

# ***On Behalf of Our Children***

**Wisconsin's Racial Disparities  
and the Call of the Gospel**

**A Study-Action Guide for Wisconsin Congregations**

**Facilitator's Guide**

**Wisconsin Council of Churches**

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## **Before You Begin**

### **Read this guide from cover to cover.**

This will give you a sense of the flow of the study and how it is designed to lead your congregation to take action.

For many people race is a difficult and challenging topic. This study-action guide is designed as an introduction to the topic, to be used by predominately white congregations in Wisconsin that may not have been previously exposed to this issue in a public forum, such as an adult education class. As you plan each session, we invite you to enter a time of prayer and discernment about how this resource can best be used locally. Be mindful of your local church and community context. You will need to serve as a pro-active facilitator, guiding the conversation with sensitivity and care.

While each session is designed for a minimum of 50-60 minutes, many of the exercises will spark deep conversation that may take longer than you anticipate. Approximately 90 minutes for each session is a more realistic timeframe. Whatever your time allotment, you will need to build some flexibility into each session, recognizing that you may need to pick and choose a smaller number of exercises than are listed for each session.

### **Visit the "Racial Equity Study Guide" section of the Wisconsin Council of Churches website.**

Go to [www.wichurches.org](http://www.wichurches.org) and find "Racial Equity Study Guide" under the "Programs and Ministries" menu tab on the home page. There you will find handouts, posters, and announcements for the class that you can download, as well as any updates or additional resources.

### **Invite the Pastor(s) and lay leaders of your church including members of any committees that focus on peace and justice issues and/or community outreach.**

Their support and involvement will be important for carrying out an action plan to address racial equity issues in your community - so get them engaged in the course from the beginning.

### **Partner with another congregation or community group in presenting this course.**

Racial equity and the issues surrounding it can look very different depending on a person's background and situation. Enrich the conversation by reaching across racial

and class lines as you plan and gather participants for this course. Involve participants who have experienced racism themselves, if at all possible.

Consider all of your potential participants as you plan to lead this study. Should youth in your church be invited? Women's groups? A church-wide study on Wednesday evenings during the season of Lent or Advent?

**Talk with experts in your community.**

In Session II, your class will meet with someone who is a community resource person on racial inequity in your area. You will need to extend an invitation well in advance and fill this person in on your goals for the session. If you do not already know a local resource person, see the lesson plan for Session II for suggestions on how to find someone.

**More resources can be found on Wisconsin Council of Churches' website.**

In addition to the handouts and materials at [www.wichurches.org](http://www.wichurches.org), there are links to sites and resources that will help you get a better understanding of the issue. You can also find a .pdf version of this study-action guide and all handouts, plus updated information on the website.

**Sign up E-News and E-Alerts**

Sign up with Wisconsin Council of Churches to receive E-Alerts about public policies relating to racial equity and find out what you and your congregation can do to be advocates for neighbors. Use the link on the Council's home page at [www.wichurches.org](http://www.wichurches.org)

## **Introduction**

### **Course Objective**

The objective of this program is to prepare congregations and their members to faithfully and actively address racial disparities in their own communities. The course will utilize the “Race for Results” study produced by the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families. Remember: your congregation is engaging this study because you are people of faith called “to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8).

### **The Study-Action Approach**

The approach of this resource is to begin with study that leads to concrete action. Keep in mind that these four sessions are only the beginning. We are called to "be doers of the word, and not merely hearers" (James 1:22).

### **How do I recruit a study-action group?**

The poster and announcements (on the website - see below) can be used to generate interest. Personally invite not only those who are already interested, but anyone who may resonate with this issue because of personal circumstances, or who can contribute because of expertise. Consider inviting other congregations in your neighborhood or community to join your study. Also consider which groups in your church you want to invite.

### **Read this guide from cover to cover**

This will give you a sense of the flow of the study and how it is designed to lead your congregation to take action.

For many people race is a difficult and challenging topic. This study-action guide is designed as an introduction to the topic, to be used by predominately white congregations in Wisconsin that may not have been previously exposed to this issue in a public forum such as an adult education class. As you plan each session, we invite you to enter a time of prayer and discernment about how this resource can best be used locally. Be mindful of your local church and community context. You will need to serve as a pro-active facilitator, guiding the conversation with sensitivity and care.

### **How to use this study-action guide**

This is a flexible resource designed to be tailored to the needs of your congregation or group. Some possibilities include:

- Four 60-90 minute sessions
- Two 2-3 hour sessions
- Half-day workshop
- Short, introductory programs. Use one of the sessions as the program for a congregational dinner or get-together
- Church Council retreat
- An Ecumenical Lenten Study involving several congregations in your community

While each session is designed for a minimum of 50-60 minutes, many of the exercises will spark deep conversation that may take longer than you anticipate. Approximately 90 minutes for each session is a more realistic timeframe. Whatever your time allotment, you will need to build some flexibility into each session, recognizing that you may need to pick and choose a smaller number of exercises than are listed for each session.

Note that Session II involves inviting a resource person to talk about your community's needs and resources. This session is crucial for enabling participants to move from study to effective action.

This curriculum is intended to be used in conjunction with handouts and resources available at [www.wichurches.org](http://www.wichurches.org). Look for "Racial Equity Study Guide" on the home page or under "Programs." For each session, you will find the handouts and charts to download and print, links to websites, and other resources. If you need help in accessing these materials, please contact the Council office at 608-837-3108.

### **Tips for leading discussions**

This study will raise issues that may be controversial and arouse strong feelings in participants. Some participants may have personal experiences (past or present) that relate to these issues. Be sure to have read through the entire study-action guide before you begin. It may be helpful to post or briefly review some "ground rules" for discussion at the beginning of each session, for example:

- Each person gets a chance to talk.
- One person talks at a time. Don't interrupt.
- Help the discussion leader keep things on track.

- Listen carefully and with respect.
- It's OK to disagree, but show respect for one another.
- If someone says something that hurts or bothers you, say so, and say why.
- Speak for yourself, and not for any other person or group. Don't put words in other people's mouths.
- Any personal story shared by someone in the group is not to be repeated outside the group unless that person gives permission.
- Include time for people not to talk (silence).

If you feel your congregation is not ready for this conversation, consider using Parker Palmer's resources that teach how to engage in civil dialogue on difficult issues, which can be found on the Wisconsin Council of Churches' website at: <http://www.wichurches.org/resources/habits-of-the-heart-for-healthy-congregations-with-parker-palmer/>

## Session 1: Race and the Gospel (50 minutes)

Goal: To create a safe space in which to begin dialogue regarding racial disparity in Wisconsin by using Creation stories to affirm our connectedness to one another.

Materials needed for this session:

[Mandala Project Handout](#) (Handout 1)

Crayons, markers, colored pencils (your choice)

Bible (variety of translations, including the Jewish Study Bible, encouraged)

Ho-Chunk Origin Story (Handout 2)

The Haudenosaunee Creation Story-Oneida Nation (Handout 3)

Access to the internet and video projection capability relative to group size

YouTube video: [A Conversation with White People about Race](#)

Copies of “Race for Results: Wisconsin Needs to Reduce Racial Disparities” (Handout 4)

A Litany against Racism (Handout 5)

(Note to facilitator: while Session 1 is designed for 60 minutes, you may need more time, or may have to limit the number of exercises you utilize.)

1. Introduction: Explain to everyone the purpose of this course (see Introduction, pg. 3). Then, complete one of both of these exercises (10 minutes). If there are more than 10 participants in the class, split into smaller groups to share “I” stories in “b”:
  - a. Peace Mandala Coloring Activity – using crayons, markers, and/or colored pencils, create a mandala using the [Mandala Project Handout](#). Have materials available as people arrive and invite them to begin to color using the medium of their choice.
  - b. What is your story? In 30 seconds or less, or in 7 words, or in a tweet—140 characters or less – give your “I” story---describe who you are to the class. (5 minutes to prepare and then share.)
  
2. Bible Study Genesis 1:1-2:8 (15 minutes)
  - a. We recognize that the Ho-Chunk and Oneida Nations Origin Stories are not ours to share, so we sought and received permission from both nations to share portions of their Origin Story (you may utilize either or both of these stories). We give thanks for these stories from other faith traditions.
    - i. To learn more about the People of the Big Voice, our Ho-Chunk brothers and sisters, please visit: <http://www.ho-chunknation.com/available-services/heritage-preservation/cultural-resources.aspx>
    - ii. To learn more about our brothers and sisters of the Oneida Nation, please visit: <http://www.oneidaindiannation.com/history>
  - b. Read out loud Genesis 1:1 – 2:4; Genesis 2:5-8; the Ho-Chunk Origin story (Handout 2), and/or the Haudenosaunee Creation Story of the Oneida Nation (Handout 3).
  - c. Discuss the readings. Suggested questions:
    - i. Did you hear something new? If so, what?
    - ii. What do you hear that connects us?
    - iii. Where do you find sacredness in each of these stories?



3. A Conversation with White People (20 minutes)
  - a. View the video “A Conversation with White People about Race” which is part of the NY Times Op Ed documentary series on race and relationships.  
Visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xXow7oIFyIM&feature=youtu.be>
  - b. Break into groups of 2-3 for discussion. Mirror the video in your discussion. Why is race difficult to talk about?
  
4. Next Steps – *Race for Results* (4 minutes)
  - a. Distribute copies of “Race for Results” (Handout 4). Explain to the class that you will be exploring the “Race for Results” report in the subsequent sessions.
  - b. Invite participants to read through the report for the next session. Ask class participants to consider the diversity of their own community as they consider the conclusions of the report.
  - c. Questions?
  
5. Closing Prayer-Use the “Litany against Racism” from the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church (Handout 5).

## **Session 2 – The Hidden Power of Race in our Community (50 minutes)**

**Session Goal:** To understand the racial disparities in our community, including the roles of power and privilege.

### **Materials needed for this session:**

Bibles for the class

Terms and Definitions (Handout 6)

Additional large sheets of blank paper or a white board for additional class notes

Circle of “isms” (see instructions below and pg. 11 for drawing-for leader only)

A/V equipment (if using Option 3B video)

Prayer for Forgiveness (Optional-Handout 7)

### **1. Bible Study / Reflection (10 min)**

Read Jesus’ parable in Luke 16:19-31, the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus. Ask for up to three (brief) reactions. What was fair? Did you feel more sympathetic to (or on the side of) the rich man or Lazarus?

As leader, tell a brief personal about being included or excluded. Possibilities may include:

picking teams for a sport,

experiencing prejudice related to age or gender,

cliques in school,

entering another religious or cultural environment

feeling included in your church/community

In telling your story, share feelings, as well as what repercussions or consequences came from that situation. (E.g., I tried harder, I never went back, I was scared, I didn’t even have to think about the rules!)

Divide the group into pairs. Ask one partner to tell a story of being an insider and the other an outsider (90 seconds each). Encourage them to reflect as you did, sharing feelings and more.

### **2. Exercise to explore privilege and white privilege (5-10 min)**

Use “making of an ‘ism’” exercise (see pg. 11). Pre-draw the wheel with the inner terms only written on large paper or a white board.

If those are the “insiders,” then invite the group to name the “outsider” for each term around the circle. Notice how quickly and easily this dualistic thinking can respond.

Note also that there is positive and negative value assigned to these words, which is also then assigned to people.

You might also observe that moving “into” the circle means giving up identity, since the insiders are considered the “norm.” (We have categories for “female authors” but not “male authors,” or “Asian dance” or “Native American art,” but no “white history” class – that’s just called “history.”)

Distribute Handout #6 with definitions and terms. Invite a person to read each term and definition. Ask if the group understands what is meant, including of the equation:

“Prejudice + Power + Privilege = Oppression”

- 3. You may choose Option A or Option B below. A third option is to offer “A” or “B” at another time (e.g. “Movie Night” for Option B) to invite a broader audience within your congregation and to leave more time for discussion during this session.**

**Option A – Guest Speaker (30 min)**

Invite a local speaker to discuss racial issues and disparities in your community.

Some possibilities include:

- community member of a different race
- teacher or school official
- social worker
- police officer
- human services administrators
- representative from the District Attorney’s office or human resources departments
- a government official/representative

*Note: Contacting your county government offices may provide good connections while also maintaining a local focus.*

**Option B – Video (30 min)**

*Note: You’ll want to preview these videos and select a portion of the program that fits your time allotment.*

Some possible video options include:

- “A Class Divided”- a PBS documentary about one teacher’s response to discrimination: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/divided/> Shorter segments of the program can be used. There is also a helpful teacher’s guide.
- PBS Special on America After Ferguson: <http://www.pbs.org/specials/town-hall/america-after-ferguson/talk/race-privilege/>
- “White People”- a new 41 minute MTV documentary exploring privilege from the perspective of young white people. Available at <http://www.lookdifferent.org/videos/113-white-people>
- “Race: The Power of an Illusion”- a PBS series with three hour-long episodes on science, historical narratives, and current dynamics of power/status. You can find more at [www.pbs.org/race](http://www.pbs.org/race) or stream rental at <http://vimeo.com/ondemand/race>
- “Vel Phillips: Dream Big Dreams”- an hour-long PBS program (with Wisconsin connections), of the first African American woman in the nation elected to statewide office. It is available to view online at <http://video.wpt.org/video/2365403598/>
- “Missing Threads: The Story of the Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act”- the tragic story about the fate of Native American children prior to 1978. One in four was removed from their native homes. For more information, go

to: <https://www.fcpotawatomi.com/news/missing-threads-film/> . The film will be available June 2016 on YouTube. For more information, go to: <http://missingthreadswicwa.blogspot.com/>

- Of popular films on race and power, possibilities include: “12 Years a Slave”- a free black man put into plantation slavery, “42”-on Jackie Robinson, “Black Like Me”- a white reporter impersonates a black man in the Jim Crow South, “Fruitvale Station”- young black man killed by police officer in Oakland, “Gran Torino”-on Hmong immigrants, “The Help”- maids working for white families in the Civil Rights era, “Selma” - Martin Luther King and nonviolent resistance in Alabama, “To Kill a Mockingbird” - movie version of Harper Lee’s novel, “Watermelon Man” - a comedy about a serious topic: bigotry.
- “Lighting the 7<sup>th</sup> Fire”- a 1995 PBS documentary on the spearfishing conflict in northern Wisconsin. A 10 minute clip is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PEpC-D2Ppug&feature=youtu.be>  
Find other resources at <http://theways.org/story/spearfishing>

*Reminder: You’ll want to preview these and select a portion of the program that fits your time allotment. If the film/video relates to something historical, ask the class, “How are these dynamics present in our community today?”*

In either option, try to include at least 5 minutes for question/answer or discussion. Encourage participants to focus on feelings or details of the problem (rather than assigning blame).

#### **4. Closing Prayer (3 min)**

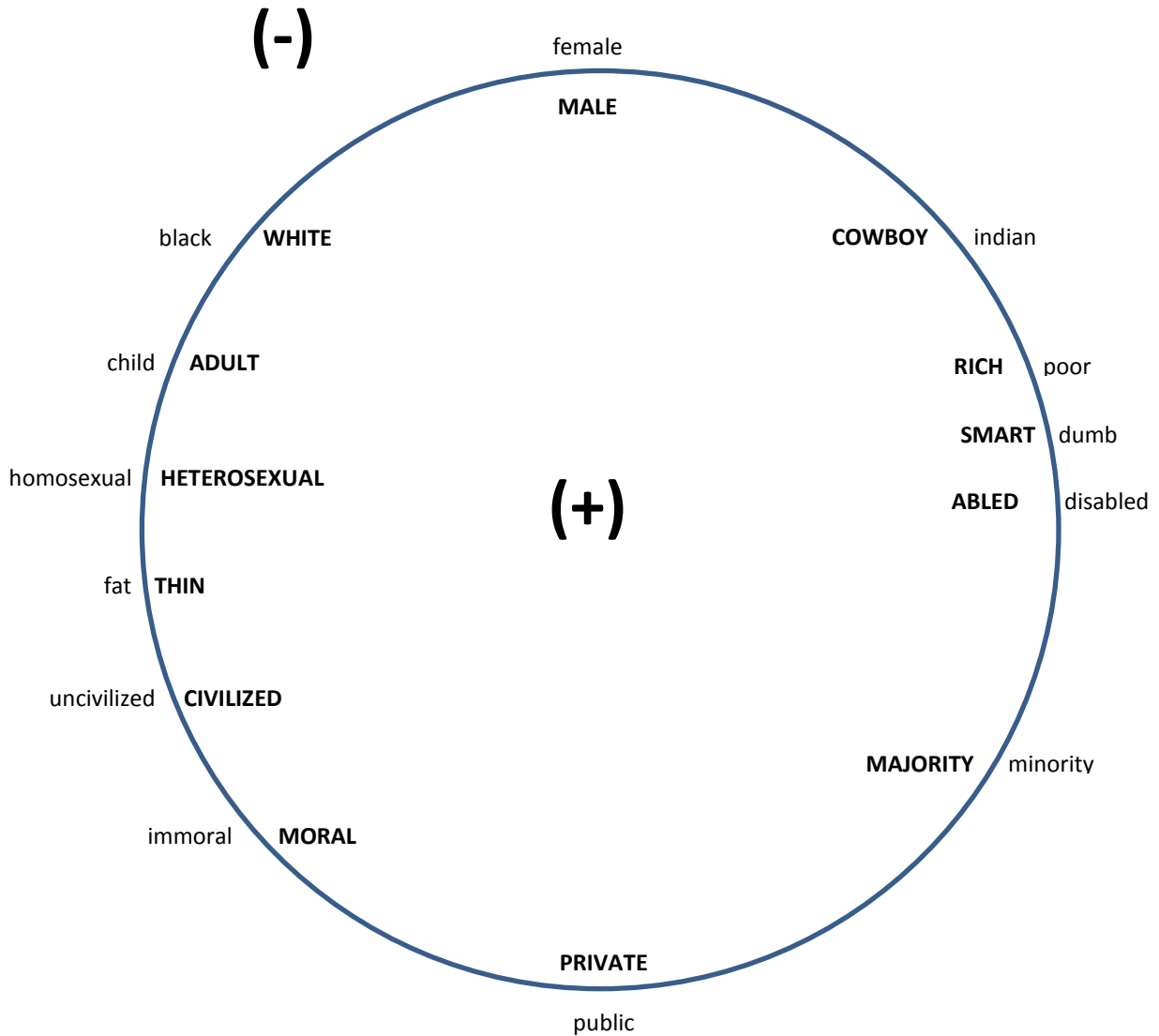
Join hands and close with prayer, giving thanks to God for our time together to share vulnerability, and asking God’s vision in seeing our brokenness and need for healing. You may use the optional “Prayer for Forgiveness” (Handout 7).

**Exercise: Making of an “ism”**

Based on “Making of an ‘ism’: Structure of Oppression” in *Breaking the Bonds: A Workshop on Internalized Racial Oppression* (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2003). Diagram copyright © 2003 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Draw a circle.

Around the inside of the circle write these words clockwise: male, cowboy, rich, able, smart, majority, educated, private, moral, civilized, thin, heterosexual, adult, white. The group will be invited to name the “opposites” outside the circle.



## Session 3 – “Race for Results:” Exploring the Data

**Goal:** To review the “Race for Results” data and consider the implications.

**Materials Needed:**

Bibles  
“Race for Results” (Handout 4)  
Terms and Definitions (Handout 6)  
Case Studies (Handout 8)  
Steps in Social Action (Handout 9)  
Poster paper or white board and markers

**Opening Prayer and Biblical Reflection large group** (10 minutes)

**Open with Prayer**

**Biblical reflection:** I John 4:20 and John 13:34

*Hand out Bibles and ask a couple class participants to read the scripture texts aloud.*

*Ask for insights from the class and offer this summary:* This is a warning against exclusive relationships that create an “us vs. them” world. The Christian community has a responsibility to demonstrate the values of its faith and has a role to play in the transformation of society.

**Definition of Racism:**

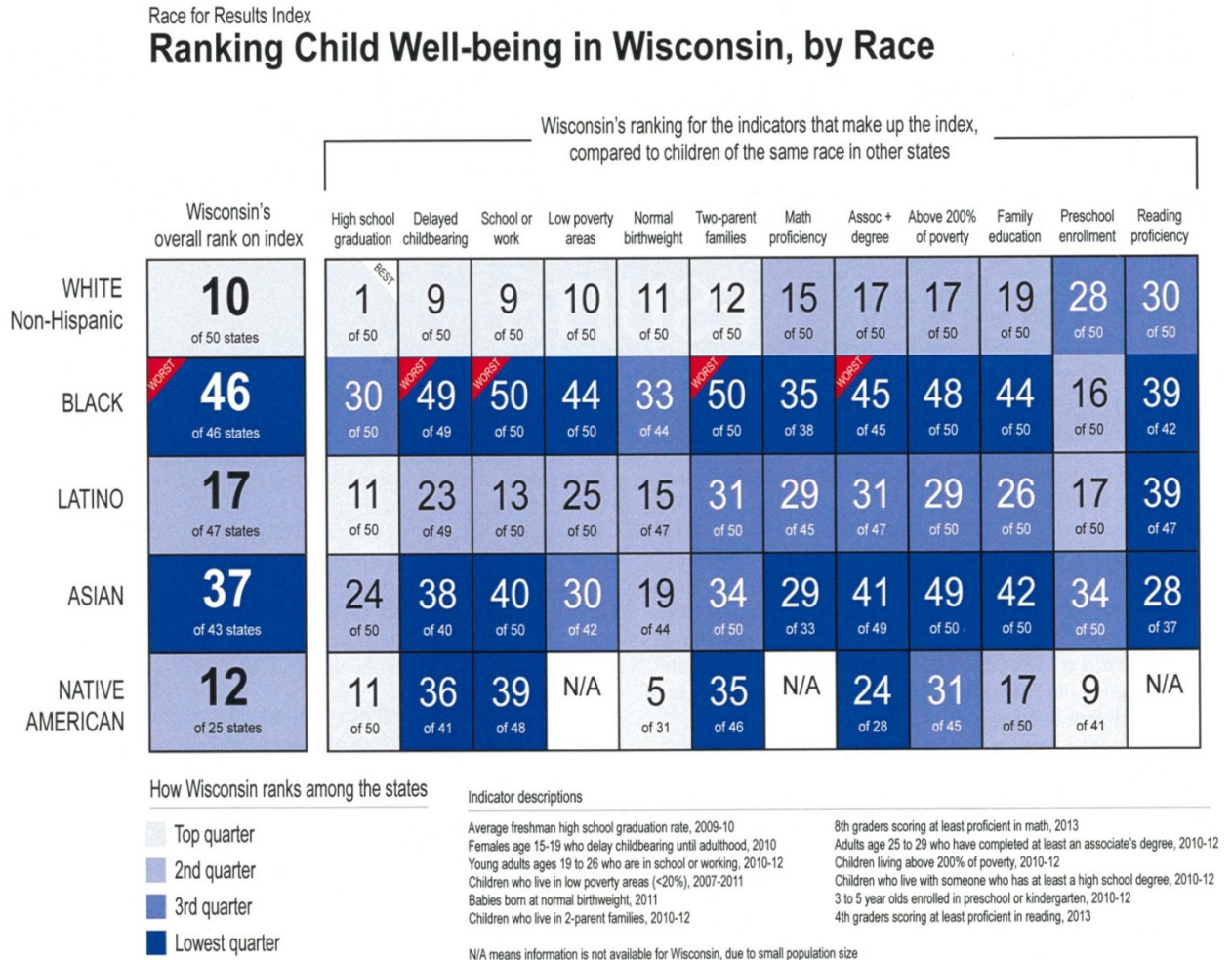
*Review with the class the definition of racism from the Terms and Definitions discussion last week (Handout 6). Post this in the room for reference:*

Individual and Institutional discriminatory actions that arise from a combination of prejudice, privilege, power. To exact racism, one must have social power and privilege based on one’s race, thereby being able to use that social power/privilege to further marginalize an individual or group of individuals without that social privilege/power.

*Ask class members if they have questions and comments on this definition.*

**Review of and Reflection on the Data (10 minutes)**

Review with the class this chart on page 2 of the “Race for Results” handout (Handout 4):



Post these additional statistics for the class to review:

- African American 3<sup>rd</sup> graders are 4.4 times less likely to be proficient in reading than white Americans
- African Americans students are 9.5 times more likely to be suspended from school than white Americans
- 49.9% of African Americans will not graduate high school on time
- African Americans are 5.3 times more likely to be unemployed than white Americans
- African Americans are 6.2 times more likely to live in poverty than white Americans
- 3 out of 4 of the homeless are African American
- African Americans are 2.3 times more likely to be uninsured than white Americans
- African Americans are arrested 8 times more often than white Americans
- African American juveniles are 6 times more likely to be arrested than white Americans
- White Americans have a median income 3.1 times higher than African Americans

*Statistics drawn from: Race to Equity: A Baseline Report on the State of Racial Equity in Dane County, Appendix 1, (Madison: Wisconsin Council on Children and Families, 2013).*

**Discuss the Data** (10 minutes)

*Split the class into small groups of 3-4. Ask, "What stands out in this data? What surprises you?" After a few minutes in small groups ask each group to share its surprises with the larger group.*

**Engage the Data** (15 minutes)

*Return to small groups. Handout copies of the case studies (Handout 8) and assign each group at least one case study.*

**Conclusions** (5 minutes)

*Ask the class what conclusions they can draw from today's discussion. Summarize these points for the group:*

The Data establishes the fact that White Americans in each comparison have significant advantages over African Americans. From the data that has been collected it can be noted that race is the most accurate predictor of well-being in this country. Unless we believe that whites are somehow more able or deserving than persons of color, it is clear that white Americans are privileged in a way not true of persons of color.

*As Christians we are called upon each day to realize God's desire for us to be in community, and through Christ's example, encouraged to move ahead boldly.*

**The Challenge:** (5minutes)

*Ask the class what challenges we face in addressing these disparities. List on paper or white board. Summarize these points for the class:*

- We must be open to talking about the history of our racial group
- It is important to check our assumptions to see if they are based on racial stereotypes and racial prejudices
- We need to learn of the harms of racism
- We must recognize that our power and privilege just might be based on our membership in a specific racial group
- It is important to understand the impact that one's cultural values have on others
- We should create opportunities for racial diversity and inclusion

**Homework:** *Give participants a copy of Handout 9, "Steps in Social Action," and ask them to read it as they prepare for Session 4.*

**Close with Prayer**



## Session 4 - What is God Calling Us to Do?

**Session Goal:** To develop a set of next steps for our congregation and for each class participant on the journey to racial equity in Wisconsin.

### Materials needed for this session:

- Bibles for the class
- “Race for Results” Study (Handout 4)
- Copies of Potential Solutions Chart (Handout 10)
- A large chart of Handout 10 prepared in advance
- Additional blank sheets of large paper or a white board for additional class notes

#### 1. **Biblical Reflection** (10 min)

*Ask a member of the class to read aloud the Parable of the Last Judgment, Mathew 25:31-46.*

*The class facilitator should summarize this introduction for the class:*

Jesus is very specific in this parable about the ways we serve “the least of these, our brothers and sisters.” In this final session of our class we’ll be focusing on how we put our faith into action to address the racial disparities we’ve been discussing these past few weeks.

*Divide the class into pairs, and ask them to discuss these questions:*

- As you think about the Matthew 25 passage in today’s context, who do you think are “the least of these”?
- What do you think is our Christian responsibility in moving our community and our state towards full racial equity?

*Ask pairs to share aloud their insights with the larger group.*

#### 2. **Engage the Racial Disparities Study Conclusions** (25 min.)

*Say to the class:* In Handout 10 there is a list of eight potential solutions identified by the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families to address racial inequities in our state. It is not an exhaustive list, but rather a good beginning for our conversation.

*Split the class (if possible) into eight small groups. Assign each group one of the eight solutions and then say to the small groups:* In addition to the solution you have been assigned, select a second one you would like to discuss. Then, brainstorm a list of potential strategies or activities to implement the solutions you are focusing on by filling in the boxes next to each solution:

- What our community can do
- What our church can do
- What I can do

*Invite groups to think creatively about existing programs and opportunities within the community in which the individuals as well as the congregation can participate. Examples:*

- *Tutoring programs in the public schools*
- *Preparing backpacks with school supplies for at-risk children and youth*
- *Mentoring programs through community non-profits*
- *Participating in a youth camp for children of incarcerated parents. For more information: <http://www.wisconsinumc.org/Resources/Documents/Brochures/RisingSunCamp2014.pdf>*
- *Relationship-building opportunities with people of color*
- *Local and statewide faith-based advocacy efforts supporting racial equity*

Groups should also consider where there are gaps in services and unmet needs. Finally, where more information is needed locally about a particular issue, group, or concern, consider appointing a short-term task group to follow up in order to gather more information and report back to appropriate decision-making bodies within the congregation.

**3. Report Back (10 min)**

*Ask the groups to report back. On the large chart you prepared in advance, ask a class participant to fill in the chart as each solution is discussed. After each small group presents to the full group ask if other participants have additional strategies or activities to add to each list.*

*Then ask:*

- *Are there potential solutions that are missing from this list?*
- *What do you think our church's next steps should be?*
- *What is your next step?*

*Ask someone in the class to record the responses as they are shared.*

**4. Discern Next Steps (5 min)**

*Lead a discussion with the full group to see if it can reach consensus on next steps, and ask for volunteers to lead the follow-through.*

*Ask for a volunteer in the class to type up the conclusions reached and distribute to the class via e-mail. Also send these notes to the Wisconsin Council of Churches at [wcoc@wichurches.org](mailto:wcoc@wichurches.org)*

**5. Close with Prayer (5 min)**

*If there is time, ask each person to share what they have learned from our four weeks together and what their personal next steps will be.*

*Use the Litany against Racism from Session I (Handout 5) to close the class with prayer.*