



What is Truth?

An Embodied Lenten Series

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Part of “A Toolkit for Reparations in Community: A Resource for the Body of Christ” www.diomass.org/reparations-toolkit

Developed by the Subcommittee on Reparations of the Racial Justice Commission
Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts

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Session 1: Telling the Truth

Overview

Why is it so hard to tell the truth, the whole truth, about what it means to live in and be part of the fabric of the United States? Who benefits from telling partial truths and who is harmed? Session 1 explores the often difficult landscape of truth telling and how truth isn't always what it seems.

Preparation and set-up

This session includes a YouTube video link for viewing together.

Centering breath

As a group, breathe in for a count of three, hold for a count of three, and exhale for a count of three. Do this three times.

Creating the container

Read the poem one time through. Sit in silence for one minute. Read the poem again. Sit in silence for one minute. For the final time, read only the lines in bold type. Reflect on the questions provided.

There is no such thing as a “safe space” —

We exist in the real world.

We all carry scars and have caused wounds.

This space

seeks to turn down the volume of the world outside,

and amplify voices that have to fight to be heard elsewhere,

This space will not be perfect.

It will not always be what we wish it to be

But

It will be our space together,

and we will work on it side by side.

— *By Beth Strano [Used here with permission]*

- Why would Beth Strano say that there's no such thing as “safe space”?
- In your experience, is this true? Why or why not?
- Many people make the distinction between creating a “safe space” and creating a “brave space.” What does this distinction mean to you?
- Share one thing that you need in order to feel brave in this space.

After this discussion, establish group agreements and/or expectations (see the suggestions provided in the introduction to this series).

Embodied exercise

We know that the practice of uncovering and telling the truth can be challenging; we also know the gift we give and are given when we step into the truth of our hi(stories). Sitting in a circle, play “One Truth and One Lie.” Each person shares one thing about themselves that is true and one thing that is false. The group tries to guess which statement is the truth.

Opening prayer

Accompanying God, be with us as we uncover, strive for, and share the truth of our collective history. Give us the wisdom to know when we create half truths and give us the courage to tell the truth, the whole truth. Always. Amen.

Video engagement

One group member reads the paragraph below, then watch together the video “Blaming President Donald Trump Is Too Easy. This Is Us.” (linked below).

- Lent invites us to slow down and ready ourselves for the challenging road ahead to Jerusalem and the cross. This season is full of beautiful and difficult truths, ones found deep within ourselves and society. Both Lent and this interview with scholar Eddie Glaude encourage us to think about what has been preventing us from doing this important work. We are invited to hold the intention of Lent in our hearts and bones as we listen to this interview with Eddie Glaude.

[“Blaming President Donald Trump Is Too Easy. This Is Us” 2019 interview with Princeton scholar and author Eddie Glaude](#) (3 minutes, 14 seconds)

Questions

After watching the video take five minutes to silently journal or quietly reflect on the following questions. Use the questions as a guide to help you process. If your feelings take you elsewhere while you journal, go with it. After five minutes of silence, return to the group and use the questions as a place to start processing together. Remember to take your time and don't rush— the goal isn't to find answers but to deepen the space through listening and relationship building.

- How are you feeling after hearing/watching this video?
- What surprised you?
- What did you notice about Glaude's body language compared to the other panelists? What emotion did that bring up for you?
- What parts of the video resonate with you and your experience in your own community?
- To what extent has viewing this clip been an opportunity for you to “zoom out” your perspective, seeing a broader truth than what you had previously seen?
- What sins need confessing, individually and communally?

Closing prayer

Invite one of the group members to offer the following prayer to close:

God, you became flesh in Jesus so we might know the truth of the living word. Give us the grace to listen to truths that are not our own. Guide us on this journey of truth-seeking and truth-telling so that, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we may gain the wisdom to come to the fullness of truth in community. Amen.

Going deeper

Suggestions for individual and household follow-up reflection, study, and action:

Over the next week take some time to understand your own history and what truths or partial truths make up your own narrative. Explore your congregation's history as well. How much of the story do you know?

- For further reflection, you might respond to a few questions from the “Changing the Narrative” section (from the middle of page 13) in [“The Process Toward Reparations: A Template”](#).
- Has your own church explored its history around race and racism? Is there a clear narrative on who funded the building of the church? Who built the church? From where did they get their money? How was it determined where the church would be built? If your congregation hasn't asked these questions, why do you think that is?
- The 2022 Lenten Preaching Series hosted by the Cathedral Church of St. Paul in Boston—“The Spiritual Practice of Truth”—will follow the session themes in this series. You are invited to reflect further on each session theme by watching the corresponding sermon from the preaching series, which will be available at <https://www.stpaulboston.org/sermon-index>.