*The Road Toward Reparations*
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The road toward reparations is at once a personal, communal, and aspirational journey. It is a moral imperative that people of all faith traditions, including Unitarian Universalists, are called to pursue in partnership. My personal involvement with and understanding of reparations has been guided by congregational, collegial, and local community relationships, the wisdom of scholars, and an exploration of my cultural and family heritage. The workbook, *Sacred Reckonings: White Settler-Colonizer Churches Doing the Work of Reparations*[1], says "a public story consists of three parts:

- a story of self: how you came to be the person you are;
- a story of us: how your constituency, community, or organization came to be the people they are; and
- a story of now: the challenge this community now faces, the choices it must make, and the outcomes to which 'we' can aspire."

As a White woman of Irish and Italian descent, my identity affords me the privilege of either ignoring or examining the impacts of systemic racism. However, each aspect of the public story I am a part of has called me to and keeps me committed to the work of reparations locally and nationally. What calls each person to the work of dismantling White Supremacy Culture and to the liberatory and equity-building work of reparations will require personal reflection on family histories, as well as the histories of our faith and local communities. Discerning my place in the

[1] *Sacred Reckonings: White Settler-Colonizer Churches Doing the Work of Reparations, Gathered and Written by Rev. Dr. Rebecca Voelkel and Jessica Intermill, Esq., A Joint Publication of MARCH (Multifaith Anti-Racism, Change & Healing), the Center of Sustainable Justice, & Intermill Land History Consulting, 2023 Center for Sustainable Justice, Version 2023.2, Minneapolis, MN; Appendix 15.*

interlocking, codified, cultural and entrenched history as well as present horrors of racism means I can no longer turn away or be satisfied with easy answers or solutions. I am compelled to examine with humility my personal history and place in the larger narrative of community and nation, and to response with courage and integrity.

In 2015 the congregation I serve, the Unitarian Church of Evanston, decided to publicly and boldly proclaim the truth that Black Lives Matter by placing a large permanent sign stating so on our property. A small group of committed volunteers led the congregation in an education process leading to a vote and it was clear from that process that our work could not conclude with the sign. Without ongoing education about the impacts of White Supremacy culture within and beyond our community, relationship building, and action, the sign would be nothing more than a performative gesture.

A Racial Equity Action and Leadership (REAL) team formed to plan programming and education around dismantling White Supremacy Culture. One of the early workshops offered by the REAL team was a two-part discussion on "The Case for Reparations" in *The Atlantic* by author Ta-Nehisi Coates[2]. I spent a Saturday reading the article in its entirety, clicking on links, studying maps, reading through supporting documents, and watching video interviews. It was one of the most transformational pieces for me in my commitment to racial justice. I was drawn into the opening story of Clyde Ross, a Black man living in the North Lawndale neighborhood, on the west side of Chicago. Around the turn of the 20th Century, my eight great grandparents, four from southern Italy and four from Ireland, came to the United States and landed in or around Chicago. All four of my grandparents, my parents, and I have spent our lives living and serving

[2] Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The Case for Reparations," *The Atlantic,* June 2014 Issue
https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/

in the Chicagoland area. Reading Clyde Ross' story of predatory contract lending was an epiphany for me in terms of understanding how systemic racism works, even before I knew how closely my family history was connected to it.

As a seminarian, I was asked to preach several times during the summer of 2015. I had just read "The Case for Reparations" and was eager, though a little nervous, to preach about it in Door County, WI. I wasn't sure how racial justice and reparations would be received in this northern Wisconsin vacation town. Also, my mom was coming with me, and I wasn't sure how she would receive it. My mom and stepdad, conservative Catholics, have an RV parked in a campground in Door County, so she and I drove up together that August.

In the small sanctuary of mostly White appearing folks, an African American family walked in and sat down just before the service started. I read parts of the story of Clyde Ross who lived in the North Lawndale neighborhood of Chicago and preached a message calling for an examination of the use and misuse of White power and privilege. After the service, an older African American man, came up to me and expressed his gratitude for the sermon. He was from All Souls Free Religious Fellowship, a Unitarian Universalist congregation on Chicago's south side, and he shared his involvement in the work to integrate housing in Oak Park. As we were talking, my mom walked up, tearful, and shared her story, which I did not remember hearing before. When she was sixteen years old, in 1958, a real estate agent came to the house she had lived in for most of her life with her parents and grandmother, on Arthington Street, the northern border of North Lawndale. The realtor came to the door and said to her family, "You better sell now, because 'they're' coming," meaning African Americans were coming across the invisible barrier of race, Roosevelt Road, to move into the 'White' neighborhood. If they wanted to get

anything out of the value of their house, the agent warned, they better sell it now. My mom said within a week everyone on the block sold their house.

My grandparents, first generation Italian Americans, moved to Norridge, a White enclave suburb within the northwest corner of the city, set up as a destination of White flight. A generation before my Italian grandparents were not considered White. I was stunned and embarrassed as I watched this Black man, comforting my weeping mom, saying "It wasn't your fault. You were 16. What were you to do?" My mom's guilt was eased, and I was left thinking about the implications of my family history in the case for reparations.

Perhaps no two ethnic minorities in our country have experienced a more rapid shedding of a non-White identity than the Italians, my mom's side, and the Irish, my dad's. Along with that escape from the impacts of White supremacy, came a deeply embedded racism, born out of the fear and guilt of evasion. This realization of the implications of my cultural identity, along with my family's personal history of unearned White privilege have further compelled me to remain on the path of collective liberation, to be a part of the leadership of my congregation in joining that path, and to deepen relationships among my interfaith colleagues in Evanston, Illinois, as we join in meaningful support for reparations locally and nationally.

The Unitarian Church of Evanston, like many of the congregations in our movement, has had a long and complicated racial justice history. In 1959, the social justice committee proposed a resolution on fair and equal housing which did not pass because the congregation at large believed the church should not take political stands and they feared, erroneously, that such action would violate our non-profit status. In 1962, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. preached at our church to a crowd twice the sanctuary's capacity. Called ministers of this congregation, including Homer Jack, who came from open housing campaigns in Chicago and preached about putting the

Christian back into the Young Men's Christian Association (The YMCA was segregated in Evanston at the time); Ross Allen Weston, who formed a partnership with a UU Fellowship in Alabama to support Black civil rights workers, preached strongly for racial justice, and went to Selma when Dr. King called; and Charles Eddis, who worked closely with Evanston interfaith colleague, Jacob Blake Sr., to address housing discrimination in Evanston in the 1960's. When Martin Luther King Jr. was murdered and the Evanston mayor asked the two clergy to help keep peace in the community, Blake and Eddis agreed, as long as the mayor and city council agreed to sign a fair housing ordinance they'd been marching and advocating for. The ordinance was signed, and a peaceful vigil of lament was held.

When I first discovered Unitarian Universalism at the Unitarian Church of Evanston in the fall of 2001, I knew none of this history and was curious about the lack of diversity in this progressive faith community. I was looking for a religious home for my children primarily and myself secondarily. In part, I was responding to the feedback we were getting from prospective adoptive parents who were looking to place their child in a home with a religious structure. We had been in the process of trying to adopt our second child through a local agency's African American adoption program. At the time, my husband and I did not have a faith community. I had, more than a decade before, let go of my childhood Catholic faith and my husband had no need or desire for one. I began to consider faith communities that might be a fit for our family.

Though we did not end up adopting, and had our second child biologically, the process opened an awareness in me. As I contemplated what it would mean to parent a Black child as a White person, I was more cognizant of the books and toys I read to my child, the friends and neighbors we had, and the communities we spent time in. Though I was drawn to the openness of the Unitarian Church of Evanston, I was troubled by the lack of diversity. The question as to why

so few BIPOC choose to call our church home still comes up. There has never been a satisfying answer, but the question has changed over time. Rather than, “Why are we so White?” it has become a question of how we as Unitarian Universalists of all identities, better live our shared values of equity, inclusion, justice, and liberation. The congregation now includes in its stated values “practicing Beloved Community,” and “a commitment to anti-racism and anti-oppression.”

Studying the Case for Reparations had a profound effect not only on me but on the whole congregation, which led us to pass in February 2016 a resolution in support of legislation introduced to the U.S. House of Representatives by Rep. John Conyers, Jr.: HR 40, entitled: “The Commission to Study Reparation Proposals for African Americans Act.” Soon after, the congregation submitted a proposed Congregational Study/Action Issue (CSAI) to the UUA on reparations for consideration and eventual adoption of a Statement of Conscience by the UUA.

Passing this resolution empowered the Unitarian Church of Evanston to be fully aligned with a concurrent and separate movement taking shape in Evanston, a movement that would eventually have the whole world watching our city, inspiring hundreds of local municipalities to replicate it, and which would compel the interfaith community’s resounding and collective support.

The long national struggle for reparations began almost immediately after the official end of enslavement, with General William T. Sherman’s Special Field Order 15, which was revoked after President Lincoln’s assassination, and Callie House, a formerly enslaved person, along with Rev. Isaiah Dickerson, who formed a pension and relief fund for formerly enslaved people. House was arrested for fraud for these efforts, but the case for reparations has only continued to

build. The endurance of the struggle for and fierce resistance to national reparations, makes the actual success of Evanston's efforts even more remarkable and inspirational.

In many ways, the origins of Evanston's current reparation's story can be traced to the personal journey of former Evanston City Council Member, Robin Rue Simmons. Though some local critics have claimed Simmons is attention seeking, she is in no way putting herself at the center of this effort. My intention in naming her personal connection is to reiterate that the journey of reparations is concurrently personal, communal, and systemic. It is both intimate, dealing with the personal narratives of human beings, and interconnected to the larger narrative and legacy of injustice and enslavement, which this country was founded upon and has not reconciled. Truly reparative work can only be advanced through an interconnected, relational, and interpersonal approach, rooted in a spiritual and communal obligation.

When Simmons was a child, she recognized the disparity between the way she lived and the way her White friends lived in Evanston. Her home in the 5th ward, a predominantly Black neighborhood, was small, with a tiny yard, as were all the homes around her. When visiting a White classmate's home, she wondered why their house, and all the houses around it, was so large. The reason, as it turns out, was not by accident or luck but by the intentional and harmful practice of redlining in the city of Evanston, as explained by Evanston historians, Dino Robinson and Jenny Thompson.

A comprehensive history co-authored by Robinson, founder of Shorefront Legacy Center and Thompson, of the Evanston History Center, titled, "Evanston Policies Directly Affecting the African American Community,"[3] details the impact of systemic racism and racial prejudice in the

[3] Dino Robinson and Jenny Thompson, "Evanston Policies Directly Affecting the African American Community,"

city's housing, education, healthcare, and social institutions. As a result of the great migration of African Americans to the north fleeing the Jim Crow south, fear of an influx of Black residents into the predominantly White community was fomented, as evidence by this and many publications of the time:

> *In January 1918, the Evanston News-Index published an article with the headline: "Negroes Unable to Secure Homes Here." The article reported that a Black real estate firm had conducted research into the housing conditions of Evanston's Black residents. "With more than 400 tenantless residences in Evanston," the article read, "insanitary conditions are developing in the negro sections here because of the congestion in many homes." Nearly fifty Black families were crowded into too small residences because they were "unable to rent any of the hundreds of empty houses" in the city. The report explained that "owners and agents of vacant property plan to prevent the negroes from spreading from their own quarters." There was an "alleged plan to 'freeze out' the negroes from all parts of Evanston except their own neighborhoods." And this, the article stated, was done owing to "race prejudice." ("Negroes Unable to Secure Homes Here," Evanston News-Index, January 2, 1918.)*[4]

In response to fears of an influx of Black residents, and under the guise of 'safety,' "Black residents were steered toward buying and renting housing in the city's Fifth Ward" and "attempts among Black residents to occupy areas beyond that ward were met with strong opposition."[5]

The evidence of racial discrimination and segregation in the city is unequivocal and well researched in the 84-page document, commissioned by the city. The economic impacts of that segregation in housing contribute to the continued disparities in Evanston in income, wealth,

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[4] Dino Robinson and Jenny Thompson, "Evanston Policies Directly Affecting the African American Community," page 30
[5] ibid, page 31

educational opportunities, and lifespan. Though the impacts of White supremacy and systemic racism are far reaching and well documented, the focus of Evanston's reparative work began with addressing housing discrimination, as homeownership is the way generational wealth is most often cultivated, and because impairments to such homeownership for African Americans in Evanston was so blatantly codified through restrictive covenants, policies, and practices. As Black mortgage professional and public policy strategist, Mark E. Alston states in another report to the City of Evanston:

> "Given that real property ownership is the primary source of wealth-building for the majority of Americans, creative and resourceful strategies that promote and sustain home ownership and real property investment by Black Americans are essential means of resolving the racial wealth disparity."[6]

In April 2019, 400 years after African enslavement began in America, Councilwoman Simmons, presented a case for reparations in Evanston to the city council, built on the fact that the city had practiced, mandated, and codified racial discrimination in housing and economic development through exclusionary housing policies, redlining, and divestment from the Evanston Black community.[7] Then, in June, the City of Evanston passed Resolution 58-R-19 committing to, "end structural racism and achieve racial equity."[8] That November, Resolution 126-R-19[9] was proposed and approved by the city council to use the retailers' occupation tax on recreational

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[6] Mark E. Alston, "Reparations: Redressing Institutional Racism and Redlining;" a Report to Evanston City Council, February 20, 2020; page 1
[7] ibid, page 7
[8] Resolution 58-R-19, https://www.cityofevanston.org/government/city-council/reparations
[9] https://www.cityofevanston.org/home/showpublisheddocument/57474/637257576500130000

cannabis sales to fund reparations, with the expectation that $10,000,000 would be raised in 10 years.[10]

A Reparations Subcommittee was formed in January 2020, and community meetings were held to gather input on what form reparations might take. While community leaders were also in support of federal efforts, the focus of these local efforts have been explicitly tied to the practices and impacts experienced in Evanston. The first method of redress, as decided by Evanston's city council, was to be directed to "Black residents who had ancestors living in Evanston between 1919 and 1969."[11] Those families were to receive up to $25,000 each to apply to home repair, home loans or down payments, starting in June 2021 as part of the Evanston Home Improvement Reparations Program. As of this writing, about 56 disbursements of $25,000 have been made and another 90 applications are being reviewed, representing $3,650,000 in reparations.

These first payments redressing housing discrimination were never meant to be the only or conclusive form of reparations in Evanston. Local efforts have always been coupled with Federal efforts in support of HR40. The city's initiative is a powerful first step in "the journey of a thousand miles," and one part of a much larger portfolio of efforts toward a comprehensive reparations plan. However, a small but vocal group of local Black residents and allies felt the initial approach was inadequate and that only direct and unqualified payments to descendants of enslaved ancestors could be called reparations.

In response to concerns raised that reparations should come in the form of direct payments without restrictions or limits imposed by any members of the White community, the Reparations Stakeholders Authority of Evanston (RSAE) was formed. The RSAE is a rotating

[10] Public Funding of Evanston's Local Reparations Program – Anne Rainey
[11] Boulé Journal, Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity, Vol. 85, Number 3, Fall 2021

board of advisors including many of the city's Black leaders, pastors from predominant Black churches in Evanston, and Evanston historian, Dino Robinson. After forming, the RSAE established the Evanston Reparations Community Fund, a second fund held at the Evanston Community Foundation and administered by the RSAE, with input gathered entirely from Evanston's Black community members, apart from the City of Evanston's influence. This second fund will focus on reparative work in economic and business development, educational and cultural initiatives, and health and wellness, as well as home retention and ownership.[12] This second fund is also meant to be an ongoing source of reparations funding after the city's cannabis tax funds are no longer available.

Though the advancement of reparations in Evanston has been a civic action, the engagement of the city's faith communities has been an integral component to the movement's realization. The impetus to engage in this fight for justice has been empowered by Councilwoman Simmons' deep grounding in her faith community. The leaders of Evanston's Black churches have been instrumental in organizing support through townhall discussions as well as small group conversations. It is hard to imagine the passage of reparations in Evanston without Evanston's Black clergy and faith communities or the solidarity of the whole interfaith community, committed to moving reparations from theoretical to actual.

Evanston is known as "The City of Churches" due to the 100 houses of worship in this town of 75,000. It was established around Northwestern University, built on land stolen from the Potawatomi in the Black Hawk War and sold to the founder of the university, John Evans.

[12] https://evanstonforever.org/files/7016/1228/0269/Reparations_Stakeholders_Authority_of_Evanston_Press_release_02FEB2021.pdf

Northwestern and Evanston were founded to create a community distanced from the "rough crowds" of Chicago, in other words, a White Christian town.

Today, Evanston is a place where progressive people of many faiths work alongside one another to support Connections for the Homeless and Interfaith Action of Evanston, serving free community meals almost every day of the week, providing overnight shelter for those who are unhoused, as well as a morning hospitality center, afternoon warming center, and long-term supportive housing with wrap around services. There are two active clergy groups, one that is predominantly but not exclusively White, Evanston Interfaith Clergy and Leaders, and one that is composed almost exclusively of Black clergy from Evanston's 5th Ward, Evanston Own It. The interfaith clergy group grew from a desire to include Jewish, Baha'í, and Unitarian Universalist colleagues and to be engaged in social action and advocacy. Evanston Own It evolved to be a prayerful, Christ-centered support network for Black faith leaders. For years these groups were separate, with respect for one another but without much interaction or a clear impetus to work together. The clarion call of reparations galvanized the faith communities to join in a myriad of ways beginning with the first town hall held at First Church of God, in the historically Black 5th Ward and attended by people of many faiths and racial identities.

The disparity of health impacts evident during the early months of the Covid pandemic, followed by the murder of George Floyd, further motivated the community to work together toward racial justice and healing. In the fall of 2021, several congregations coalesced to present a 3-part on-line workshop on Faith and Reparations: Northminster Presbyterian Church, St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Sherman United Methodist Church, Lake Street Church, and the Unitarian Church of Evanston. Leaders from the Unitarian Church of Evanston raised funds from its members who are committed to anti-racism to be matched by participants in the workshop and

contributed to the Community Reparations Fund. The Rabbi and leaders of Beth Emet the Free Synagogue developed a report titled, “Why We Support Reparations,” and the Jewish Reconstructionist Congregation used curriculum grounded in Jewish teachings called the Stolen Beam Series.

As the laity of several congregations took action, the clergy were taking note. In November of 2021, Evanston Interfaith Clergy and Leaders met in person for the first time in a year and a half. At that meeting the question was raised, whether we might combine our efforts and funds to make a more impactful statement of support for reparations in Evanston. A small group of us began to gather to discuss how to work together to make such a commitment, not only in terms of financial redress, but to cultivate deeper relationships of reconciliation and repair. We invited members of Evanston Own It to speak with the Evanston Interfaith Clergy and Leaders group about the Reparations Stakeholders Authority and how to support their efforts. We knew that the money was important, but the healing of harm through introspection, examining our histories, and having restorative conversations, were as much a part of reparations as the dollars raised.

We came together to draft a case statement calling for support of reparations and describing what the commitment would mean. All the congregations on the Evanston Interfaith Clergy and Leaders list were invited to sign on. We recognized that each congregation would have their own decision-making processes in terms of financial commitment, but we asked for engagement and vocal support that included whatever financial support was possible, along with ongoing education and relationship building. We agreed to continue working together to create programming, to share resources, and explore our own congregational histories.

The Evanston Interfaith Clergy and Leaders held a public rally in June 2022 at Fountain Square in downtown Evanston to announce our collective support for national and local reparations efforts. We invited the press and the clergy of Evanston Own It to hear our commitment and we promised to announce the results of our fundraising efforts at the upcoming annual Martin Luther King Day Interfaith Service. Those of us who serve predominantly White congregations recognized our responsibility to champion this effort, responding to the request from our Black colleagues, and fostering relationships of accountability.

As we planned our fundraising efforts, we decided not to set a goal. Having no way to know what was realistic given the number of congregations involved, we thought it better to celebrate whatever was raised by the MLK service. But, off the record, some of us expressed hopes of raising $1,000,000. Six months later, we had raised $942,000 among the 18 congregations that signed on, and that amount continues to grow. The various faith communities each had their process for raising funds. Evanston's first church, First United Methodist, led by Pastor Grace Imathiu, made a special appeal to the congregation after preaching about reparations on Easter. She thought they might raise $500, but raised $5,000. The next Lenten season, after the collaborative interfaith effort, 91 members of First United Methodist contributed a combined $50,000 to the Evanston Reparations Community Fund.

The Quakers held a meeting and decided to cut a check for $35,000. Northminster Presbyterian included a percentage toward reparations in their capital campaign. The Unitarian Church of Evanston used endowment funds to match the contributions of 50 members and added the shared offering collection, for a total contribution of $44,645. Members have also been encouraged to contribute through monthly, ongoing payments made directly to the reparations fund, and we contribute royalties every time an African American Spiritual is used in worship.

Congregations have also examined their own histories to acknowledge where harm was done, including the harm of remaining silent and complicit in the midst of segregation and inequity. Lake Street Church and Second Baptist have engaged in a powerful reparative journey. Lake Street, which used to be known as First Baptist Church, and Second Baptist, which formed as the Black Baptist church, split in the 1880's, when Black members left First in response to the demand that they sit in the segregated balcony. The two congregations have come together in the past two years to talk about this history and explore what form financial and relational recompense, reconciliation, and healing might take.

Other congregations in Evanston began exploring their archives to better understand and share their history with regard to racial justice, including St. Luke's and First United Methodist. They shared their findings publicly, mostly of complicity or silence in the context of racial violence, inequity, and segregation in Evanston and Chicago. Inspired by the work of our neighbors to explore their histories, a group of five of us at the Unitarian Church of Evanston, met for several sessions in our archives to explore our history with regard to racial justice. We learned our forebearers were mostly silent and complicit in response to the segregation of the hospital systems and schools in Evanston. We shared our findings with the congregation in a worship service and posted the narrative to our website.

As clergy, leaders, and congregants of many faiths and racial identities, we have come together to experience the power and beauty of deepening relationships. After the rally to announce our shared commitment to reparations, Rev. Michael Nabors who has been a bridge between the White and Black clergy groups, invited three of us from the EICL group, to meet with him and two other members of Evanston Own It, to plan follow up opportunities for reparative connections. We planned and implemented three events in the winter of 2023. The first

was the MLK Service where we announced how much was raised among the interfaith community toward the Evanston Reparations Community Fund.

The second event was a bus tour of Evanston led by Dino Robinson, founder of Shorefront Legacy Center, and the historian who provided much of the information for the case for reparations in our city. Following this 2-hour tour, we convened at Beth Emet the Free Synagogue for small group discussions about how this experience impacted us. Each of us leaders co-facilitated a small circle, one Black leader and one White. I was paired with Pastor Moody who serves one of the city's most conservative Christian churches. I serve, arguably, the city's most liberal congregation. Each of us in the circle, regardless of racial or religious identity, was moved by the experience of coming together to speak honestly of justice, inclusivity, and healing. The room was filled with conversations like these.

The third event was a tour of Chicago, visiting the North Lawndale neighborhood that is the centerpiece of Ta-Nehisi Coates' article *The Case for Reparations*, and home to the Lawndale Christian Church, Health and Legal Centers. We heard from Natalie Moore, WBEZ journalist and author of *South Side,* about her experiences growing up in Chicago. We also visited the MLK memorial in Marquette Park and concluded at Chicago's Beth Shalom B'nai Zaken Ethiopian Hebrew Congregation for an Interfaith/Interracial dinner and conversation.

These experiences provided an opportunity for each attendee to reflect on their connection to, responsibility for, and experience of the systems of racism where we live. They facilitated stronger connections among people of many experiences, faiths, and identities. They make the ongoing story of reparations at once personal and communal, rooted in faith as well as civic engagement.

Evanston has provided a model for local reparations efforts and Robin Rue Simmons, who is referred to as the architect of these efforts, has gone on to found First Repair, a not-for-profit working nationally to educate and equip local leaders as they advance reparations in their areas. A third annual Reparations Symposium is being planned for this fall and the Evanston interfaith community is working together to present evidence that this work is stronger, more sustainable, and truly reparative when it is grounded in and supported by the faith community.

I have come to understand that there is no way to ever repay fully what has been stolen or repair the devastation of enslavement, Jim Crow, segregation, mass incarceration, or the countless ways that White Supremacy and systemic racism have destroyed life. But knowing that painful truth is no reason to avoid the work of reparations.

We are called by the historic and evolving expressions of our Unitarian Universalist values of liberating love, justice, and equity, to engage personally, communally, congregationally, and nationally in the work of reparations, reconciliation, and repair. Evanston has inspired municipalities around the country to consider what reparations means in their local context and I am humbled to be able to serve in such a community. I recognize that many colleagues may not have the impetus of such a clear imperative in their ministry setting. However, I encourage you, if you haven't already, to learn about the status of reparations in your area and consider what you might do to contribute to those efforts. Begin with building relationships of trust with those who are the stakeholders of reparations where you are.

You might examine the history of your town to learn about the ways racial injustice has been perpetuated. You could form a team of congregants to explore your archives to understand how your congregation responded to such events. There may be congregants and/or local clergy

who are already involved in local reparations. Build on those relationships and continue listening and learning together.

The work of reparations is a personal and communal journey as much as it is national imperative. It must be directed and led by those most impacted by harm at the local and national levels, and it must be supported – economically, spiritually, relationally – by those who benefit from White Supremacy and other oppressive systems. As we explore what it means to repair harm done, as we strive to stop the injury, make restitution, and work toward a society where the atrocities of White Supremacy are no longer committed, the conversation and attempts to repair should reach every corner. If not beginning in communities of faith, striving however imperfectly to dismantle White Supremacy culture within, among, and beyond us, where would these conversations take place? If not supported by people who are faithfully working to build Beloved Community, how could we ever co-create the world we dream about? May each of us and all of us together have the courage to keep moving forward with the faith that healing, repair, and true liberation are possible.