility of our witness to the transformative presence and love of Jesus in our midst. Using a mixture of resources, including the book Forgive Us: Confessions of aCompromised Faith, podcasts, and videos as a catalyst, we’ll explore the impact that these realities have on real people—often the most marginalized—as well as our society as a whole. Together we will reconsider what the “good news” of Jesus may look like for all of us.

Group Format
During this 7-week short circle [meeting the weeks of February 11-April 1], group participants will come together to discuss one of the resources designated for each week [agreed on ahead of time]. Facilitators will use the same basic set of questions each week. For example:

- What surprised you?
- What did you learn?
- What questions does this bring up for you?
- I wonder [fill in the blank....]
- I feel [fill in the blank....]
- What did you really realize for the first time? What finally sunk in?
- How have you benefitted from this perspective/treatment of “the other”? [Knowingly or not]
- How has this perspective/treatment of “the other” hindered or hurt you? [Knowingly or not]
- How is God trying to grow/develop this week’s fruit of the Spirit in you? [As it relates to today’s topic? In general?]
- What is the next right thing for you? How are you implicated? How can you pursue making measurable change in this area? [So What? Now What?]

Homework each week will consist of reading a chapter of a book, listening to a podcast, or watching a film—this will take approximately 30 minutes-2 hours each week, depending on the selected option.

Suggested Materials
Journal/paper, Forgive Us book, Bible, Internet access + device to view/hear multi-media
MEETING ONE—Week of Feb 11
Sermon Series: PEACE
Short Circle Topic: Introduction to Group Participants, Topics, + Tone

Getting Started/Welcome
- What is your name? How long have you been part of Mars Hill [perhaps in what capacity], and what do you most appreciate about our community?
- What interested you in taking part in this Short Circle experience? And/or, if you were looking back at the end of our weeks together, what would have made this a worthwhile experience?
- What was your experience or understanding of Lent growing up?

Introduction of Materials
- Lent has historically been a 6-week time period between Ash Wednesday and Easter that is focused on inward reflection, repentance, prayer, and fasting.
- As a reminder of what we are endeavoring to do together, re-read the Overview of Short Circle Curriculum from page 1
- The book, Forgive Us, was chosen to share a brief history about the Church’s treatment of various people groups over the course of US history. Written from an evangelical perspective, it then offers some biblical and theological reflection, along with prayers of confession, and a movement toward action and reconciliation.
- Audio clips, films, and articles were chosen to help illustrate more current and personal stories of the [often marginalized] people groups who are being discussed. This is designed to give these people a “voice”.
- You may find that the views expressed are different than your own. You are invited to a posture of humility, curiosity, and empathy. The point is to walk in another person’s shoes, not agree on one right view. Again, think posture over position. [Check out The Colossian Way: Conflict As Opportunity [2 min] at marshall.org/LentSC1 to better understand the spirit of this.
- Also, think of these short circle conversations as good “practice conversations”, an opportunity to ask questions and to express feelings in a setting that may not be as charged as it is with, say, your mother-in-law or a difficult neighbor. Likewise, when speaking, speak from your own experience, using “I statements”, rather than generalizations which assume people feel or believe the same thing.
- Finally, our hope is not that you would be paralyzed with shame or overcome by too much information, but rather that the Spirit would guide you into awareness, introspection, and action.

Opening Prayer
The Psalms are full of laments and prayers of the heart. At the beginning of each week, we’ll begin with this simple prayer of humility and self-reflection from Psalm 139v23-24, asking God to open us to this conversation, to shed a light on our heart and actions.

Search me, God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.
Amen.
Read/Listen + Discuss

Forgive Us
The Bible talks not only about confessing and repenting of one’s own personal sin, but also corporate sins—sins that have been committed against individuals, nations, and institutions for generations.

For example, notice how Nehemiah confessed not only his own sin but also the sins of his ancestors in Nehemiah 1v5-7 [go ahead and read it aloud]. And, reading through the entire book of Nehemiah shows how this story didn’t end with a mere prayer of confession, but rather moved to repentance—an about-face—to action.

Or consider the 3-year famine described in 2 Samuel, which God said was because of the deeds of Saul toward the Gibonites, many generations earlier [2 Sam 21v1-3]. Even though David and his people had nothing to do with this act years prior, David asks, what can I do to make it right?

- What do you think? Why might it be important to learn about and/or confess the sins of prior generations? What concerns you about this? What comes up for you?

Article
To help us bring this conversation a little closer to home, here’s one woman’s story of committing to better understanding history as well as the stories and perspectives of loved ones who think differently than her. Read ”The Christian Mandate to Subvert Tribalism” [Christianity Today, Oct 2017], located at marshall.org/LentSC2

Consider the following questions as the article is read aloud, then discuss.
- I feel..... [What feelings are coming up for you as this is article is read, or as this group commences in general?]
- I wonder.... [What questions come up for you?]
- This makes me think of.... [What people are you at odds with that come to mind?]
- How is God trying to grow/develop this week’s fruit of the Spirit in you? [As it relates to today’s topic? In general?] 

Action/Measurable Change
- Homework to read/listen to/watch before next meeting: See “Resources to Consider” under 2.18 and decide as a group what you will be focusing on in the week ahead.
- Think of one person you are at odds with relationally, ideologically, theologically, and set up a meeting with them during Lent to listen and learn more about their life and perspective.
- Pray Psalm 139v23-24 throughout the week. Sit quietly; listen to what thoughts or ideas come to mind, perhaps recording them in a journal. Take action.
- Attend [or listen online later] to the Learning Lab about Immigration + Refugees at Mars Hill on Sunday, Feb 11, at 6:30pm.
Closing Prayer: Peace Prayer

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.

O, Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love;
For it is in giving that we receive;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
it is in dying that we are born again to eternal life.
Amen.
MEETING TWO—Week of Feb 18
Sermon Series: PATIENCE
Short Circle Topic: Immigrants + Refugees

Resources to Consider
Read: Chapter 6—Sins Against Immigrants
Watch: God Grew Tired of Us documentary [on Netflix, YouTube, and Amazon] OR After Spring documentary [on Amazon, YouTube]
Listen or read transcript of: “Out From the Shadows: Living Undocumented” [50 minutes] at marshill.org/LentSC3

Welcome + Greeting
As you get started today, invite people to get up around the room and officially welcome one another, one by one, with this greeting: “The image of God in me greets the image of God in you.”

Opening Prayer
Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. Amen.

Review/Listen + Discuss
In addition to the material you read/listened to/watched over the past week, here’s one woman’s story of trying to immigrate to the US from Canada. Read aloud this Facebook post [located at marshill.org/LentSC4] from Sarah Bessey, popular Christian author + speaker who preached at Mars Hill in 2017.

With all this in mind, select a handful of the following questions, moving from learning from the perspective of history, perspective of “the other”, and then toward your own experience. [In other words, learning from the experience of others should be prioritized over the sharing of your own story, at least at first.]

- What surprised you?
- What did you learn?
- What questions does this bring up for you?
- I wonder [fill in the blank…]
- I feel [fill in the blank…]
- I confess [fill in the blank…]
- I hope [fill in the blank…]
- What did you really realize for the first time? What finally sunk in?
- How have you benefitted from this perspective/treatment of “the other”? [Knowingly or not]
- How has this perspective/treatment of “the other” hindered or hurt you? [Knowingly or not]
- How is God trying to grow/develop this week’s fruit of the Spirit in you? [As it relates to today’s topic? In general?]
- What is the next right thing for you? How are you implicated? How can you pursue making measurable change in this area? [So What? Now What?]
Action/Measurable Change:

- Homework to read/listen to/watch before next meeting: See “Resources to Consider” under 2.25 and decide as a group what you will be focusing on in the week ahead.
- Consider getting involved with organizations that allow you to learn from and serve refugees. Some examples include Bethany Christian Services, the Refugee Education Center, Samaritas, and Treetops Collective.
- Attend cultural festivals to celebrate the rich heritage of the many cultures found in Grand Rapids. For example, the Hispanic Festival, the Polish Festival, and more. Follow experiencegr.com for a list of upcoming events.
- Support businesses and restaurants owned by immigrants [e.g., Little Africa, Curry Kitchen, Chez Olga, Shiraz, Bangkok Taste, various international markets]
- Continue to pray Psalm 139:23-24 throughout the week. Sit quietly; listen to what thoughts or ideas come to mind, perhaps recording them in a journal. Consider, how is God trying to grow/develop this week’s fruit of the Spirit in me?
- Read, watch or listen to other materials from this week’s Resources to Consider list.

Closing Prayer

Immigrants Are a Blessing Litany [from the Christian Reformed Church Office of Social Justice]
[Leaders read the plain text; the italics are for the group response.]

Abraham and Sarah did not know whether their visitors meant harm or good, still they opened their tent in welcome, and they were blessed. From the stranger, we hear the good news of God’s covenant love.

We praise you for the blessing of the stranger.

Boaz saw in Ruth not as a project, but a partner. From the stranger, we are given the lineage of Christ.

We praise you for the blessing of the stranger.

The man lay dying on the Jericho road until the strange and reviled Samaritan came to his aid sharing his oil and wine. From the stranger, we receive help and healing.

We praise you for the blessing of the stranger.

When the people of Israel were strangers in Egypt, only as valuable as the bricks they produced for Pharoah’s economy, God heard their cry and saved them. When we are strangers, we come to know a God who frees us.

We praise you for the blessing of the stranger.

Christ hides in the face of the stranger, reminding us that “I was a stranger, and you welcomed me.” In the stranger, we can experience the presence of Christ.

We praise you for the blessing of the stranger.

We are called in Scripture, again and again, to welcome the stranger and the many blessings that the stranger may bring.

For the immigrant, the refugee, the one we do not know, we give our thanks and praise. The family of God is worshiping you in many languages, and following you in many cultures, all over the world. But the diversity of the family of God has also come right here to this community. May we receive the blessings you bring to us, Lord, through the gift of the stranger.
MEETING THREE—Week of Feb 25  
Sermon Series: KINDNESS  
Short Circle Topic: Women/Sexism

Resources to Consider:
  Read: Chap 4—Sins Against Women  
  to better understand sexual harassment, and what it brings up for both women and men] located at marshill.org/LentSC5

  Read/Watch: Reasons Why Men Should Not Be Pastors [for a humorous perspective on what it’s like to be a woman who wants to lead within the church]  
  Read at marshill.org/LentSC8 or watch at marshill.org/LentSC9 [1 minute video]

  Listen: Moving Beyond Patriarchy, a Carolyn Custis James Interview with Peter Enns, The Bible for Normal People, Episode 32 | Dec 11, 2017 [46 min] at marshill.org/LentSC10 [for a biblical/theological look at women as made in the image of God, and pursuing equality and justice for inclusion in all spheres of society]

Welcome + Greeting  
As you get started today, invite people to get up around the room and officially welcome one another one by one with this greeting: “The image of God in me greets the image of God in you.”

Opening Prayer  
Search me, God, and know my heart;  
test me and know my anxious thoughts.  
See if there is any offensive way in me,  
and lead me in the way everlasting.  
Amen.
Review/Listen + Discuss
The Church has a long history of silencing, devaluing, and abusing women—or looking the other way while the larger culture did such things. From denying rights to speak, to work outside the home, to vote, to lead; to harassment, abuse [couched as biblical submission], and misogyny, the Church has too often been complicit in the mistreatment of women. In addition to the material you read/listened to/watched over the past week, here’s one woman’s story of what it is like to live inside a woman’s body:

- Listen to The Liturgists Podcast Episode 40—Woman [from 32:20-42] [10 min] at marshill.org/LentSC6 or read “Moment One” by Lisa Gungor at marshill.org/LentSC7.

With all this in mind, select a handful of the following questions, moving from learning from the perspective of history, perspective of “the other”, and then toward your own experience. [In other words, learning from the experience of others should be prioritized over the sharing of your own story, at least at first.]

- What surprised you?
- What did you learn?
- What questions does this bring up for you?
- I wonder [fill in the blank…]
- I feel [fill in the blank…]
- I confess [fill in the blank…]
- I hope [fill in the blank…]
- What did you really realize for the first time? What finally sunk in?
- How have you benefitted from this perspective/treatment of “the other”? [Knowingly or not]
- How has this perspective/treatment of “the other” hindered or hurt you? [Knowingly or not]
- How is God trying to grow/develop this week’s fruit of the Spirit in you? [As it relates to today’s topic? In general?]
- What is the next right thing for you? How are you implicated? How can you pursue making measurable change in this area? [So What? Now What?]

Action/Measurable Change:
- Homework to read/listen to/watch before next meeting: See “Resources to Consider” under 3.4 and decide as a group what you will be focusing on in the week ahead.
- Meet with a friend or loved one of the opposite sex. What is it like for you to be a man? A woman? What’s hard? What’s beautiful? How can I support you?
- Learn more about signs of intimate partner violence, and Safe Haven Ministries—one of the country’s only faith-based organizations dedicated to ending abuse. Learn about services available in Grand Rapids at safehavenministries.org
- Visit Christians for Biblical Equality to learn more about pursuing biblical justice and equality for women in church, home, and around the globe at cbefinternational.org
- Continue to pray Psalm 139v23-24 throughout the week. Sit quietly; listen to what thoughts or ideas come to mind, perhaps recording them in a journal. Consider, How is God trying to grow/develop this week’s fruit of the Spirit in me?
- Read, watch or listen to other materials from this week’s Resources to Consider list.

Closing Prayer: Peace Prayer [found on page 4]
MEETING FOUR: Week of March 4
Sermon Series: GOODNESS
Short Circle Topic: Racism

Resources to Consider:
- **Read**: Ch. 3—Sins against African Americans and People of Color
- **Watch**: 13th—a documentary found on Netflix or via your local library
- **Listen**: Interview with author + expert, Isabel Wilkerson, as she discusses the great migration of 6 million southern blacks to the north in the 20th century, and the historical and spiritual crisis of racism facing us all. [51 min.] Located at marshill.org/LentSC11.
- **Attend**: Mars Hill’s Learning Lab about Race + Reconciliation on Thursday, March 8, 6:30–8pm

Welcome + Greeting
As you get started today, invite people to get up around the room and officially welcome one another one by one with this greeting: “The image of God in me greets the image of God in you.”

Opening Prayer
*Search me, God, and know my heart;*
*test me and know my anxious thoughts.*
*See if there is any offensive way in me,*
*and lead me in the way everlasting.*
*Amen.*

Review/Listen + Discuss
The United States has a long history of racism, and the Church has often been complicit through their treatment of persons of color and support of systems that have served to deny dignity and rights to all people.

In addition to the material you read/listened to/watched over the past week, consider this story from Dr. Robin DiAngelo, author of *What Does It Mean to be White?* as she unpacks her own whiteness and white culture, and how this understanding is impacting her posture and action in working for racial justice. [18 min] Located at marshill.org/LentSC12.

With all this in mind, select a handful of the following questions, moving from learning from the perspective of history, perspective of “the other”, and *then* toward your own experience. [In other words, learning from the experience of others should be prioritized over the sharing of your own story, at least at first.]

- What surprised you?
- What did you learn?
- What questions does this bring up for you?
- I wonder [fill in the blank…]
- I feel [fill in the blank…]
[I confess [fill in the blank...]]
[I hope [fill in the blank...]]
What did you really realize for the first time? What finally sunk in?
How have you benefitted from this perspective/treatment of “the other”? [Knowingly or not]
How has this perspective/treatment of “the other” hindered or hurt you? [Knowingly or not]
How is God trying to grow/develop this week’s fruit of the Spirit in you? [As it relates to today’s topic? In general?]  
What is the next right thing for you? How are you implicated? How can you pursue making measurable change in this area? [So What? Now What?]

Action/Measurable Change:
Homework to read/listen to/watch before next meeting: See “Resources to Consider” under 3.11 and decide as a group what you will be focusing on in the week ahead.
Spend some time on pbs.org/race to learn more about what “race” really is, how racist views were built into the constitution, as well as the varied treatment of people of different races over the entire course of United States history
Host a viewing + dialogue gathering of a film such as 13th, Selma, I Am Not Your Negro, etc.
Visit a church that represents an ethnicity different than your own.
If you have children, consider buying them a toy, book, or doll that represents an ethnicity different than your own.
Read about past + current racial discrimination in Grand Rapids at marshall.org/LentSC13 and marshall.org/LentSC14.
Continue to pray Psalm 139v23-24 throughout the week. Sit quietly; listen to what thoughts or ideas come to mind, perhaps recording them in a journal. Consider, how is God trying to grow/develop this week’s fruit of the Spirit in me?
Read, watch or listen to other materials from this week’s Resources to Consider list.

Closing Prayer
Start with this quote:
“The problem is not in God’s willingness to have mercy, but in our forgetting that we need it. We keep lapsing into ideas of self-sufficiency, or get impressed with our niceness, and so we lose our humility. Asking for mercy reminds us that we are still poor and needy, and fall short of the glory of God. Those who do not ask do not receive, because they don’t know their need.”

[The Illumined Heart, Frederica Mathewes –Green]

Continue with The Jesus Prayer
[to be repeated silently—matching one’s inhalation/exhalation—for several minutes]

Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, [inhale]
have mercy on me, a sinner [exhale]
MEETING FIVE—Week of March 11
Sermon Series: FAITHFULNESS
Topic: Environment + Creation Care

Resources to Consider
Read: Ch. 1—Sins Against God’s Creation
Watch: Before the Flood [documentary by National Geographic]
[90 minutes; available on Amazon, iTunes, or through your local library]

Welcome + Greeting
As you get started today, invite people to get up around the room and officially welcome one another one by one with this greeting: “The image of God in me greets the image of God in you.”

Opening Prayer
Search me, God, and know my heart;

test me and know my anxious thoughts.

See if there is any offensive way in me,

and lead me in the way everlasting.
Amen.

Review/Listen + Discuss
The United States has a long history of overconsumption, exploitation of the earth, and pollution. And there is at least a correlation between the mistreatment of land and the places where there is poverty and in which persons of color live. The Church’s “I’ll Fly Away [to heaven]” mentality has, perhaps inadvertently, contributed to these realities.

In addition to the material you read/listened to/watched over the past week, consider this video’s explanation of key ways that you can personally help care for the earth, helping to preserve and be a steward of its beauty, safety, and functionality for generations to come. Watch Drawdown: Is It Even Possible to Reduce Global Warming? [11 min] at marshill.org/LentSC15

With all this in mind, select a handful of the following questions, moving from learning from the perspective of history, perspective of “the other”, and then toward your own experience. [In other words, learning from the experience of others should be prioritized over the sharing of your own story, at least at first.]

- What surprised you?
- What did you learn?
- What questions does this bring up for you?
- I wonder [fill in the blank…]
- I feel [fill in the blank…]
- I confess [fill in the blank…]
- I hope [fill in the blank…]
- What did you really realize for the first time? What finally sunk in?
How have you benefitted from this perspective/treatment of “the other”? [Knowingly or not]
How has this perspective/treatment of “the other” hindered or hurt you? [Knowingly or not]
How is God trying to grow/develop this week’s fruit of the Spirit in you? [As it relates to today’s topic? In general?] 
What is the next right thing for you? How are you implicated? How can you pursue making measurable change in this area? [So What? Now What?]

Action/Measurable Change:
- Homework to read/listen to/watch before next meeting: See “Resources to Consider” under 3.18 and decide as a group what you will be focusing on in the week ahead.
- Read through 100 Solutions to Reduce Global Warming at drawdown.org. Select one idea to help you be a steward of the earth’s resources, and take steps to put it into action.
- Learn about the impact you personally are having on the environment by calculating your own carbon footprint at marshill.org/LentSC16.
- Research your city’s recycling procedures, and do your part to reduce, reuse, and recycle.
- Continue to pray Psalm 139v23-24 throughout the week. Sit quietly; listen to what thoughts or ideas come to mind, perhaps recording them in a journal. Consider, how is God trying to grow/develop this week’s fruit of the Spirit in me?
- Read, watch or listen to other materials from this week’s Resources to Consider list.

Closing Prayer

God, Give us hearts to understand; Never to take from creation’s beauty more than we give; never to destroy wantonly for the furtherance of greed; Never to deny to give our hands for the building of earth’s beauty; never to take from her what we cannot use. Give us hearts to understand, That to destroy earth’s music is to create confusion; that to wreck her appearance is to blind us to beauty; That to callously pollute her fragrance is to make a house of stench; that as we care for her she will care for us. We have forgotten who we are. We have sought only our own security. We have exploited simply for our own ends. We have distorted our knowledge. We have abused our power. Great Spirit, whose dry lands thirst, Help us to find the way to refresh your lands. Great Spirit, whose waters are choked with debris and pollution, help us to find the way to cleanse your waters. Great Spirit, whose beautiful earth grows ugly with misuse, help us to find the way to restore beauty to your handiwork. Great Spirit, whose creatures are being destroyed, help us to find a way to replenish them. Great Spirit, whose gifts to us are being lost in selfishness and corruption, help us to find the way to restore our humanity. Oh, Great Spirit, whose voice I hear in the wind, whose breath gives life to the world, hear me; I need your strength and wisdom. May I walk in Beauty. Amen.

—Give Us Hearts to Understand: A Native American Prayer
MEETING SIX—Week of March 18
Sermon Series: GENTLENESS
Topic: LGBTQ / Human Sexuality

Resources to Consider
Read: Chap. 5—Sins against the LGBTQ Community
Watch: Reformation Project 2016 Keynote Address at marshill.org/LentSC17
[Julie Rodgers shares her personal experience growing up as a gay Christian with attenders of the Reformation Project, a conference for LGBTQ Christians] [60 min]

Welcome + Greeting
As you get started today, invite people to get up around the room and officially welcome one another one by one with this greeting: “The image of God in me greets the image of God in you.”

Opening Prayer
Search me, God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.
Amen.

Review/Listen + Discuss
The authors of Forgive Us aptly state, “Over the last few decades, the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer community [LGBTQ] has been front and center in the so-called culture wars that have marked faith and politics in the United States. One would be hard-pressed to find a group of people that has faced greater consternation and vilification by Christians in the past 40 years than gay men and lesbian women.” It’s no secret that this particular topic has been particularly divisive within the church, with faithful Christians finding themselves with varying views and practices. As a reminder, the hope for this session is not to change anyone’s opinion but to learn from past history and current stories of ways that LGBTQ persons have been treated.

In addition to the material you read/listened to/watched over the past week, here’s a video entitled Room For Me, which shares the experiences of 26 gay Christians from the Reformed Church in America [RCA] denomination—marshill.org/LentSC18

With all this in mind, select a handful of the following questions, moving from learning from the perspective of history, perspective of “the other”, and then toward your own experience. [In other words, learning from the experience of others should be prioritized over the sharing of your own story, at least at first.]

- What surprised you?
- What did you learn?
- What questions does this bring up for you?
I wonder [fill in the blank...]
I feel [fill in the blank...]
I confess [fill in the blank...]
I hope [fill in the blank...]
What did you really realize for the first time? What finally sunk in?
How have you benefitted from this perspective/treatment of “the other”? [Knowingly or not]
How has this perspective/treatment of “the other” hindered or hurt you? [Knowingly or not]
How is God trying to grow/develop this week’s fruit of the Spirit in you? [As it relates to today’s topic? In general?]
What is the next right thing for you? How are you implicated? How can you pursue making measurable change in this area? [So What? Now What?]

Action/Measurable Change
- Homework to read/listen to/watch before next meeting: See “Resources to Consider” under 3.25 and decide as a group what you will be focusing on in the week ahead.
- Learn more about the perspectives [personal and theological] of gay Christians on roomforall.com, reformationproject.org, or gaychristian.net
- Meet with a friend or loved one who is LGBTQ. What is it like for you to be you? What’s hard? What’s beautiful? How can I support you?
- Reflect on the article, We Need to Talk About Sex, by Chuck DeGroot at marshall.org/LentSC19 [which explores the need to discuss sex more holistically, and face one’s own brokenness before pointing at the log in another’s eye].
- Continue to pray Psalm 139v23-24 throughout the week. Sit quietly; listen to what thoughts or ideas come to mind, perhaps recording them in a journal. Consider, how is God trying to grow/develop this week’s fruit of the Spirit in me?
- Read, watch or listen to other materials from this week’s Resources to Consider list.

Closing Prayer
Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love;
according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.
Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.
For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.
Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight;
so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge.
Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.
Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb; you taught me wisdom in that secret place.
Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.
Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice.
Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.
Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.
—Psalm 51
MEETING SEVEN—Week of March 25
Sermon Series: SELF-CONTROL
Topic: Native Americans

Resources to Consider:
Read: Chap. 2—Sins against Indigenous People
Watch: Mark Charles on the Doctrine of Discovery at marshill.org/LentSC20
Read: A Brief History of Native Americans in Grand Rapids at marshill.org/LentSC21

Review/Listen + Discuss
The Church has a long history of using Christianity as a reason and means for controlling Native American people, often leading to the destruction of their culture, homes, families, and land.

In addition to the material you read/listened to/watched over the past week, here’s a video created by the Episcopal Church to share more of this history and the ongoing consequences of these attitudes and actions today. [14 min]—marshill.org/LentSC22

With all this in mind, select a handful of the following questions, moving from learning from the perspective of history, perspective of “the other”, and then toward your own experience. [In other words, learning from the experience of others should be prioritized over the sharing of your own story, at least at first.]

- What surprised you?
- What did you learn?
- What questions does this bring up for you?
- I wonder [fill in the blank...]
- I feel [fill in the blank...]
- I confess [fill in the blank...]
- I hope [fill in the blank...]
- What did you really realize for the first time? What finally sunk in?
- How have you benefitted from this perspective/treatment of “the other”? [Knowingly or not]
- How has this perspective/treatment of “the other” hindered or hurt you? [Knowingly or not]
- How is God trying to grow/develop this week’s fruit of the Spirit in you? [As it relates to today’s topic? In general?]  
- What is the next right thing for you? How are you implicated? How can you pursue making measurable change in this area? [So What? Now What?]
Action/Measurable Change

- Learn more about the people who originally settled the land in West Michigan. The 4th floor of the Grand Rapids Public library [main campus/downtown] is devoted to Grand Rapids history. See also—marshill.org/LentSC23
- Read a children’s book about Thanksgiving from a Native American perspective. [Here are a few ideas: marshill.org/LentSC24] Discuss how this may impact how you celebrate or speak about the Thanksgiving holiday.
- Continue to pray Psalm 139v23-24 throughout the week. Sit quietly; listen to what thoughts or ideas come to mind, perhaps recording them in a journal. Consider, How is God trying to grow/develop this week’s fruit of the Spirit in me?
- Read, watch or listen to other materials from this week’s Resources to Consider list

Closing Reflection

- Think about the people and topics you have learned about over the past 7 weeks—immigrants and refugees, women, persons of color, creation care, LGBTQ persons, indigenous people. Which group of people has tugged at your heartstrings? Which specific group of people do you want to commit to learning more about and advocating for?

- Think about people in your life who you may be at odds with relationally, ideologically, and/or theologically. Set up a meeting with one or more in the next month to listen and learn more about their life and perspective.

- Think about the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Which fruit is God most trying to grow within you? What weeds are getting in the way?

Closing Prayer

Spend some time praying together as a group, as the Spirit leads. Consider the following prompts:

- God, we thank you that....
- God, we confess that....
- God, we ask that....
- Amen.

For Further Reading/Reflection

Disunity in Christ: Uncovering the Hidden Forces That Keep Us Apart, by Christena Cleveland [IVP 2013]