



One Diocese, One Book

A Lenten book study for the Episcopal Church in Louisiana,
using **The Night is Long, But Light Comes in the Morning**
by Dr. Catherine Meeks



Walking in Love. Making Jesus Known. Transforming Lives.

One Diocese, One Book

The Racial Healing Commission and Bishop Shannon are embarking on a unique journey during Lent 2025 that promises to deepen our understanding of racial healing in the context of faith and community.

The Commission has selected Dr. Catherine Meeks' recent book: 'The Night Is Long But Light Comes In The Morning: Meditations For Racial Healing' to guide us in this journey. Dr. Meeks is the former Executive Director of the Absalom Jones Center for Racial Healing in Atlanta. In his Foreword to her book, Presiding Bishop Michael B. Curry writes: "...Dr. Catherine Meeks shares profound meditations, deeply rooted in those times alone with God and interwoven with her decades of life experience in addressing racial injustice...The result is both beautiful and powerful, as she calls us to the hard work of self-interrogation, taking seriously Jesus' question, "Do you want to be healed?" If your answer is 'Yes,' then these meditations are for you, and for all who will dare to join you on this journey toward deep healing and the casting out of the demons that poison our collective soul."

The purpose of this diocesan-wide study is twofold:

- to offer individuals and parishes a reflective journey to increase awareness of the need for racial healing in ourselves, our churches, communities, and country; and,
- to encourage conversation within churches and throughout the Diocese about our shared stories of race and faith and offer practical ways to seek racial healing and justice.

Our hope is that by offering this resource, each parish will commit to participating in this study by forming a study group for those wishing to participate. The Racial Healing Commission will also offer a weekly zoom discussion for those who would like to participate, but do not have a discussion group in their own church. The zoom discussions will take place at 6:30 PM on Thursdays in Lent, beginning on March 6 and ending on April 10. You can sign up to participate on the diocesan website.

By participating in this book study, you will not only be engaging in an educational and spiritual exploration but also contributing to the broader mission of racial healing within the Diocese of Louisiana. Your presence and active involvement will be invaluable.

Many Blessings,

The Rt. Rev. Shannon R. Duckworth
The Racial Healing Commission

*The Rev. Liz Emblar-Beazley, Jey Rogers, The Rev. Dan Krutz, Michelle Cox, Molly Philips,
The Rev. Jane-Allison Wiggan, The Rev. Stephen Crawford, Patricia Corderman, and
Tamika Gerhardt*

This study was adapted with permission from the original creation by the Commission on Racial Healing and Pilgrimage, members of The Episcopal Diocese of Alabama.

About the Study

Overview of Book

The Night is Long but Light Comes in the Morning - Meditations for Racial Healing by Dr. Catherine Meeks will be the book used for our One Diocese, One Book Lenten Study. This powerful collection of meditations focus on issues of race, oppression, and personal transformation. Dr. Meeks uses these issue-based meditations with attached questions to help us become reflective and interrogate our own narratives. Addressing the deep societal and spiritual challenges of racial injustice are necessary to seek liberation and healing. This book will help us do the work both individually and communally.

Summary of the study

The study is designed to take place during the Lenten Season, beginning around Ash Wednesday and finishing before Maundy Thursday. Of course, the study can also be completed at any time during the year. There are forty-eight meditations divided into eight sections. These meditations are covered throughout six weeks. An optional seventh meeting is also suggested approximately two weeks after Easter to discuss the next steps. Participants should read the assigned meditations in preparation for each group meeting. The study will require a certain level of open-heartedness and truth-telling as participants reflect on the challenging questions of our time. As such, the small group space must be a safe space and a place for people to be brave and vulnerable.

Suggestions for Enhancing Your Participation

Take several deep breaths before beginning your reading each day. Before reading each meditation, look at the discussion question for that meditation and note your response. Keep track of things that stood out to you and challenged you. Make a list of things that both irritate and excite you in these readings. Take note of how you felt as you read each meditation and record it in your journal. Finally, note what you would like to know more about.

It is highly recommended that participants keep a journal throughout the study and read the provided discussion questions and ideas for deeper reflection before reading each day.

Meeting Flow - For Facilitators

This Section outlines the flow for each meeting based on a 60-minute meeting. So much material is covered each week, and there is not enough time to discuss everything. The meeting intends to begin a conversation in an intentional and openhearted community. The hope is that awareness will increase and possible actions will emerge. There will be many questions left “unanswered,” and this is okay.

Bible verse and Prayer (2-3 minutes)

One person read John 5:2-8 aloud. Pause for a few seconds and then pray the selected prayer together. See the Appendix for prayer ideas.

Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate there is a pool, called in Hebrew Beth-zatha, which has five porticoes. In these lay many invalids—blind, lame, and paralysed. One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been there a long time, he said to him, ‘Do you want to be made well?’ The sick man answered him, ‘Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; and while I am making my way, someone else steps down ahead of me.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Stand up, take your mat and walk.’

-John 5:2-8 (NRSV)

Sacred Covenant Reminder (1 minute)

Briefly remind group of key aspects of the sacred covenant created as the First/Intro Meeting.

Check-in (10 minutes)

Ask people to share “what they are bringing into the room” - worries, celebrations, prayers, etc. Not everyone needs to share.

Discussion (30 minutes)

This is the bulk of the meeting. Ask participants to share their reflections on the meditations. They can share things they journaled, responses to questions, and what they experienced with deeper reflection ideas.

Review Next Week’s Work (1 minute)

Review the Meditations and Focus for the following week.

Gratitude/Regrets (3 minutes)

Have each person share what they are grateful for and any regrets that they have. It is important to remember that this is the time to listen and not a time to “fix” anything.

Close with Prayer (1 minute)

Say a prayer to end each session.

Week 1 - An Invitation to See

Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate there is a pool, called in Hebrew Beth-zatha, which has five porticoes. In these lay many invalids—blind, lame, and paralysed. One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been there a long time, he said to him, 'Do you want to be made well?' The sick man answered him, 'Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; and while I am making my way, someone else steps down ahead of me.' Jesus said to him, 'Stand up, take your mat and walk.'
John 5:2-8 (NRSV)

Readings: Acknowledgements - Meditation 6

Key Points

- Willingness to commit to a process of interrogating ourselves
- Pay attention to the ways we perceive those we designate as “other”
- Do this work in community
- Rage unchecked explodes but, if acknowledged, can be channeled into a force for good

Discussion Guide

Acknowledgments -"What would the world look like if we believed that 'love is stronger than hate, that courage is better than cowardice, and that truth will have the last word?'"

Foreword - What does "effective, powerful, way-or-love action grounded in that 'lonely place' with God" mean?

Preface- Do you really want to be well?

Meditation 1: Searching for Inner Truth - What about the "mystical" journey interests/excites you? What do you need to have the courage to open your heart to possibility and to let go of the need for safety and stability?

Meditation 2: The Shadow is Calling- How does being "more conscious: dismantle racism and lead to racial healing?

Meditation 3: We Wear Masks- What are our "masks," and how does "taking off our masks" contribute to racial healing?

Meditation 4: Be Not Afraid—What does it mean to say that "the most important part of racial healing is to take responsibility for our own fear"?

Meditation 5: Let's Talk About Rage - What stood out for you most in this meditation? What are you willing to explore deeper about your own rage?

Meditation 6: Can I Get a Witness? What is the value of having witnesses/a community?

Week 2 - Now that I See

Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate there is a pool, called in Hebrew Beth-zatha, which has five porticoes. In these lay many invalids—blind, lame, and paralysed. One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been there a long time, he said to him, ‘Do you want to be made well?’ The sick man answered him, ‘Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; and while I am making my way, someone else steps down ahead of me.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Stand up, take your mat and walk.’
John 5:2-8 (NRSV)

Readings: Meditation 7 - Meditation 14

KeyPoints

- If racism appears not to be a problem, then we are confining ourselves to unconsciousness. We must be willing to tell the truth, which leads to consciousness, loneliness, and confrontation.
- We must be willing to improve, stay curious, and be open to what is unsettling, especially when we do not know the answer.
- Courage is essential; lack of courage leads to efforts to create race-neutral narratives.
- Standing up for racial freedom and justice does not always go well and may result in loss.
- We are all wounded by racism, and the longer these wounds are ignored, the more disruptive they become, both physiological and psychological.

Discussion Guide

Meditation 7: Loneliness—What old narratives do you have to leave behind? How willing are you to confront the truth about yourself and the nation?

Meditation 8: What must Die? How will you allow your old ways of seeing to die? How do you feel about living with paradox and uncertainty?

Meditation 9: Courage - How does saying “yes” to doing frightening things create a space for courage to grow?

Meditation 10: Faith and Race - How has racism enjoyed a favored place in our faith communities? What connections do you see between faith and race in your faith community?

Meditation 11: Loss—What potential losses might you experience when advocating for those who are oppressed by racial structures/systems? How does that make you feel?

Meditation 12: Can I Walk this Path? How could racial healing work contribute to your personal and collective healing?

Meditation 13: Facing the Wounds- What narratives do you have about race?

Meditation 14: Radicalized Trauma -What experience do you have supporting someone who was the recipient of a microaggression?

Week 3 - Unweaving the Web

Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate there is a pool, called in Hebrew Beth-zatha, which has five porticoes. In these lay many invalids—blind, lame, and paralysed. One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been there a long time, he said to him, 'Do you want to be made well?' The sick man answered him, 'Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; and while I am making my way, someone else steps down ahead of me.' Jesus said to him, 'Stand up, take your mat and walk.'
John 5:2-8 (NRSV)

Readings: Meditation 15 - Meditation 24

KeyPoints

- Practicing silence in the search for inner personal truth is essential, but make sure what is sought is not validation for a set of behaviors that need to be left behind
- There are no shortcuts to remedies for racism; everyone must find their own way, and doing nothing is not a choice
- Asking questions, listening, and staying in conversation are essential; having the option not to is a privilege
- The "Love Ethic" demands that we see a person beyond their assets and deficits and challenges us to reimagine who we are as humans
- The slow work of the mystical love of God inevitably disrupts the status quo

Discussion Guide

Meditation 15: Look in the Right Place - When confronted with silence, do you welcome it? What is it like for you to sit with silence even if it brings you pain?

Meditation 16: The Search for Remedies - How do you feel about the direction to "stay home until there is a clear sense of the best way to offer help?"

Meditation 17: It is Not Magic - How has the call for Beloved Community failed over the years?

Meditation 18: Why Black People Are Still Talking About Race - What does it mean for it to be a luxury to remove yourself from conversations about racism and systemic racism structures?

Meditation 19: What Kind of Love Does it Take? What do you think about the concept of the "Love Ethic?"

Meditation 20: Whose Love Is It, Anyway? - What does it mean to say "mystical love is not magic?"

Meditation 21: Is There Any Love Here? - What is required for a community to be a consistent truth-teller?

Meditation 22: Stop Talking Until You Have Love- How is saying, "I don't see color" insulting?

Meditation 23: No Cheap Love, Please - What is required to create metanoia, a new way to behave?

Meditation 24: Re imaging Love and Racial Healing - How does black people being "quick to forgive" accommodate white people?

Week 4 - Going Below the Surface

Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate there is a pool, called in Hebrew Beth-zatha, which has five porticoes. In these lay many invalids—blind, lame, and paralysed. One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been there a long time, he said to him, 'Do you want to be made well?' The sick man answered him, 'Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; and while I am making my way, someone else steps down ahead of me.' Jesus said to him, 'Stand up, take your mat and walk.'
John 5:2-8 (NRSV)

Readings: Meditation 25 - Meditation 33

KeyPoints

- Trespassing, betrayal, and healing - do not come into someone's space and take what you like.
- A pilgrim is more than an ally - how deeply do you want to commit yourself to this journey?
- Stand with those who suffer.
- What are you willing to give up - how are black shame and fear AND white guilt and blame unhelpful expenditures of energy?
- Children, to do the work of integration was a bad idea- who are we asking to do the work of racial healing today?

Discussion Guide

Meditation 25: No Trespassing - To what extent have you deeply and genuinely cared about your black/brown brothers and sisters?

Meditation 26: Invisibility Blues - What are the challenges to telling the best possible truth?

Meditation 27: Looking for More than an Ally - Being a pilgrim requires that we let go of privilege. What do you need to let go of?

Meditation 28: Trust—If we allow it, Trust will diligently lead us onto better paths. What kind of trust are we talking about here?

Meditation 29: Visibility - What will it take for you to work diligently to be conscious?

Meditation 30: Don't Get Too Weary - How were white men unconscious in their questioning of Supreme Court Nominee Katanji Brown Jackson?

Meditation 31: The System Killed My Little Brother - How does being broken-hearted lead to clarity about our unwillingness to tolerate racist behavior?

Meditation 32: Can We Have a Word? Victims Want to be Heard - What part of privilege that comes from having white skin are you willing to give up so that people with black and brown skin can live without the violence that took over their lives?

Meditation 33: Reflection on Integration - What would creating a space of intentional community look like?

Week 5 - Broken-hearted

Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate there is a pool, called in Hebrew Beth-zatha, which has five porticoes. In these lay many invalids—blind, lame, and paralysed. One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been there a long time, he said to him, 'Do you want to be made well?' The sick man answered him, 'Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; and while I am making my way, someone else steps down ahead of me.' Jesus said to him, 'Stand up, take your mat and walk.'
John 5:2-8 (NRSV)

Readings: Meditation 34 - Meditation 42

KeyPoints

- Deliberate and carefully drawn lines set black and brown people as second-class citizens; these lines have been maintained into the current day.
- We do many things to stay numb, which keeps us in denial. We must be willing to be disturbed and tell the best possible truth. We can tell any story we like, and when it comes to history, it is a good idea to tell the truth.
- The furor around Critical Race Theory is an example of making up a story you want to tell, not the true one. Racism's greatest enemy is the truth, and the media helped to create the firestorm and disinformation around CRT
- The tragedy of displaced communities - Designations of "expendable," "ghetto," and "blighted" prevail because of the power imbalance and racial structures that support them.
- Racial Healing must be supported by memory - When we do not remember, we cannot heal.

Discussion Guide

Meditation 34: Killing Fields - What type of lives can people lead when unmanaged rage, born out of hopelessness and helplessness, continues to this day?

Meditation 35: Broken Hearts Cure Illusion - What does it take to have your heart broken and see through illusions that have maintained systemic privilege?

Meditation 36: The Gift of Being Brokenhearted - How have you avoided seeing history accurately, and what has that resulted in?

Meditation 37: Let Me Tell a Story that I Like - What is the impact of rewriting history to suit the images we want to see?

Meditation 38: Quit Worrying About Critical Race Theory - What do you know about the origins and intentions of CRT?

Meditation 39: The Media Needs to Stop Being Racism's Press Agent - How can you take a stand for truth-telling and truth-seeking with media that is driven by profit?

Meditation 40: Colorism And Ubuntu - What is the impact of determining a person's worth based on their skin tone? To what degree do you do this consciously and/or unconsciously?

Meditation 41: Disappeared Communities: Where Are They Now? How can we use the idea of Ubuntu to create healing energy in our communities?

Meditation 42: Reclaiming Hope Through Remembering - How can we have healing if our memories are informed by falsehoods or, at a minimum, incomplete and/or systemically eliminated history?

Week 6 - Since It's a Journey, Stay Ready to Travel

Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate there is a pool, called in Hebrew Beth-zatha, which has five porticoes. In these lay many invalids—blind, lame, and paralysed. One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been there a long time, he said to him, 'Do you want to be made well?' The sick man answered him, 'Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; and while I am making my way, someone else steps down ahead of me.' Jesus said to him, 'Stand up, take your mat and walk.'
John 5:2-8 (NRSV)

Readings: Meditation 43 - Meditation 48

KeyPoints

- We are not through with race - We are nowhere near being a post-racial country
- Genuine conversations about reparations demand the willingness to consider deep systemic changes in the way that all systems are structured
- Putting your feet into "shoes of another" - the main point of awakening is that you see things differently
- "Do you want to be healed?" This is a choice we can all make and it is the beginning of racial healing. Getting well means breaking the bonds of captivity
- Activism must be grounded in inner change to be sustainable

Discussion Guide

Meditation 43: On the Road Again - What was your reaction to Obama being elected president with respect to racism?

Meditation 44: George Floyd Died, So You Need to Stand Still - What does your soul need you to do?

Meditation 45: Covid-19 Invited Us - How do you think the pandemic influenced the reaction to George Floyd's death?

Meditation 46: Do You Really Want Reparations or Not? - What do we have to do in the United States to change our understanding of having expendable people?

Meditation 47: Sick and Tired of Being Sick and Tired - We are all responsible for ourselves. Do you want to be well?

Meditation 48: Our Island Home Needs Us - Are you willing to make a commitment to equity?

Afterword-Are you willing to do the inner work and move from that inner work to outward activism?

What key points do you want to take away from this book study?

What actions will you commit to going forward?

APPENDIX

Prayer Resources

Collect #21, BCP p. 260: For Social Justice

Almighty God, who created us in your image: Grant us grace fearlessly to contend against evil and to make no peace with oppression; and, that we may reverently use our freedom, help us to employ it in the maintenance of justice in our communities and among the nations, to the glory of your holy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Prayer# 27 BCP p. 823: Social Justice

Grant, O God, that your holy and life-giving Spirit may so move every human heart [and especially the hearts of the people of this land], that barriers which divide us may crumble, suspicions disappear, and hatreds cease; that our divisions being healed, we may live in justice and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer #36 BCP p. 826: For the oppressed

Look with pity, O heavenly Father, upon the people in this land who live with injustice, terror, disease, and death as their constant companions. Have mercy upon us. Help us to eliminate our cruelty to these our neighbors. Strengthen those who spend their lives establishing equal protection of the law and equal opportunities for all. And grant that every one of us may enjoy a fair portion of the riches of this land; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer #62 BCP p, 833: Prayer attributed to St. Francis

Lord, make us instruments of your peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; Where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.

Thanksgiving #7 p. 840: For the Diversity of Races and Cultures

O God, who created all peoples in your image, we thank you for the wonderful diversity of races and cultures in this world. Enrich our lives by ever-widening circles of fellowship, and show us your presence in those who differ most from us, until our knowledge of your love is made perfect in our love for all your children; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Ideas for Further Reflection

Week 1

- Find a person to walk this journey with you and hold you accountable.
- Purchase a journal for your reflections on this work.
- Answer the questions in Meditation 112 at the top of p.11.
- Answer the questions in Meditation #4 on the bottom of p. 22.
- Answer the questions in Meditation #5 on the top of p. 29.
- Answer the questions in Meditation#6 on the top of p. 34.

Week 2

- What narratives do you need to leave behind to become more conscious?
- How comfortable are you with uncertainty, non-permanence, and paradox?
- Answer the questions in Meditation #8 in the middle of p. 41.
- Answer the questions in Meditation #9 on the bottom of p. 46.
- How does the denial of race/racism become a negative force? Why might you be afraid to see the truth about racism?
- Answer the questions in Meditation #11 in the middle of p. 53.
- What is your reaction to interracial love and marriage? What narratives do you have about it?
- Answer the questions in Meditation#14 in the middle of p.66

Week 3

- Reflect on a time when you tried to change an oppressive system. How did you seek to understand the desires of that community? What does it mean to "model agency" for communities you wish to help/serve?
- Journal about how "Beloved Community is truly a gift from God?"
- Think about where you are in this conversation? Are you getting tired of it?
- Reread pp 88-89. Answer the questions on p.89.
- Reread p. 91 and write down what stands out for you, including how it made you feel.
- Think about your church community. Is it a truly loving community? Is it trustworthy? What might need to change?
- Practice speaking only if it improves on silence.
- Read the bottom of p. 100. What frightens you about the journey to creating authentic community? Excites you?
- Journal about having the courage to hear whatever black and brown people need to say about race and their experience.

Week 4

- Reflect on the archetypal wounding, grieving, and ancestral memory that has been passed on from generation to generation. Have there been times when you did or did not stand up for a "friend "in the face of abuse? How did that feel? How did that shape you?
- Reread pp.110 - 111 and Journal your reactions.
- Answer the questions at the bottom of p. 116. Moving outside of our comfort zones is required and often frightening - are you willing to do that?
- Reflect and journal your answers to the questions at the top of p.120.
- Read the top of p.124 and journal your reactions.
- How do you think a white woman would have been questioned differently during Supreme Court nominee hearings?
- What is your reaction to this statement: "One of the most profound lessons that any of us can learn is to separate ourselves from the collective even as we work to see how we are related to it?"
- Reread Meditation #32. What feelings come up for you? What thoughts come up for you? How, if at all, do you want to defend yourself?
- Reread the bottom of p.138 thru the top of p.139. Do some additional research on the roots of the modern system of law enforcement and its roots in the need to recapture people during the era of slavery.
- Answer the questions on p. 143.

Week 5

- What do you think it is like to be a child who believes that people have given upon them and that there is a good chance that they will not live to see their eighteenth birthday?
- Reread the top of p.151 and journal about your reactions and feelings.
- Reread the top of p.154 and journal about your reactions and feelings.
- Reread p.158 and journal about your reactions and feelings.
- Do some research on CRT and explore the fundamental questions of the theory listed on p.161
- Journal about the tragedy of colorism and the powerful notion of Ubuntu.
- Answer the questions on the bottom of p.174 and top of p.175
- Research the history of lynching and its intentions. How does mass incarceration (people of color receiving excessive/disproportionate punishment) continue racial terror?

Week 6

- Read the last paragraph on p.186. Answer the question posed and make note of your reactions to the claims made.
- Answer the questions on the bottom of.189 and on p.190.
- Reread p.194 and journal your thoughts, feelings, reactions.
- Think about what makes you peaceful and imagine that to be true for every person no matter the color of their skin.
- Stand still and ask the Creator what we're called todo.
- Think about what you need to ask honest questions and to allow your heart to stay open to hear the answers.
- Answer the questions on p. 204.
- Reflect on where light is shining now in your hfe where it was not shining before. What can you do so that this light shines ever bnghter as you move forward?