

# Beloved Conversations

## Meditations on Race & Ethnicity



**Beloved Conversations** is an experiential curriculum that provides a space to heal the spiritual and organizational wounds that racism causes in our faith community. The program aims to foster cross-cultural relationships that nurture the spiritual health of program participants, their congregations, and the communities beyond their walls.

The program begins with a 1.5-day retreat in a congregational space, and is followed by eight seminars shaped to raise consciousness about the workings of personal and structural racism, identify faulty ideologies and practices therein and, finally, lead the group in developing new practices that embody UU values in service of building a racially just world. Particular care is given to the spiritual and faith formation needs of People of Color as well as those socialized into White racial/ethnic identities.

Each of the eight seminars is a two hour, highly structured experience. The theoretical framework is nested in the educational theories of Transformative Teaching and Learning, Critical Pedagogy, and Critical Race Theory, all of which are informed by our UU Sources and Principles. The retreat is facilitated by a Beloved Conversations staff person; the following eight seminars are led by members of the congregation who possess strong skills in pastoral care and small-group facilitation. The weekly work is done in the tradition of small group ministry, wherein 10-12 participants covenant to meet, reflect and then find ways to integrate new insights into their lives. Larger congregations often sponsor multiple groups running at the same time.

Each of the 8 seminars is an arts-based learning environment that uses music, visual arts, film, poetry, and theater techniques to connect learners with the problems and possibilities of living into a multi-cultural, multi-racial and theologically diverse faith community.

While Beloved Conversations has been well received in over 100 UU congregations, it is not a magic solution to “solving” a congregation’s work on the impact and damage that racism does to people and communities. The curriculum works best as one strategy among many to dismantle systems of oppression, foster new and reconciled relationships across racial lines, and forge a more promising pathway toward achieving the aims of Beloved Community.

The curriculum addresses the following topics:

- The Personal and Institutional History of Race & Ethnicity in Your Community (two sessions)
- Racism Today: Micro-Aggressions
- Rehearsing Cross-Cultural Skills to Combat Racism
- Congregational Relationships with Communities of Color
- Power & Process: How Institutional Change Happens in our Congregations
- Prophetic Vision: Towards a Multicultural Congregation in Solidarity with the World
- Building the Bridge Between our Present and our Future

### **Scheduling Beloved Conversation in your Congregation**

As a facilitated experience of faith formation, Beloved Conversations requires attention to a wide range of cultural/racial, intellectual, spiritual, theological, demographic and developmental factors. By purchasing the curriculum, you will receive:

- Permission to use the curriculum over and over again; curriculum updates are free of charge;
- An on-site opening retreat, led by a Beloved Conversations staff person;
- Four hours of coaching to develop an individualized congregational plan and address issues unique to your congregation;
- Access to web-based training videos for congregational facilitators;
- Membership in the Beloved Conversations Network, which includes support calls for congregational leaders.

In addition to the price for the curriculum and retreat, congregations should anticipate additional costs for miscellaneous retreat expenses and travel and housing costs for the Retreat Leader; this facilitation fee is required for each iteration of the curriculum. All proceeds (beyond coaching fees, travel, and lodging) are returned to the Fahs Collaborative for development of future learning experiences that expand the sense of human possibility.

**For more information or to schedule a retreat,**  
contact the Congregational Coordinator at:  
[BelovedConversations@meadville.edu](mailto:BelovedConversations@meadville.edu)

