



Weekly Resource

April 13th: Seeking Racial Justice while in Quarantine

Dear friends,

We humans are built for community. During this time of social distancing, it's crucial that we remain connected, holding one another in love and support. It's for this reason that **each week during the COVID-19 crisis, we'll be sending you a short resource** to use in a virtual meeting held over the phone or via video conferencing. This weekly resource is a great tool to stay connected with your current and past JFM small groups. It is also a great resource to use individually, or with groups of friends or family to stay connected and engaged in a meaningful way. These reflections will provide a time to pray together, check in with one another, and have conversation around a short passage.

In the meantime, we're offering tips and tools for facilitating all of our current programs through videoconferencing (including a Zoom training on April 16th at 7 pm ET). While we hope that this weekly resource will spiritually sustain your community while in quarantine, [now is also the perfect time to start one of our regular programs](#). The call to seek justice is just as important now as ever!

Last but not least, generosity is, at its core, a benefit to everyone. When you donate today, your gift helps us sustain individuals committed to making the world better. [Click here to help out](#). Also, please feel free to [forward this resource](#) to friends and family!

Thank you for continuing to care for one another during this time of heightened anxiety. Know that we are praying for you!

Stay well,

The JustFaith Ministries Staff



Welcome and Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

Begin by saying aloud (or reading silently, if you're by yourself) these words:

Welcome, friends! It's so good to be with all of you, despite that we can't be together in person. Today we'll begin with prayer and spend a few minutes checking in with each other. Then we'll have some conversation around a short reflection before closing in prayer. Most importantly, though, this will be a time to care for one another and to be the community we're called to be.

Let's take a few seconds of silence to pause, to listen to our breathing, and to be present in this space.

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Pause for 30 seconds before beginning the opening prayer.

In this time when the world is whirling from the Coronavirus and we are filled with anxiety and fear for ourselves, our families and our neighbors, give us courage.

In this time when tending to our physical health means avoiding health care facilities, sustain us.

In this time when health care workers risk becoming patients, embrace them.

In this time when those whose health is compromised have to worry about compromising their health, protect them.

In this time when we are invited to show affection by not showing affection, hold us.

In this time when communal prayer must be done in solitude, comfort us.

In this time when basic needs must be met from a distance, fill the emptiness.

In this time when exercising our civic duty means staying away from the voting booth, unite us.

In this time when strength in numbers means breaking up our large group, embolden us.

In this time when technology is facilitating human connection, link us together.



And, in this time when Easter Sunday feels more like Good Friday, fill us with a boundless sense of hope and the audacity to believe we really do have the power to help bring healing to the world. Amen.

– Susie Tierney
Executive Director
JustFaith Ministries

Check-In Time (10 minutes or so)

Ask these open-ended questions. If you are by yourself, journal about them.

Note: If you're with a group, these questions have the potential to take up a lot of time. Some weeks may require more check-in time than others, depending on the needs of the group. To provide a shorter yet meaningful check-in time, choose ONE of the questions below, and ask participants to share a ONE sentence response.

- **Before we begin this week's reflection, let's take a few minutes to check in. How is everyone feeling?** (It will be a bit more difficult via phone to know if someone is being talked over or is trying to get a word in.... Be sure everyone has a chance to speak).
- **What is something you're struggling with this week?**
- **Where have you seen a sign of hope this week?**

Other optional questions include: What is something you've learned about yourself during this time of social distancing? Where have you experienced a "thin place" in the last week? Where have you seen beauty this week? What is one new behavior you'd like to continue doing when the virus has passed us by?

Reflection (20 minutes or so)

Introduce the reflection with the following words:

While it is absolutely essential that we make space for our personal grief and anxiety, this crisis also presents us with an opportunity to examine our priorities as a community and as a nation. When we are at last able to venture outside our front doors, will we revert back to "life as usual?" Or will we emerge from this crisis as a transformed people, renewed in our commitment to caring for one another?

This reflection seeks to help us ask important questions to guide us on our journey to transformation.



Then say (or if you are by yourself, you can read silently):

We will now read an excerpt from an article called “[Pandemic and Privilege: U.S. Policies and Practices Condemn Our Sisters and Brothers to Death by Coronavirus.](#)” This article was written by Mary T. Yelenick, a Anti-Racism Team Member of the Catholic peace movement Pax Christi USA. You can learn more about Pax Christi USA by [visiting their website.](#)

Read the following excerpt. Note: if you’re using videoconferencing, share your screen and have each person read a paragraph.

Amidst the widespread fear, anxiety, and disjointedness triggered by the steady global march of coronavirus, many of us harbor the hope that the fact that the virus affects all people - regardless of nationality, education, background, class, religion, or political affiliation - may lead the global community finally to recognize and acknowledge our inherent and essential interconnectedness.

Yet we are not the same. Our race plays a critical role in whether, and how seriously, coronavirus may upend or destroy our life.....

The recommendations and strictures being imposed in various States in response to the growing pandemic have very different meaning, practicality, and effect, depending on where one stands in the artificial and continually-reinforced hierarchy of racial and socioeconomic privilege. While for some, sheltering-in-place may mean simply inconvenience, for others - notably People of Color - sheltering-in-place may equate to a death sentence. White families, by virtue of generations of entrenched racist housing and lending policies, are far more likely than are People of Color to live in, or have access to, safe shelter. In large urban areas, such as New York City (currently the epicenter of the U.S. coronavirus outbreak), apartment buildings in which most whites live are likely to be more expensive, and to offer more safety-related services to their residents, than those in which People of Color reside. More whites than People of Color are likely to have access to secluded laundry facilities, daily cleaning staff, and regular trash removal. More whites can also afford to have food and other essential items delivered to their doors in times of quarantine, thereby minimizing potentially infectious contact with others.

For individuals or families (most of whom, as a direct result of our nation’s policies and practices, are People of Color) residing in crowded public-housing complexes, jails or prisons, homeless shelters, or on the street, the directive to “shelter in place” may constitute a virtual death sentence....

....To the degree that people are being asked to continue to perform jobs deemed socially “essential,” while others take shelter from the pandemic, the magnitude of those workers’ personal risks of job-related virus exposure should, ideally, be reflected in their paychecks,



and in the social esteem with which they are regarded. Yet while those in the higher echelons of medical care are presumably being compensated financially for their sacrifice, the members of the janitorial and cleaning staffs responsible for the potentially-deadly job of keeping surfaces virus-free – whether in those same hospitals, or in office buildings - receive far less attention, and far less pay. Those people are likely to be, at least in New York City, People of Color. So too are the workers charged with making daily deliveries to their safely-quarantined fellow citizens. At least in New York City, the color lines of who is being publicly exposed during this crisis, versus who is being permitted to seek safe shelter, are visible and stark.

As peacemakers, we frequently publicly oppose, and actively advocate for nonviolent alternatives to, war - particularly the wars fomented by our own nation against others. All too rarely do we focus upon - or publicly speak about - the war raging among us, within us, and all across our own land: the longstanding and persistent war by whites, and white institutions, against People of Color. It is that war that continues to permeate our nation's institutions. It is that war that afflicts and warps our relationships with each other. And it is that war that, in this time of coronavirus, will kill our Sisters and Brothers more cruelly and effectively than could any biological virus.

The real, lasting vaccine for the heightened plague besieging People of Color during this coronavirus pandemic cannot be found in any laboratory. It lies within the minds, hearts, and actions of white people.

This excerpt is used with permission

Ask the group (if you are by yourself, you can journal or reflect silently):

- What are your initial reactions to this excerpt?
- This article describes how the rate of COVID infection is linked to the racial injustice that plagues our society, including our [history of housing discrimination](#), [discriminatory health care](#), and the [racial wealth gap](#).
 - Where do you see racial injustice in your community?
 - How do you think racial injustice affects people of color in your community during the COVID-19 crisis?
- What can you do right now to work for racial justice? What will you do after the pandemic to work for racial justice? (One option is to facilitate one of our two racism programs, [Faith and Racial Equity](#) or [Faith and Racial Healing](#))

After the discussion is over, encourage everyone to read the rest of the “Pandemic and Privilege” article. You can copy and paste into a group email the below text, which contains an embedded link to “Pandemic and Privilege,” as well as to other helpful articles.

- [Pandemic and Privilege: U.S Policies and Practices Condemn Our Sisters and Brothers to Death by Coronavirus](#) (Pax Christi USA)



- [Black Americans Face Alarming Rates of Coronavirus Infection in Some States](#) (New York Times)
- [Why Some People of Color Say They Won't Wear Homemade Masks](#) (CNN)
- [The Coronavirus is Infecting and Killing Black Americans at an Alarmingly High Rate](#) (Washington Post)
- [1619 Podcast, Episode 4: "How the Bad Blood Started"](#) (New York Times)

Closing Prayer (10 minutes-ish)

Then say: Before we join in the closing prayer, let us pause to acknowledge the presence of the Holy Spirit, who is as close as our very breath.

Pause for 30 seconds.

Then say:

**May we who are merely inconvenienced,
remember those whose lives are at stake.**

**May we who have no risk factors,
remember those most vulnerable.**

**May we who have the luxury of working from home,
remember those who must choose between preserving their health or
making their rent.**

**May we who have the flexibility to care for our children when their schools close,
remember those who have no options.**

**May we who have to cancel our trips,
remember those who have no safe place to go.**

**May we who are losing our margin money in the tumult of the economic market,
remember those who have no margin at all.**



May we who settle in for a quarantine at home,
remember those who have no home.

As fear grips our country,
let us choose love.

During this time when we cannot physically wrap our arms around each other,
let us find ways to be the loving embrace of God to our neighbors.

AMEN.

“Prayer for Pandemic”
By Cameron Belim, Seattle, WA
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Then, in these words, invite any participants who have a prayer, a concern, or a request to briefly share it:

We are disciples on a journey.

We are the body of Christ, broken for the world.

We hold one another as we carry the concerns of our neighbors.

If you feel moved, please share your prayer aloud.

Leader: We pray also for the members of the JustFaith community across the country. Unite us through the power of your Holy Spirit, that together we might participate with you in the building of your Kingdom, in order to create a more just and peaceful world. Amen.