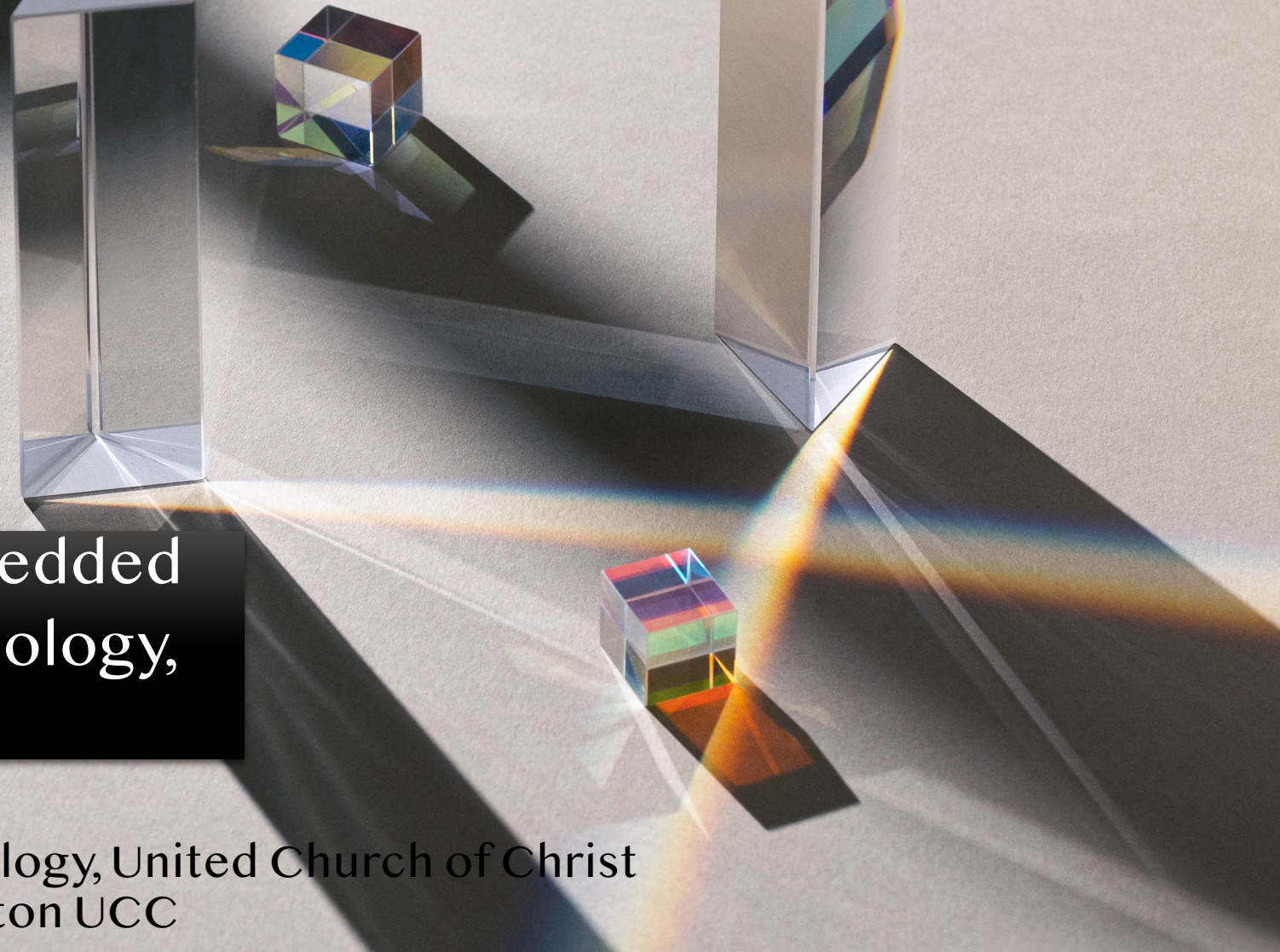


Reflecting or Refracting The Holy

Discovering Racism Embedded in Christian Worship, Theology, and Practice

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Genesis 1:27

**God created humanity
in God's own image,
in the divine image God created them,
male and female God created them.**

Revelation 7:9–12

9 After this I looked, and there was a great crowd that no one could number. They were from every nation, tribe, people, and language. They were standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They wore white robes and held palm branches in their hands.

10 They cried out with a loud voice:

“Victory belongs to our God
who sits on the throne,
and to the Lamb.”

11 All the angels stood in a circle around the throne, and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell facedown before the throne and worshipped God, 12 saying,

“Amen! Blessing and glory
and wisdom and thanksgiving
and honor and power and might
be to our God forever and always. Amen.”



Reflecting – To throw back without
absorbing

Refracting – To change direction/bend

Genesis 1:27

**God created humanity
in God's own image,
in the divine image God created them,
male and female God created them.**

Reflecting – To throw back without absorbing

Reflect	Refract
Mirrored image	Altered image
Judgment neutral	Negative judgment
Affirming	Alienating
Egalitarian and Mutual	Supremacist and Divisive
Inclusive and Expansive	Rejecting and Segregating
Kindom	Colonialism/Human Power Systems

Refracting – To change direction/bend

Confronting Racism in the CHURCH

Worship
Theology
History | Practice | Tradition

Reflecting or Refracting The Holy

Exegete the Service

How does your faith community reflect The Holy?

How does your faith community refract The Holy?

Reflecting or Refracting The Holy



Exegete the Service
Images



Exegete the Service Images



Exegete the Service

Language

In the velvet darkness, darker than a thousand midnights down in a cypress swamp, this luminous darkness, this radiant blackness, the wholly black and holy black womb of God pulsed life into the world against a tapestry of holy life-giving darkly radiant blackness, shaping, molding, knitting, coalescing earthstuff from starstuff from Godstuff. All before uttering the first word.

Reflecting or Refracting The Holy



Exegete the Service

Language

Some of our fear of the dark is ancient and instinctual from a time when we were not sure the sun would return from setting or storm or eclipse: Stay with us Lord of Light for the night is dark and full of terrors. The prayer to the Red God on Game of Thrones is in many ways the perfect embodiment of this and perhaps a worthy Advent prayer, (at least in a service where There's a Light Over at the Frankenstein House from the Rocky Horror Picture Show is the Advent hymn). But some of our fear of the dark is carefully calculated and mercenary.

Reflecting or Refracting The Holy



Exegete the Service

Language

Some lost sight of or chose not to see the beauty of the diversity of creation having lost the memory of their own ancestral African roots and, when encountering a suddenly much larger world saw that our black beauty was valuable, profitable, salable. Then beginning in 1619 on this continent those ancient fears were seized upon and weaponized to build this nation on a foundation of slavery and genocide and the rhetoric of blackness became all that was wrong in the world just as Malik el-Haj al-Shabazz taught us when he was Malcom X: blackball, black sheep, blackmail, black hearted, black people.

-- Wil Gafney, PhD, *Holy Blackness: The Matrix of Creation* ([Sermon Excerpts](#))

Reflecting or Refracting The Holy

Exegete the Service

Centered Voices

How does your faith community refract The Holy?

Reflecting or Refracting The Holy

Exegete the Service

Appropriation

How does your faith community refract The Holy?

Reflecting or Refracting The Holy

Exegete the Service

Images | Language | Cultural Norms | Appropriation
Stereotypes | Scholarship | Hospitality
Leadership | Centered Voices | Intersectionality

How can **your faith community** reflect **The Holy**?

Reflecting or Refracting The Holy

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE, ANTIRACIST AND JUST PEACE CONTENT POLICY

The United Church of Christ is committed to inclusive and expansive language with respect to God and to people. The use of only masculine nouns and pronouns for God and of masculine generic terms for humankind has hidden the gender rich imagery for God and God's people in scripture. The rediscovery of gender-neutral terms (Rock, Shepherd, Fountain of Life), complementary female and male imagery as well as queer metaphors in the Bible enrich our faith and experience of God's presence in the world and with us.

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE, ANTIRACIST AND JUST PEACE CONTENT POLICY

The UCC recognizes that throughout our history, the church has been complicit in institutionalizing racism in worship when we only use liturgy and music that is almost exclusively of European descent. As in the rich imagery as we speak of God, we encourage the use of music and language that enhances the richness and fullness of the expression of all God's people all around the world. We ask that all songs offered in the context of congregational singing are located historically (circa year) and culturally (language group and geographic region or country of origin) in addition to citing the composer.

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE, ANTIRACIST AND JUST PEACE CONTENT POLICY

The UCC also recognizes that throughout history, the Church has often been a tool of colonization and cultural destruction. This is antithetical to the Gospel of Jesus and the Liberating Love of God. We ask that contributors (writers, speakers and musicians) consider this history and turn away from metaphors of empires and military conquest as a way to speak about God's love and the movement of the Holy Spirit on earth. We encourage expansive imagery that is faithful to the Gospel of Jesus and demonstrates living and life-giving relationships and helps us imagine the reign of God on earth, in us and in the kin-dom and community God's love creates.

Reflecting or Refracting The Holy

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE, ANTIRACIST AND JUST PEACE CONTENT POLICY

Antiracist, Just Peace and inclusive language is a fundamental issue of social justice. Language that is truly inclusive affirms sexuality, racial and ethnic background, stages of maturity, and degrees of limiting conditions. It shows respect for all people. Scripture proclaims the world is created, redeemed, and sustained by the Word of God, and the church attests to the power of language and words, recognizing that words have the power to exploit and exclude as well as affirm and liberate. We ask contributors to consider all of these things while also balancing respectively contributor's customs, artistry and creative expression.

We thank you for providing leadership as we engage in transforming lives and creating a more just, equitable, and peaceful world for all of God's people.

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Questions?
Thoughts?
Commitments?

