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Holy Allyship: Looking to the Holy Trinity as our example for how to engage racism

Family, today we are invited to ponder the awesome mystery of God's other-determination in the holy community of Trinity. Together we want to lift up an aspect of the Trinity that we believe provides hope and direction for us all in the trying, and yet opportune times in which we find ourselves. In the midst of looming climate catastrophe; widening disparity in resources and opportunities between rich and poor; and, increasing awareness of the violence born of systemic racism We believe Jesus' redemption of authority and power reveals the allyship at work within and emanating from the Trinity in order to redeem and unify heaven and earth.

This dialogue is part of an on-going process of learning we are all being invited into now. Through our conversation today we hope to open a door to begin to talk about allyship in a meaningful way. In order to go deep together, we are going to limit our reflections to the ways in which Holy Allyship can help us to engage the interrelated problems of racism, discrimination, and inequality in ourselves, and our communities. Noelle, would you be willing to start us off by helping us define what is meant by allyship?

In many ways, allyship begins by recognizing one's privilege within their community and wider world. Allyship is when a member of the dominant social group takes a stand against social injustice directed at a group targeted by discrimination. (e.g. white folks who speak out against racism, heterosexual folks who advocate on behalf of members of the LGBTQ community). An ally works to be an agent of change. It begins with us humbly being able to sit with discomfort, and recognize our own privilege.

Statement of privilege as introduction: Noelle, Phil, and Lindsey

- **We are Children of God**
- Name
- Pronouns (Phil's privilege: I have lived most of my life unconscious of the fact that the gendered pronouns assigned to people and things in my first language are experienced by others as stifling.)
- How your family / you came to be here – settlers, immigrants (privilege: I have or have not faced questions surrounding my authenticity to live here).
- We are all treaty people - live in treaty 6 Territory.
- Race - white, racialized person, person of color (privilege: as a _____ person in a culture that normalizes whiteness - I have or have not faced racism in my life).
- Ability – able bodied (privilege: as an able bodied person I have not faced barriers that have constrained my life).

- Sexuality - Straight, LGBTQ2SIA+ (privilege: I have or have not faced homophobia or biphobia in my life)
- Gender Identity – female, male, cis, trans, gender queer (privilege: I have or have not faced sexism, misogyny, transphobia in my life)
- Mental health - (privilege: I have or have not faced the stigmas associated with mental wellbeing in my life).
- **Together God has called us good**

Allyship is a faithful and biblical response to the world in which we live.

- In the Gospel for today (Matthew 28:18) Jesus makes this bold claim that he has received all power and authority on earth and on heaven – Jesus didn't seize this power, but received it. What does Jesus do with this awesome authority and power? Our Lord immediately begins to share it around.
- While Jesus held a position of power as a teacher, rabbi, and male in his times he chose to use that privilege to help and come alongside others.
- Yet while Jesus had privilege he was also vulnerable as a Jewish, person of color, who was wanted by the authorities and the state.
- maybe it was because of this understanding of his privilege and his vulnerability that Jesus regularly listened to, held space for, and ate with those at the margins of his community and world. Those who had been thrown out for being different, those who lived with mental illness, those who lived with disabilities.

We have all had a moment where we needed to be heard / known / understood. What did it feel like, when someone took the time to listen closely, without judgement? To understand or at least stand by you? The Importance of being an ally is to cultivate this spirit of humbly listening, and understand those experiences that are not your own.

We are currently living through a moment in history that needs to be addressed. For many of us Racism and the call for anti-oppression work are rising to the surface of our everyday conversations, thoughts, and experiences in new ways. For some of us we have had the privilege to never have to truly think about racism in this way.

Meanwhile others of us have had to live with the negative effects of racism in our lives every day and encounter it in multiple ways and multiple systems. It goes beyond the overt racism that shows itself as personal insults, words, or symbols. But people of colour experience racism in ways that are embedded in systems and institutions. At the heart of Racism is the misuse of authority and power, and using that power to maintain inequality and prevent people from having equal access to opportunities.

Throughout Jesus ministry he talked a lot about the ways in which the powers and authorities of this world had come in conflict with the kin-dom of God...

Perhaps the most obvious way these teachings have come down to us today are when we pray the prayer he shared with us. In the Lord's Prayer we say, "Your kin-dom come your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

In his commentary on today's gospel, Stanley Saunders writes, "Jesus sends the disciples into the world not only to announce the salvation of [all] humans, but to bear witness to the end of a broken creation. Jesus' words at the Great Commission are thus not merely the fitting end of Matthew's story of Jesus, but a vision of the end of a broken world and the beginning of new creation.

Of course, it is not really a new creation, but a restoration of the original goodness that Creator spoke into existence through the Living Word even as the Spirit incubated the chaotic potential of it all in the beginning.

Between the beginning and until the fulfillment of all things, our Triune God has entered into our broken and sinful history innumerable times in the Spirit of allyship. God is seemingly never content to simply hold onto power and authority, but always willing to enter into real and mutual relationships understanding that our liberation is bound up together.

I know that when we look at all of the things going on in the world today, it might feel really scary or overwhelming. We might even feel guilt or helplessness. But those feelings don't serve us, and they do not serve justice.

In the past week as we have seen the rise of protests against racism and brutality, we have come to see that people are not okay with the status quo. Those who traditionally hold power and authority are being challenged by the collective power of many voices coming together to demand justice, and to demand something better.

And that is a beautiful moment. Now, more than ever, is the time to take a step forward, put our feelings of discomfort, guilt, or helplessness aside, and stand up as allies. We know in our hearts that we want and need justice for all, but we need to truly listen to others, and reflect on our own privilege and actions. We need to empower, uplift, and centre the wants and needs of those we most try to serve.

So, there are a few questions we need to ask ourselves, as we embark on our ongoing and lifelong journey of allyship.

- Are we aware of, and holding ourselves accountable to, our own privilege?
- Are we actively making room for more voices and more places at the table?
- Are we standing up for what we know is just and right, even when it feels difficult, scary, or uncomfortable?

What we need to do now is to find every opportunity to listen compassionately, and seek out those who will share their stories and struggles so we can learn how to best serve. We need to consistently reflect and take time to consider how we can use our own privilege to benefit those around us who experience hatred, discrimination, and injustice. God has created us good and tasked us with tending the common good. Jesus laid down his life for us, and He has asked us to lay down our lives for our friends, in the

service of justice. The Holy Spirit continually comes alongside us, giving us uplifting words to share with every tribe and nation.

And one of my favorite quotes, that I often think of when I consider my own role in allyship, is said best in the words of Indigenous Australian feminist activists: “If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.”

SO HOW DO WE BECOME better allies?

Prioritize listening to the stories of others, and what their lived experiences are. Don't try and argue or defend your own position - believe and trust others when they open up and show vulnerability in sharing their story. Understand that, as an ally, you cannot completely understand the lived experiences of an oppressed group. The goal here is not pity, but solidarity and compassion.

Think of ways that you can begin conversations with those who share your privilege. It is not the responsibility of only people who experience discrimination or oppression to educate others. Use your own resources and ability to learn more about the issues at hand, and use this knowledge to open up conversations with others.

Do not take on leadership over, speak on behalf of another group, or exert top-down authority. Your role as an ally is to actively create space for leaders who are otherwise systematically silenced and disempowered.

Find support systems so that you do not have to rely on emotional support from the oppressed group. Share experiences, feelings, and thoughts, but do not conflate your emotional heaviness with their experiences of oppression.

Resources:

How to Be A Good Ally - Identity, Privilege, Resistance [youtube video](#)

5 Tips for Being an Ally [youtube video](#)

Online Guide to Allyship <https://guidetoallyship.com/>

Becoming An Ally: Breaking the Cycle of Oppression by Anne Bishop (book)

Dear church: a love letter from a black preacher to the whitest denomination of the US.
– Lenny Duncan (book)

The Archipelago of Hope: Wisdom and Resilience from the Edge of Climate Change. -
Gleb Raygorodetsky (book)