



Zachariah Walker

Racial Justice Initiative 2020-2021

Pennsylvania Southeast Conference

*Let justice roll down like a river
and righteousness like a mighty stream.*

~ Amos 5:24

Few people know that a very public lynching took place within the boundaries of the Pennsylvania Southeast Conference (PSEC) of the United Church of Christ in the early 20th century. Zachariah Walker, an iron worker who left Virginia in search of work and landed a position at the Worth Brothers Steel Company in Chester County was [lynched on August 13th, 1911 in Coatesville, Pennsylvania.](#) The Zachariah Walker Racial Justice Initiative was born out of a desire to remember this atrocity and raise awareness about the ways people of faith can follow the prophetic call to stand up for racial justice.

In this time of challenge and reckoning, the light of Christ is shining through the sins of the generations, revealing how white privilege has colluded with, chosen to ignore, or refused to see the sin of systemic racism in our midst. As Christians, we are called to open our eyes, and open wide our hearts to Black communities and all people of color who continue to be oppressed by our nation's original sin – racism.

“The ultimate measure of a man (or woman) is not where he (she) stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he (she) stands at times of challenge and controversy.”

~ The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The veneration and idolatry of whiteness and white power creates degradation, enslavement, oppression, and racial violence that grievously injures Black and Brown people and diminishes the humanity of white people who commit both the interpersonal and structural violence that sustain racism.

The Holy Spirit is moving through this land in the voices and hearts of those challenging the status quo of hundreds of years of racial and economic injustice and who are calling for real, concrete change. The PSEC seeks to answer this call to work for racial justice and create a culture of anti-racism within our churches and our communities by (1) facing and embracing our collective past, (2) opening our eyes, minds and hearts to the present racial suffering and injustice, and (3) repenting and turning our hearts once again to our loving God who creates all of humanity in the divine image. This intergenerational sin can end with us as we work toward creating a culture of anti-racism and repair.

To this end, PSEC's Zachariah Walker Racial Justice Initiative will offer ways that churches can stand in support of our Black members, neighbors, and friends. We will

educate ourselves about the terrorism of white power and the violence of systemic racism and turn our hearts to action and prayer. The Zachariah Walker Racial Justice Initiative will be sharing with pastors and churches historical information, educational resources, and worship suggestions that follow the liturgical calendar, beginning in Advent 2020.

A few highlights of the themes for the liturgical year include:

- **Advent** - growing our awareness and shining the light of Christ on the historic atrocity of lynching and the violence of systemic racism suffered by Black individuals and communities
- **Lent** - exploring the intergenerational sins of racism; expressing grief and communal repentance in response to these sins
- **Pentecost** – offering a variety of actions congregations and individuals can engage in toward repairing wrongs and creating a culture of anti-racism

The project will culminate in an interfaith service of repentance and a sacred remembering of Zachariah Walker and the many people of color murdered by acts of racial violence in the United States.

Jesus told his followers to “...love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as

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~ The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

yourself” (Luke 10:27). Loving our neighbor takes courage, commitment, and action. We hope that you will join the PSEC in remembering Zachariah Walker and working for racial justice as we remember the words of The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in his message to

the wider church: “In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.”

The time is now to raise our voices for good, and together, commit and hold ourselves accountable to create a culture of anti-racism, and do the hard work of racial justice. May we, too, dream dreams of racial equity, and together, through our work in Christ, let us make these dreams a reality.

If you have questions or would like to get involved, please contact PSEC’s Zachariah Walker Racial Justice Initiative Steering Committee:

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