

# HUMAN RELATIONS DAY

YOUTH RESOURCE GUIDE



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## WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?

Event ideas for youth to celebrate Human Relations Day

**H**uman Relations Day falls near the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday in the U.S. Capture the spirit by encouraging “a day on, not a day off” with youth-led ideas. Please be sure to keep in mind safe sanctuary and public health concerns in your area:

### Host a racial justice focused watch party.

Invite each youth to develop a conversation starter or question for discussion after the film.

Recent movies include:

“Selma”

“Harriet”

“John Lewis: Good Trouble”

“Just Mercy”

“The Hate U Give”

Or introduce a “throwback”:

“42”

“Remember the Titans”

“A Raisin in the Sun”



### Organize a day of service.

Encourage the youth to serve in the community.

Some ideas include:

- Coordinate a march, rally or vigil to address systemic injustice and dismantle racism.
- Organize a flash mob: shoveling, park cleanup, other outdoor community service activity.
- Set up containers around your community to collect items for the local food pantry
- Show up with signs of gratitude at a nearby hospital, nursing home, fire station or grocery store during the shift change.
- Chalk messages of hope and encouragement on sidewalks or in parking lots (with permission).



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### 30 *days* of ANTI-RACISM

#### Participate in “30 Days of Anti-Racism.”

Review the General Commission on Religion and Race “30 Days of Anti-Racism” resource and create your own calendar with specific actions for your context: <https://r-squared.squarespace.com/library/30-days-of-anti-racism>

#### WORSHIP PLAYLIST

Rend Collective — “Build Your Kingdom Here”

<https://youtu.be/sbdJXKqVgtg>

Common & John Legend — “Glory”  
(From the Motion Picture “Selma”)

<https://youtu.be/KnlozPJWTPM>

Britt Nicole — “Ready or Not”

<https://youtu.be/fccqaKTz3Ko>

Matthew West — “Do Something”

[https://youtu.be/b\\_RjndGOIX8](https://youtu.be/b_RjndGOIX8)

Darnisha Taylor — “God of This City”

[https://youtu.be/oqvZxN1P\\_6s](https://youtu.be/oqvZxN1P_6s)

Fort Washington Church — “What Does the Lord Require of You?”

[https://youtu.be/2XonFo0\\_gWM](https://youtu.be/2XonFo0_gWM)



#### GROUP OPENING AND ICEBREAKER

- This exercise is adapted from Passport Media <http://getstarted.passportcamps.org/mlk-dream/>

Welcome the youth as usual. In your welcome, include an introduction to Human Relations Day:

One of the wonderful aspects of The United Methodist Church is that we can do so much more together than we ever could do on our own. Today we join with other congregations to receive the Human Relations Day Special Sunday offering.

Our gifts are part of building beloved community through faith-based volunteer programs, community developers and programs that work with at-risk teens. As society begins to recover from a health and financial crisis, these programs are vital in strengthening communities that are most impacted.

Human Relations Day always falls on Martin Luther King Jr. weekend. King was a Christian pastor, and many of his famous speeches were actually sermons. We often hear words and quotes



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that are attributed to him but forget that they originated in Scripture.

Half of you will receive a paper with a quote written on it. The other half will receive a card with a Scripture passage on it. Find the person who matches your card.

**Quote:** “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” — from “Loving Your Enemies,” 1957

**Scripture:** MATTHEW 5:43–48, CEB

**Quote:** “But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!” — from “I Have a Dream,” 1963

**Scripture:** AMOS 5:24



**Quote:** “Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain.” — from “I Have a Dream,” 1963

**Scripture:** ISAIAH 40:4–5

**Quote:** “Weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning.” — from “I Have a Dream,” 1963

**Scripture:** PSALM 30:5

**Quote:** “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” — from “I Have a Dream,” 1963

**Scripture:** GALATIANS 3:28

**Quote:** “I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.” — from “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” 1963

**Scripture:** GALATIANS 6:17

**Quote:** “But recognize that he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. (Amen) That’s a new definition of greatness.” — from “The Drum Major Instinct,” 1968

**Scripture:** MATTHEW 23:11



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# HUMAN RELATIONS DAY

## YOUTH RESOURCE GUIDE

**Quote:** “Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that.” — from “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop,” 1968

**Scripture:** 2 CORINTHIANS 4:6



**SCRIPTURE: LUKE 10:25-37, CEB**

Assign different roles for a readers’ theater experience of this familiar story:

**Narrator:** A legal expert stood up to test Jesus.

**Lawyer:** “Teacher, what must I do to gain eternal life?”

**Jesus:** “What is written in the Law? How do you interpret it?”

**Lawyer:** “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself.”

**Jesus:** “You have answered correctly. Do this and you will live.”

**Narrator:** But the legal expert wanted to prove that he was right, so he said to Jesus,

**Lawyer:** “And who is my neighbor?”

**Narrator:** Jesus told this story:

**Narrator 2:** A man went down from Jerusalem to

Jericho. He encountered thieves, who stripped him naked, beat him up, and left him near death. Now it just so happened that a priest was also going down the same road. When he saw the injured man, he crossed over to the other side of the road and went on his way.

**Narrator 3:** Likewise, a Levite came by that spot, saw the injured man, and crossed over to the other side of the road and went on his way.

**Narrator 4:** A Samaritan, who was on a journey, came to where the man was. But when he saw him, he was moved with compassion. The Samaritan went to him and bandaged his wounds, tending them with oil and wine. Then he placed the wounded man on his own donkey, took him to an inn, and took care of him.

The next day, he took two full days’ worth of wages and gave them to the innkeeper. He said, “Take care of him, and when I return, I will pay you back for any additional costs.”

**Jesus:** “What do you think? Which one of these three was a neighbor to the man who encountered thieves?”

**Lawyer:** “The one who demonstrated mercy toward him.”

**Jesus:** “Go and do likewise.”



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# HUMAN RELATIONS DAY

## YOUTH RESOURCE GUIDE



### **Message: Samaritan Lives Matter**

If time permits, consider watching this “Daily Show” interview with Derek Black: <https://youtu.be/S7xFtzT88dw>

College student Matthew Stevenson was the only Orthodox Jew at his college. To provide structure in his own faith journey and to raise awareness for non-Jewish students, he hosted a small weekly Shabbat dinner at his home for anyone open-minded enough to attend.

In the fall of 2011, Matthew invited Derek Black, a student who had been ostracized by other students, to join him. Derek had been raised as a White Nationalist and even hosted a weekly radio program that expressed these hateful views.

When the other students found out, they rejected him. Understandably, this was not someone they wanted to hang out with. But Matthew, one of the only Jewish people in the school, invited Derek Black, a White Nationalist, into his home for Shabbat.

As Derek sat at dinner week after week with people whom he had worked so hard to destroy, he began to experience their humanity.

Over the next few years, the racism and anti-Semitism that had poisoned him began to be undone through the relationships that he was building. Finally,

he renounced his position with a public apology, writing, “The things I have said as well as my actions have been harmful to people of color, people of Jewish descent, activists striving for opportunity and fairness for all. I am sorry for the damage done.”

This idea of “love your neighbor as yourself” sounds simple, but the reality of it can create a challenging tension. What Matthew Stevenson did by inviting Derek Black to his home required incredible courage and humility.

And, frankly, Derek Black must have been quite lonely to have the courage to respond. The reward in this relationship paid off as both the humanity and the dignity in each person were recognized.

If we cannot even have a conversation with people who have a different moral compass than our own, how can we begin to find common ground? And when I say, “conversation,” I don’t mean arguing until you change the other person’s mind. And it also doesn’t mean excusing a point of view that is harmful.



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# HUMAN RELATIONS DAY

## YOUTH RESOURCE GUIDE

We just heard the familiar parable that that we know as the story of the Good Samaritan.

Jesus is tested by a lawyer, asking him questions to see how he will answer.

An expert in the Mosaic law, the lawyer asks.

*“What must I do to inherit eternal life?”*

And quoting the Hebrew Scriptures, the man answers his own question, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind. AND Love your neighbor as yourself.”

To illustrate what it looks like to be a neighbor, Jesus responds with a story of a man who is traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho.

He doesn’t mention the ethnicity of the man, though it is likely Jesus’ audience would imagine him as Jewish since we naturally tend to imagine people who look like us as the default image.

Jesus doesn’t point out that, perhaps, the man should have been better prepared to protect himself or that he should have found a way to avoid falling into the hands of robbers.

He is a man beaten, robbed and left for dead on the side of the road.

And we hear that a high priest sees him and passes on the other side. Now it may be that the high priest is doing what he felt was right. After all, the man is nearly dead, and if the priest touches a dead body, he will be ritually unclean.

So, he does what the law tells him and avoids the man.

Then another high-profile religious man — a Levite — comes along and also passes on the other side. I wonder if he is afraid that it is a setup or a scam. He avoids the situation and continues on his way.

In a scandalous turn of events, a Samaritan is the next person to come along. The Jews and Samaritans have a mutual disdain for each other. They consider each other enemies.

I wonder if the injured man is frightened as the Samaritan approached. *In his vulnerability will the man spit on him, kick him, or worse?*

But in this story, the Samaritan is the hero. He puts aside his own prejudice and sees a man in



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# HUMAN RELATIONS DAY

## YOUTH RESOURCE GUIDE

desperate need. He isn't concerned that maybe some Jewish people will see him and accuse him of hurting the man.

He isn't worried about bumping into one of his Samaritan friends who might roll their eyes at this act of mercy. He is living out eternal life — the kingdom of God right now.

And I wonder how the presumably Jewish man who is helped might respond to Samaritans in the future. Perhaps, he will be an up-stander instead of a bystander the next time he sees a Samaritan being ridiculed or treated unfairly by a Jewish person.

Maybe the Priest and the Levite are justified in their actions. They have their reasons for not helping. But the Samaritan is the one who goes above and beyond. The perceived enemy is the one who gives up some of his own comfort and privilege.

In response to Jesus' question, "Which of these three was the neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" the lawyer cannot even name the Samaritan.

Instead, he refers to him indirectly, "the one who showed mercy." And Jesus responds, "Go and do likewise."

Friends, we are called to do likewise. We are called to name and respond to the ones who are experiencing pain and alienation.

It is not enough to cross the road and ignore the injustice. It is not enough to try to avoid being racist or sexist or homophobic. As people of faith — as followers of Jesus — we are called to be peace builders and healers.

This weekend we celebrate the life of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., and we celebrate United Methodist Human Relations Day.

As Christians, particularly those of us who benefit from privilege, what does it look like to be moved by compassion to actively tear down unjust systems and build God's realm?

I wonder: *Who are the people you need to sit down with and just be reminded of their humanity — their hopes and fears?*

*Who have you nurtured a dislike for or treated poorly and justified that treatment in your mind?*

Please hear that I am not suggesting that you open yourself to abuse or harm. And, perhaps,



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# HUMAN RELATIONS DAY

## YOUTH RESOURCE GUIDE

there are people in your life for whom a simple smile or “hello” would be a welcome gesture and then could grow from there.

*Maybe there are people with whom you normally wouldn't sit, but what would happen if you bridge that divide by joining them in conversation?*

*Where are the broken relationships that could begin to be repaired, if only you would take the risk to reach out?*

Our neighbor is every human being who is created in the image of the Divine. Through crossing boundaries and forming unlikely partnerships, we begin to experience full and abundant life.

In loving God and loving neighbor, we find salvation — not in some far away heaven but here and now as the beloved community emerges because we nurture it with God's peace with justice.

“The neighbor is the one who showed mercy.”  
Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

In the name of our compassionate and merciful God, may we go and do likewise.  
Read about Human Relations Day ministries.

Break into groups for discussion:

### Small-Group Discussion

- The opening sermon illustration was about a White Nationalist who changed his mind because people who didn't agree with him still extended kindness to him. As he got to know the people whom he previously thought were inferior, he recognized that he was wrong. When have you said or done something that you later realized was expressed because of prejudice?
- Many issues are dividing the United States. How do you interact with people who believe differently than you?



Assign each group one of these articles to read and then discuss the questions below:

- <https://www.umcmmission.org/share-our-work/news-stories/2020/august/community/multicultural-church-s-history-inspires-support-for-immigrants>
- <http://emorybeaconoflight.org/index.php/programs/>
- <http://www.umcgiving.org/impact-articles/improving-literacy-for-buffalos-poor>



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## YOUTH RESOURCE GUIDE

- In the article you read, what are some of the societal factors that contributed to or ignored the suffering of neighbors? Which factors or institutions might have operated like thieves?
- In the article you read, how do you see the church at work as a neighbor to the community?
- What are some areas of injustice that you see in your community?
- Are there people in your community with whom you don't usually talk? What are some questions that you might ask them?
- What was the good news you heard in the Scripture reading today?

### OFFERING



The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. said, "Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others?'" Human Relations Day offers a concrete response.

Today we offer back a portion of what God has given to us. Through our Human Relations Day offering, we become a neighbor to communities like those we read about in our small groups. You are invited to give generously, trusting that in community, they will be multiplied to strengthen relationships with God and with God's people, each of whom is our neighbor and made and known by God.



### Take it into the world

Write down one prayer request for a dream you have for the community (church, school, neighborhood or town). Post it on the board in the front of the room. When you leave today, take someone else's prayer with you and pray with them throughout the week.



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