Walking the Way of Love:
A journey through the Baptismal Covenant

Session 4:
Go - Beyond Discrimination

“Seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself.”
# Table of Contents

Introduction 2  
Objectives 2  
Sample Outline 3  
The Baptismal Covenant Promise and Way of Love Step 4  
Preliminary Discussion Questions 4  
Bible Study 4  
  - Bible Passages 4  
  - Quotes 4  
  - Discussion Questions 5  
Human Rights Content: Discrimination 6  
  - Reviewing Galtung’s Triangle of Violence 6  
  - What is Discrimination? 6  
  - Kinds of Discrimination 8  
  - Example: “The Doll Tests” 8  
  - Addressing Discrimination: Positive formation as a form of discipleship 9  
Spotlight Congregation 11  
  - Background 11  
  - Journaling 11  
  - Questions 11  
Group Discussion Questions 11  
Evaluation 11  
Additional Information 11  
Materials 12  
  - Powerpoint Presentation 12  
  - Handouts 12
Session 4: Beyond Discrimination

Introduction
We are called by God, to Go out into the world, to cross boundaries, real or perceived, to love all our neighbors. The Baptismal Promise to “Seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself,” compels us not only to Go, but to have our hearts transformed by meeting Christ in all people. The human rights principles of equality and non-discrimination will assist us, as we try more fully to live into this promise, and see where we may be falling short. Together, we will discuss ways to ensure that “all” means “all,” and that no one is excluded from our work or discriminated against in our lives.

General Objective
Connect our commitment to “Go” and “Seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself” to the human rights principles of equality and non-discrimination.

Specific Objectives
1. Participants will review the link between discrimination and violence
2. Participants will identify discrimination as they have experienced and contributed to it
3. Participants will explore racial formation as a model for ensuring equality and non-discrimination
4. Participants develop ideas for ensuring equality and non-discrimination in their worship, mission and ministry
Sample Outline

This guide has a variety of materials that you can use (or not use) to facilitate a study of the Way of Love and the Baptismal Covenant. Below is a sample outline of a 90 minute session using the materials provided in this guide. Feel free to use the sample provided, or to develop your own session using the materials in this guide and online.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Instructions</th>
<th>Materials</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 min.</td>
<td>Opening Prayer</td>
<td>● Open the session in prayer or ask a volunteer to do so</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>o Ground the session in our faith and ask the Holy Spirit for guidance</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 min.</td>
<td>Greeting</td>
<td>● Welcome everyone to the space and briefly explain the objective this session</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>o Make sure everyone is on the same page and in agreement with the objectives</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Share the corresponding Baptismal Covenant Promise and Way of Love Step</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 min.</td>
<td>Preliminary Questions</td>
<td>● Ask participants to separate into pairs and reflect on the preliminary questions</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>o Share opinions and ideas in a low-stakes setting</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>o Begin critically reflecting on the subject matter</td>
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<td></td>
<td>o Apply the subject matter to your personal life</td>
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<tr>
<td>20 min.</td>
<td>Bible Study</td>
<td>● Share the Bible verses with participants</td>
<td>Bibles</td>
<td>o Share opinions and ideas in a higher-stakes setting</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Have participants respond to the discussion questions</td>
<td></td>
<td>o Reflect critically on the connections between two familiar subjects; the Baptismal Covenant and the Bible</td>
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<tr>
<td>20 min.</td>
<td>Human Rights</td>
<td>● Deliver the presentation on Discrimination</td>
<td>Presentation, Computer, Projector, Projector Screen, Triangle of Violence Handout</td>
<td>o Introduce human rights as a tool for fulfilling this promise</td>
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<td></td>
<td>o Develop a basic understanding of discrimination</td>
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<td></td>
<td>o Connect human rights to a faith commitment</td>
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<td>15 min.</td>
<td>Churches in Action</td>
<td>● What is your church doing?</td>
<td>Journal, notebook or paper</td>
<td>o Evaluate your own church, given what you have learned.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>● Ask the accompanying discussion questions</td>
<td></td>
<td>o Reflect critically on the connections between familiar and new concepts</td>
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<tr>
<td>20 min.</td>
<td>Final Discussion</td>
<td>● Continue with final discussion questions</td>
<td>Journal, notebook or paper</td>
<td>o Think of new ways to apply human rights concepts in our lives and work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 min.</td>
<td>Closing Prayer</td>
<td>● Close the session in prayer or ask a volunteer to do so</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>o Close the session renewing our commitment to our faith</td>
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Baptismal Covenant Promise

Seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself.

The Way of Love

Go: Cross boundaries, listen deeply and live like Jesus

Preliminary Questions

Ask participants to divide into pairs and answer the following questions. Participants may share with the whole group after discussing in pairs if they like.

1. How do you live out this promise?
2. What does the step Go mean to you? To cross boundaries? To listen deeply?
3. How does our church live out this promise to Go as a community of faith?

Bible Study

Introduce the Bible passage(s) associated with the Baptismal Covenant Promise and ask participants the discussion questions.

Bible Passages

All Bible passages are taken from the NRSV translation except where otherwise noted.

Matthew 25:31-46

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’ Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?’ Then he will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”
Luke 10:25-37
Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he said, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him, “What is written in the law? What do you read there?” He answered, “You shall 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 your neighbor as yourself.” And he said to him, “You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.”

But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, ‘Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.’ Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

Discussion Questions
Lead a discussion of the Scripture passages. Below are some sample discussion questions:

1. What does it mean to love our neighbor?
2. Why is this important?
3. Who are our neighbors? Who are today’s Samaritans? Who are the “least of these”?
Human Rights Lesson

Note to Facilitator: This information is provided for your background. There is not time to cover it all. Use these notes, or the slides to remind you of the topics and summarize.

Begin the presentation by asking “What is discrimination?” After gathering some thoughts, begin the presentation by reviewing Galtung’s Triangle of Violence.

A Review of Galtung’s Triangle of Violence

Here is a brief review of the three kinds of violence described in Galtung’s Triangle of Violence. See Session 2 for more details.

**Direct Violence** involves a clear victimizer and victim. It may consist of the use of physical force, like killing or torture, rape and sexual assault, and beatings. It can also include verbal or psychological abuse. Direct violence is personal, visible, and manifest.

**Structural Violence** is the unequal distribution of wealth, power, and access to goods, resources, and opportunities in favor of certain groups, classes, genders, nationalities, and/or races. This unequal advantage is built into the very social, political, and economic systems that govern societies, states, and the world.

**Cultural Violence** is reflected in our attitudes and assumptions about one another and about the world. It is difficult to see and identify cultural violence because it is so pervasive that it feels natural to us, and because it can be difficult to identify one responsible party.

What is discrimination?

**Discrimination** is a form of violence that manifests when we treat individuals and groups differently because of a group, class, nationality, gender, race, etc. to which they belong. It manifests in all three categories of violence.
Prejudices and “-isms” (racism, sexism, ableism, etc.) are examples of cultural violence. They are harmful attitudes and beliefs about certain groups of people. Again, these are all interrelated. Prejudices and “-isms” justify the discriminatory structures and acts of direct violence against members of these groups.

**Structural violence** is committed when we encode these beliefs into our institutions. An extreme example is slavery, which is a structural manifestation of the belief that some human beings are so inferior it is legally permissible to own them. A less obvious example is racially-targeted voter ID laws, where certain government IDs more likely to be owned by black people than white people are not seen as valid for the purposes of casting a vote (e.g. public housing IDs are not accepted but driver’s licenses are).

Discrimination becomes direct violence when an individual commits an act of violence against another person because of a group or category to which they belong. Using racial slurs or sexist language is an example of direct violence; targeting another person because of their race, sex, class, ability, etc.

Discrimination manifests in attitudes and stereotypes that are either explicit or implicit.

**Attitudes** are how we feel about a certain group, idea, thing, person, etc. Whether we like or dislike something.

**Stereotypes** are specific beliefs or associations we have about something. This could be the stereotype that cops like doughnuts or that science is a field of study for men not for women. Stereotypes translate into actions when we assume the gender of a scientist based on our stereotype whether we recognize this or not.

**Explicit** biases, attitudes, stereotypes and actions are deliberate and intentional. We are aware of our explicit biases against certain groups or individuals and often justify these biases these biases. This could be something harmless like saying we don’t like math because we find it boring, or it could be explicit racism if someone admits to thinking people from Latin America generally have a bad work ethic.

**Implicit** biases, attitudes, stereotypes and actions are not intentional. They are biases that we don’t recognize in ourselves. We don’t notice the ways our subtle assumptions and prejudices influence our beliefs, attitudes and actions. If we say we aren’t racist, but still get nervous around black people, we have an implicit racist bias.

We all have implicit biases because of the world in which we live. The way we are taught to understand the world through media, family, school, and even religion make these beliefs and attitudes seem normal and natural. Many of us don’t even realize that these are learned behaviors and not instinctual or factual. We can even be conditioned to discriminate against our own group, race, sex, etc. This lifelong process of learning and conditioning is called **formation**. At some point in time, these biases
have probably influenced our actions and speech, whether we realized it in the moment or not.

Because we are all capable of acting in discriminatory ways and holding discriminatory beliefs without being aware, we must take active steps to recognize and address these attitudes and beliefs.

**Kinds of Discrimination**
Discrimination manifests in a variety of ways. Below are several definitions of different categories of discriminatory beliefs, attitudes and prejudices, and some examples of their expression.

- **Sexism**: Discrimination against someone based on their sex
  - Ex. Taxing tampons, pads, etc. as “luxury goods” despite being a basic necessity for a females

- **Racism**: Discrimination against someone based on their race
  - Ex. The over-policing of black neighborhoods

- **Adultism**: Discrimination against youth/children (with a preference for “adults”)
  - Ex. Corporal punishment; the idea that there are human beings who deserve to be beaten because they are children

- **Ageism**: Discrimination against the elderly (with a preference for younger adults)
  - Ex. Addressing comments or questions to younger adults accompanying an elderly person

- **Ableism**: Discrimination against someone based on their ability (against people with a “disability”)
  - Ex. Lack of wheelchair ramps or other options for those who can’t use stairs

- **Classism**: Discrimination against someone based on their class
  - Ex. Believing that the poor must be poor because they are lazy

- **Heterosexism**: Discrimination in favor of opposite-sex sexuality (against other kinds of sexuality)
  - Ex. The assumption that heterosexuality is “normal” as opposed to homosexuality

**Example: “The Doll Tests”**
What does discrimination look like? How can we measure discrimination? How are we conditioned to hold discriminatory biases?

To understand better these questions, let’s look at the example of “The Doll Tests.”

In the 1940s, psychologists Kenneth and Mamie Clark designed and conducted a series of experiments known colloquially as “the doll tests” to study the psychological effects of segregation on African-American children. This test has been repeated formally and informally numerous times since its development to disturbingly similar results even within the past decade.
Watch the following video from min. 4:30-7:22: https://youtu.be/tkpUyB2xgTM?t=272, or simply explain the test.

The researchers had two dolls, one black and one white, and asked children to identify which doll had certain characteristics. They asked questions like “Which is the good doll?” “Which is the bad doll?” “The pretty doll?” “The ugly doll?” and finally, “Which doll looks most like you?”

In almost all runs of the test, children—both black and white, as well as children of other races—tend to identify the negative characteristics with the black doll and positive characteristics with the white doll. In the original test, when black children were asked to identify which doll they most looked like, many became visibly upset or even refused to answer the question. It is clear from this test that from a very early age we receive the message that people of color are inferior to people with white skin, and that this message is internalized not just by white people, but even by people of color themselves. When we internalize these ideas, we no longer have to think about them consciously; they just exist in our subconscious and guide our judgments and actions.

In the example of these children, we can see that the process of formation molds us from a very young age. We may find it difficult to recall a time when we did not see certain “normal” beliefs as natural. Once we recognize this, however, we must address our own discriminatory tendencies both as individuals but also as institutions, societies, and communities of faith.

Positive formation as a form of discipleship

“Following Jesus will and must change every aspect of our being. At the core will be our reconciliation with God, but this can never be complete until we are at peace with ourselves, in vital communion with the whole Body of Christ, in a renewed relationship with the whole human family, and discovering a new harmony with creation as a whole.”

The Most Rev. Ng Moon Hing
Bishop of the Diocese of West Malaysia
Primate of the Church of the Province of South East Asia

The first step in responding to discrimination is naming and acknowledging it, even and especially if we are responsible as individuals or organizations for this discrimination. The next step is to develop a strategy for addressing discrimination and preventing discriminatory attitudes from continuing.

One example is through positive formation as a form of discipleship. As detailed above, formation is the process by which we construct our understanding of the world. As our ideas and beliefs are formed, social norms, media, family values, friends, schools and church influence our formation. By developing new ways of formation that aim to counter discrimination, we can address the sources and causes of discrimination.
When we incorporate intentional formation around race, gender, sex, religion, etc. into our discipleship, we are shaping ourselves spiritually to be more accepting, loving and Christlike. This goes beyond “spiritual formation” and touches every aspect of our being. Because religion, faith and the Church are such big parts of our formation already, the Church is in a unique position to serve as a source of formation to counteract discrimination.

Often we talk about “reconciliation” instead of “formation” (as in “racial reconciliation”). Reconciliation typically points towards a past time when things were good, before relationship was broken. With issues like racism, sexism, ableism, etc., it can be difficult and often impossible to find a previous time when we did not act discriminatorily, or acted less discriminatorily. Thus, “reconciliation” may be a flawed model, whereas understanding positive formation as a form of discipleship may point us not towards a fictional past of harmony, but the possibility of a better future.

Once we decide to incorporate formation around marginalized groups into our discipleship, we must identify and implement ways to include others and ensure that all voices are heard. We do this by including diverse leadership in our faith communities and designing programming which honors and recognizes those who have been historically marginalized. We must unlearn the assumptions we have about race, sex, gender, religion and culture, and develop new narratives which more accurately reflect the inclusiveness of the Kingdom of God. In doing so, we can deconstruct the prejudices which divide us and develop relationships based on equality and respect.

As we address discrimination, it is important to focus not only on our individual accountability, but to hold institutions (including and perhaps especially the Church) accountable for structural discrimination.
Spotlight Congregation: You

Preparation
Doing work ahead of time will make this conversation richer. Determine, through talking with the leadership of your congregation ahead of time, what are some stories that could lead to positive discussion. Choose one or two stories, and screen people to tell those stories. Story-tellers should be coached to speak from their own perspective and experience, and not speak on behalf of or generalize the perspective of other groups.

If there is a nearby congregation that has made more progress in this area than your congregation, consider inviting a few people from that congregation to come tell their story.

Storytelling / Large Group Discussion
Questions for large group discussion (or prompts for stories):
1. How has your congregation reached out across boundaries in your community?
2. How is diversity welcomed or celebrated in your parish?
3. When have assumptions been questioned or new narratives encouraged?
4. Has repentance or reconciliation taken place for wrongs of the past?

Small Group Discussion Questions
Seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself.
1. How do we connect this baptismal promise with our life as a congregation?
2. How can the human rights principles of non-discrimination and equality help us?

Journal Reflection
Take a time of personal reflection, allowing participants to gather their thoughts by journaling, note taking, or thinking.

Prompt
1. Key ideas that influenced me
2. Where do I see these ideas in my own life
3. How have we been victims and/or perpetrators of discrimination in the past?

Final Group Discussion Questions
Continue in group discussion with the following questions:
1. How do we understand the connection between this baptismal promise, Scripture and human rights?
2. How have we been victims and/or perpetrators of discrimination in the past?
3. How does Galtung’s Triangle of Violence help us understand discrimination? How does it help us construct ways to address discrimination?
4. How can we apply positive formation in our lives?
5. What is the role of discipleship in the Church?
6. How can we transform our mission and ministry as a community of faith using these concepts?
Additional Information

If your participants want to learn more, check out the following resources:

- [https://centeraisle.blog/2018/07/09/racial-formation-not-racial-reconciliation/#comments](https://centeraisle.blog/2018/07/09/racial-formation-not-racial-reconciliation/#comments)