

Title slide

Be thoughtful and listen statement.

Today's discussion is NOT intended to decide on changes to make to our worship. As before, the goal of the session is to create a safe space for dialogue.

What Attracts You to a Worship Service?

What do you like or expect?

Beginning of Segregated Churches in the US

This picture shows the inside of a Philadelphia Methodist church that was founded over 250 years ago and is still in use. Both Whites and Blacks worshipped here, with the Whites holding the power of making decisions. In churches of this time, it was customary to have the Blacks sitting or standing in sections behind or to the side – or perhaps in the balcony that you can see in the picture.

Richard Allen

The church included some Black Methodist preachers, including Richard Allen. He was a former slave who had been able to purchase his own freedom. About 1792, the Whites' rude and discriminatory treatment of the Blacks at St. George's resulted in a lot of Blacks leaving that church. Richard Allen became the pastor of the Bethel African Church in 1794. It met in a former blacksmith's shop that Allen had purchased, moved and refurbished.

Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church

This is what the church looks like now. This congregation became the first AME church, a denomination that was formally separated from the Methodist (or Methodist Episcopal) denomination in 1815. This action was taken because the White Methodist Episcopalians were attempting to control the churches owned by the African Methodists.

Segregated Worship: Pros and Cons

Invite people to respond: Who benefits and how? Who is at a disadvantage? What do we miss out on if worship is segregated?

Non-segregated Worship Melting Pot Soup

What might worship be like if we were not segregated? One model is similar to what St. George's in Philadelphia was doing in the 18th century. Blacks were allowed to worship there, but on terms that were set by the White leadership. When the Blacks and Whites were in the same worship service, the liturgy and music would be chosen and led by the Whites. And the Blacks were expected to stay in their places.

Today, separated seating would not likely be required, but the worship would probably be done in a manner that fit the White culture and what the leaders and majority members were comfortable with.

Non-segregated Worship Tossed Salad

This model values and makes use of the diversity of the different cultures represented. It incorporates a range of music and liturgy and movement and emotion to honor the wishes and traditions of the breadth of cultures. Examples from the reading include Church of All Nations, a PC(USA) congregation in Minneapolis, Minnesota; and Plymouth United Church of Christ in Oakland, California. This material was put together in 2009, so I checked their websites and both seem to still be thriving.

It was clear to me from the reading that these congregations have had to work through many issues and accept differences. But they seem to be really energized by the results.

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Ask for people's thoughts and response (remind of the listen-to-learn-and-understand Vs listen-to-respond. Watch the time)

Closing prayer

Our God, you have brought us together at a time when our society is struggling with many issues that divide us and worry us. Thank you for helping us today to be open to learning and to having our minds opened to things that need to be said; things that need to be understood; and things that deserve responses that are prayer-filled and even vulnerable. Amen