

*“Where Now for Visible Justice?”*

## Curriculum and Methodology Booklet



## North America–Turtle Island Regional Ecumenical Theological Institute

 THE CANADIAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES  
LE CONSEIL CANADIEN DES ÉGLISES

 NCC  
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN THE USA

*With the accompaniment*

 **World Council  
of Churches**

Where Now for Visible Justice?

Curriculum and Methodology Booklet NATI-RETI 2026

Edited by David Montealegre, NATI-RETI 2026 Co-director

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## Introduction

### Programme Overview

NATI-RETI 2026: the North America–Turtle Island Regional Ecumenical Theological Institute is a two-week residential program that brings together 50 emerging Christian leaders from across Canada and the United States. Jointly organized by the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC) and the National Council of Churches USA (NCC), with the accompaniment of the World Council of Churches (WCC), NATI-RETI 2026 unfolds under the central theme: “Where Now for Visible Justice?”

The program takes place from August 3 to 16, 2026, beginning in Detroit, Michigan (Week 1) and continuing in Toronto, Ontario (Week 2). Detroit and Toronto serve as living classrooms: two cities shaped by migration, industrial transformation, racial history, and diverse faith communities, offering participants immediate and embodied engagement with the program’s themes.

Participants who have enrolled for academic credit will receive credit equivalence for the course Global Ecumenical Theology, awarded by the *Toronto School of Theology*, while all others will receive a certificate of attendance.

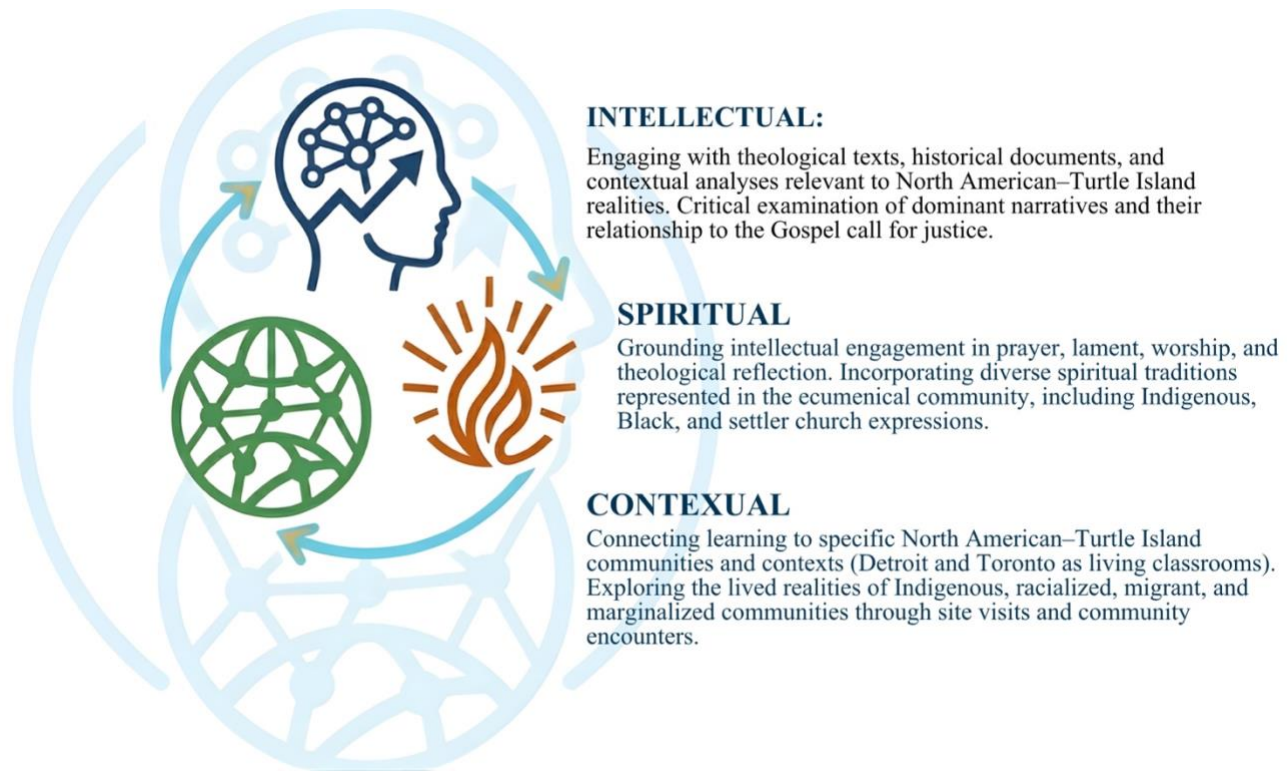
### Overall Learning Objectives

NATI-RETI 2026 aims to equip participants with the theological grounding, analytical competencies, and practical skills to engage questions of visible justice in their ecclesial, ecumenical, and civic contexts. By the end of the program, participants will be able to:

- Articulate a theologically grounded vision of visible justice that draws on diverse ecumenical, Indigenous, and contextual theological traditions
- Analyze the structural dimensions of injustice in North American/Turtle Island societies, including the legacies of colonialism, racism, economic inequality, and ecological crisis
- Apply the three-tiered methodological approach (Intellectual, Spiritual, Contextual) as an integrative framework for theological reflection and community engagement
- Engage across differences of confession, culture, denomination, and religious tradition in the service of shared ecumenical witness
- Develop concrete action plans for justice-oriented ministry, advocacy, and community engagement in their home contexts

## Methodological Considerations

All NATI-RETI 2026 modules are built on the three-tiered methodological approach inherited from GETI 2025. This approach ensures that learning is simultaneously intellectually rigorous, spiritually grounded, and contextually relevant.



## Innovative Learning Practices

NATI-RETI 2026 draws on a repertoire of participatory and experiential learning practices adapted from the GETI 2025 model and enriched by the North American ecumenical context. These include:

- Small group facilitation: participants are organized into small groups of approximately eight, each guided by a dedicated facilitator, for sustained engagement with pillar content over two days
- Case studies: contextually grounded ethical and theological case studies that invite participants to apply frameworks to concrete situations drawn from North American ecclesial and civic life
- Biblical-theological engagement: close reading of biblical texts through multiple interpretive lenses, including decolonial, womanist, Indigenous, and ecumenical approaches
- Circle method dialogue: structured conversation practices that emphasize attentive listening, shared accountability, and the integration of diverse perspectives
- Contextual immersion: site visits, walks, and community encounters in Detroit and Toronto that ground theological reflection in lived urban realities
- Creative and liturgical reflection: opportunities for artistic, liturgical, and contemplative expression that integrate intellectual and spiritual dimensions of learning
- Action planning: participants conclude each pillar with concrete commitments for ministry, advocacy, and community engagement in their home contexts

## Programme Structure: The Six Thematic Pillars

NATI-RETI 2026 is structured around six thematic pillars, each addressing a critical dimension of the central theme, “Where Now for Visible Justice?” Each pillar unfolds over approximately two days, with participants spending four hours per day in their assigned small groups, guided by a dedicated facilitator.

### 6 Pillars NATI-RETI 2026



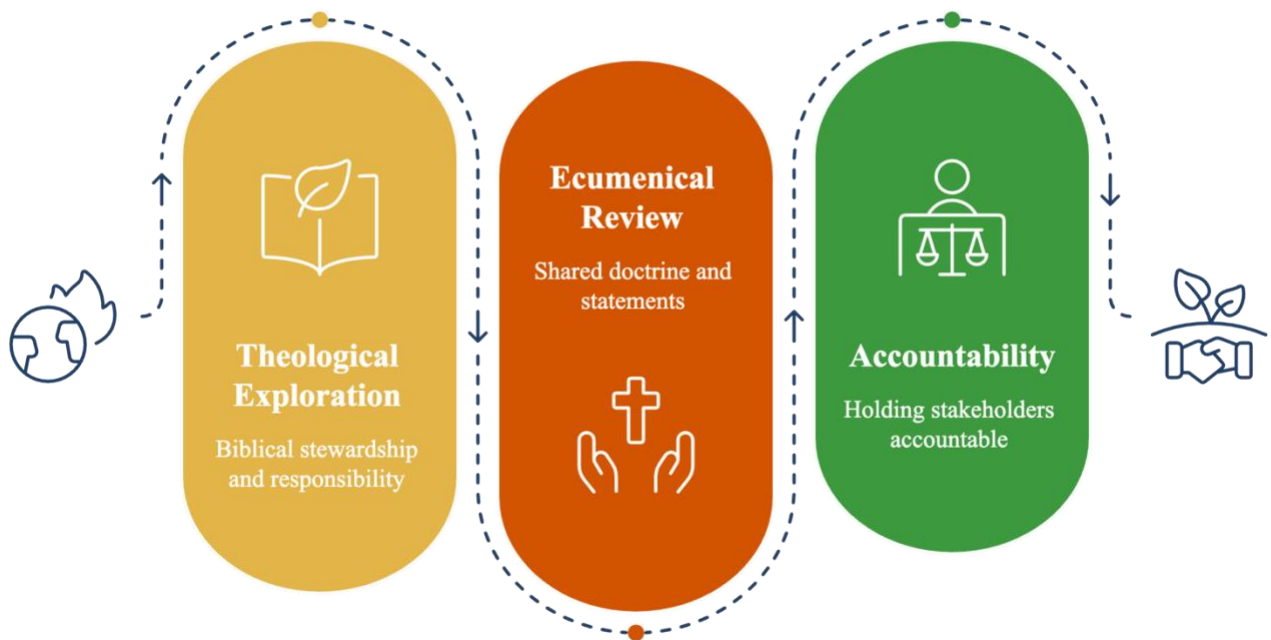
# Pillar 1: Climate Justice

## A. Pillar Description

This session invites participants to delve deeply into an exploration of Climate Justice through the accompaniment of theological and practical methods of addressing pressing issues through thought-provoking reading, engaging discussions, and synthesizing discourse into communal action. As two of the world’s economic superpowers, we will identify our individual and collective responsibilities to working on solutions to our ecological crisis, inspired by our shared Trinitarian faith, and discern effective ways to hold stakeholders in the public square accountable.

We will address what it means to be a steward of the Earth and creation from a biblical foundation. From there we will examine our roles as Christians in taking responsibility and action to not only slow down, but to reverse the catastrophic trajectory we have been accelerating in recent years. We will review ecumenical statements and shared doctrine to help guide the conversation. We will also take a cursory look at how the theology and anthropology of White Christian Conservatives is among the largest threats to ecological stewardship, strongly observed throughout the United States. Participants will, hopefully, conclude the RETI with a newfound purpose in teaching ecological awareness, continuing education, and acting. As Christians, this is one of our most pressing themes of collective action, which directly impacts the present and future generations. We are all stakeholders.

## Pillar 1: Climate Justice



## B. Three-Tiered Methodology

Tier	Description of Application for This Pillar
<b>Intellectual</b>	Participants will engage ecumenical theological statements and US/Canadian research studies that address the climate crisis, our responsibilities as Christians to prevent further destruction and help bring about positive change, as well as exploring methodologies for tackling these tough conversations with our communities of faith and social relationships.
<b>Spiritual</b>	Spending time outdoors during small group work will assist in connecting the theoretical and theological with the practical and experiential. When we spend time outdoors — in nature or in a city center — we are able to bridge the mind-body-spirit with our senses enlivened by the elements. We will share our prayer and traditions that encourage both lament and hope for the state of the Earth and climate.
<b>Contextual</b>	The resources used for this pillar are primarily derived from US and Canadian sources both in and outside of the Church. As often as possible, Indigenous/First Nations voices are lifted up to help guide the conversation and encourage a deeper connection and appreciation for the land. The participants, while spending one week in the US and one week in Canada, will experience their contexts on campus and off, affording an opportunity for NATI-RETI to come to life.

## C. Learning Objectives and Intended Learning Outcomes

	Learning Objectives (What learning opportunity this pillar aims to provide)	Intended Learning Outcomes (What participants will be able to do after this pillar)
<b>Knowledge The content of your learning</b>	This pillar will be an opportunity for participants to read through pertinent documents on climate change and UN-level efforts to affect necessary change. Participants will learn about relevant themes highlighted from scripture to substantiate why all Christians need to be actively involved in solutions.	After this pillar, participants will be able to intellectually discuss the statements and results of international climate action and solutions since the Paris Agreement was first enacted and will support their knowledge with scriptural foundations and theology. For lay and ordained leaders alike, this synthesis will equip individuals with compelling arguments for helping to lead congregations and ministries through change.
<b>Competence The application of learning to specific situations</b>	During this pillar, participants will learn to examine texts from both a theological and scientific perspective not encumbered by socio-political agenda.	Participants will be able to engage intellectually and thoughtfully with the primary topic of the Climate Crisis and sub-topics with more substantiated claims supported by faith and science. Participants will feel more comfortable having difficult conversations with those who disagree.
<b>Skills The abilities developed during learning</b>	Participants will gain skills to navigate difficult conversations by learning how to present theological beliefs and scientific evidence to establish a compelling stance on the climate crisis, as well as use these newfound skills to act.	Participants will create action plans that can be applied to their ministry, educational, or social settings, and will implement the knowledge and competence developed and honed during this RETI.

## D. Guiding Questions

- What are your experiences in the US or Canada as it relates to climate conscientiousness and action within your church and residential communities? Could the church be doing more?
- Name a few ways residents of the US and Canada can learn from the Indigenous/First Nations Peoples' respect and value specifically related to the land and creatures therein. How can this also be a source of restorative justice?
- How does the institutional Church play a role in navigating our current ecological crisis?
- In what ways do political tensions impact Christian climate action? How do we overcome discrepancies?
- Name one action or change that you can commit to, in your church or community, or both, that is likely to be sustainable from an effort standpoint.

- Jesus often speaks about creation and being a good steward. What are some ways that we can follow the teaching of Luke 12:42-46?
- In what ways does a successful or failed approach at ecological crisis management impact humanity? The most vulnerable? Animals? The rest of creation?

### E. Key Themes and Topics

- Ecology and Theology: how caring for the climate, our planet, and all of creation are core aspects of Christian doctrine and necessary practice
- The climate: 25 years of radical temperature shifts, weather phenomena, and the relationship with church and society
- Ecumenical initiatives addressing the climate and ecology through the CCC, NCC, and WCC
- Parsing climate justice and ecological responsibility from politics: addressing how corporate power and political interests dictate national commitments to the Paris Agreement
- Climate Crisis as a hierarchy of needs crisis: food, water, and shelter for all walks of life
- Ecological justice for local communities through actionable steps
- Combating anthropogenic aspects of the climate crisis: environmental impacts of war, oppression, and genocide (Palestine, Congo, Sudan, and more)
- Effects of AI data centers on water usage and environmental impacts

### F. Learning Activities

Activity Description	Format
Participants will identify factors related to climate change — sea-level, water temperatures, climate/weather patterns, agricultural production — from the year they were born and their state/province of birth. Each participant or small group will present the findings to the large group.	Small Group Work and Discussion
Participants will explore their church/communion’s resources as available online and will share with the group what resources or statements have been made about the climate crisis, critically evaluating their scope and commitments.	Small Group Work and Large Group Discussion
Participants will take a walk in small groups around the interior and exterior of the campus, making observations about “green” initiatives on campus and in the immediate vicinity and reflecting on the theological significance of built and natural environments.	Small Group Walk and Post-Activity Discussion
Participants will discuss sermon/teaching opportunities to address the climate crisis — including courses of action, theological tenets, and scientific studies — for children, young adults, and congregants who may be more opposed to or disbelieving in climate-related ecological issues.	Small Group Work

### G. Biblical and Theological Anchors

Text / Reference	Relevance to This Pillar and NATI-RETI Context
<b>Colossians 1:15-17</b>	This passage connects Christ to creation, both as creator and redeemer — grounding the Christian call to ecological stewardship in the cosmic lordship of Christ over all things visible and invisible.
<b>Sirach 43</b>	This wisdom text gives glory to God for the whole order of creation. The call to honor all of creation and to use all of our strength in praise of the Creator grounds ecological stewardship in the deepest currents of the Jewish and Christian wisdom traditions.
<b>The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed: “We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible”</b>	This foundational statement for all Trinitarian Christians ties the care for creation and the climate to belief in God the Creator. Our ecological responsibilities are not peripheral concerns but flow from the heart of Christian confession.
<b>September 1st — Orthodox Feast of Creation (proposed through WCC)</b>	The Feast of Creation, emerging from the Orthodox tradition and embraced ecumenically through the WCC, reframes the beginning of the

Text / Reference	Relevance to This Pillar and NATI-RETI Context
	liturgical year as an occasion for celebrating and lamenting the condition of the created order — a profound resource for ecological worship and advocacy.

## H. Readings and Resources

### Required Readings

1. Brooks, Tasha, and Leighton Gall. “Navigating Climate Change in the Indigenous Economic Ecosystem.” Canadian Climate Institute, June 13, 2025. <https://climateinstitute.ca/publications/navigating-climate-change-in-the-indigenous-economic-ecosystem/>
2. Government of Canada. 2025 Progress Report on the 2030 Emissions Reduction Plan. Canada.ca, March 11, 2026. <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/environment/weather/climatechange/climate-plan/climate-plan-overview/emissions-reduction-2030/2025-progress-report.html> (Sections 1-4.1 and 6.3.9)
3. Hart, David Bentley, and John Chryssavgis. *For the Life of the World: Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church*. Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2020. (Sections 41, 61-67, 76, 77)
4. Jewell, Michelle. National Climate Assessments. SECASC, July 14, 2025. <https://secasc.ncsu.edu/2025/07/14/national-climate-assessments/> (Chapters 2, 8, 12, 20)
5. Robra, Marin. “Climate Change.” World Council of Churches, January 1, 2005. <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/climate-change> (pp. 5-40, 65-78)

### Further Readings

- LWF, WCC, ACT Alliance. “COP26 Ecumenical Preliminary Analysis.” Act Alliance, 2021. <https://actalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/COP26-ECUMENICAL-PRELIMINARY-ANALYSIS-END-OF-SUMMIT.pdf>
- NCC. “God’s Sacred Earth: A Renewed Commitment” (2024). <https://nationalcouncilofchurches.us/common-witness/gods-sacred-earth-a-renewed-commitment-2024/>
- Peters, Steven. “Climate Change, Colonization and Community Organization.” Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, September 1, 2020. <https://mashpeewampanoagtribe-nsn.gov/september-2020-mittark-blog/2020/9/1/climate-change-colonization-and-community-organization>
- “Shinnecock Nation and Rising Tides.” New York State Climate Impacts Assessment, February 1, 2024. <https://nysclimateimpacts.org/explore-the-assessment/case-studies/shinnecock-nation-and-rising-tides/>
- Yanez-Barnuevo, Miguel. “Data Centers and Water Consumption.” EESI, June 25, 2025. <https://www.eesi.org/articles/view/data-centers-and-water-consumption>
- Weir, Doug. “How Does War Damage the Environment?” CEOBS, May 20, 2025. <https://ceobs.org/how-does-war-damage-the-environment/>

### Audiovisual and Digital Resources

- “How Much Environmental Damage Is Israel’s War on Gaza Causing?” Inside Story. Al Jazeera. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6OT8t1UGDdg> [Video]
- “Science Talk: Canada’s Inuit Communities and Their Interconnected Crises: Water, Health, and Housing.” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lSob9c9H19s> [Video]
- “Feast of Creation.” World Council of Churches. <https://www.oikoumene.org/news/the-feast-of-creation-an-eastern-orthodox-gift-to-the-whole-church> [Video]
- Environmental Impacts of AI Data Centers [Infographic — to be provided by facilitator]

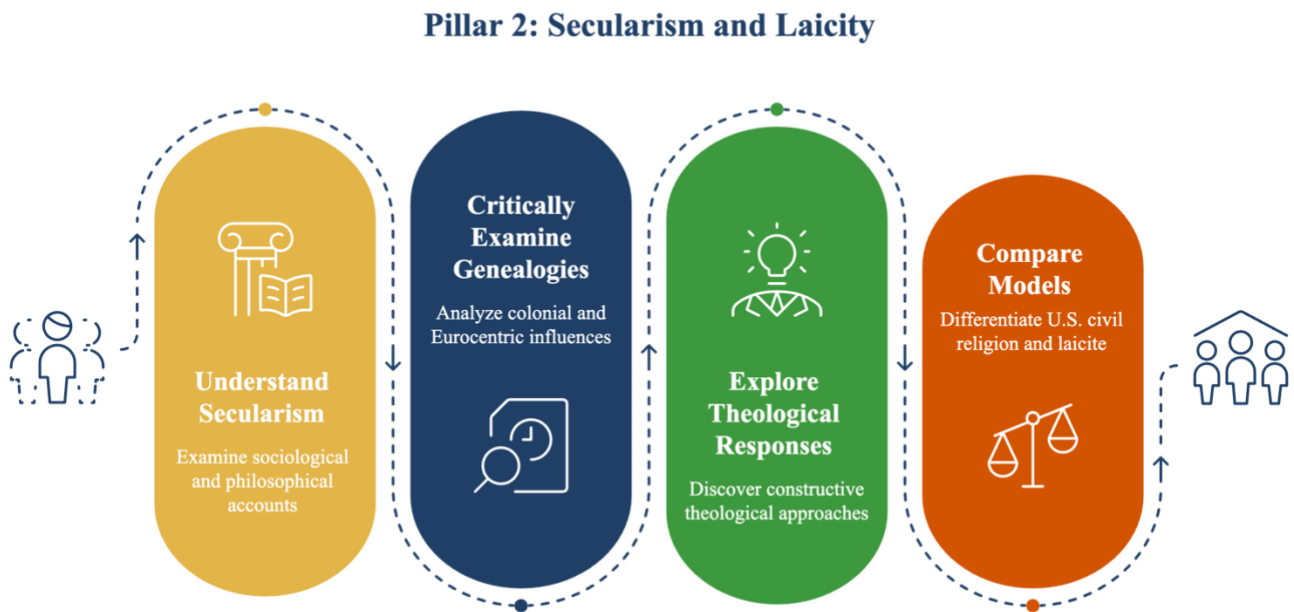
## Pillar 2: Secularism and Laicity

### A. Pillar Description

This module introduces participants to the conceptual, historical, and theological landscape of secularism and laicity in contemporary North American societies. It asks how Christian communities can speak and act faithfully in contexts where religious claims are no longer the default public language — and where the very meaning of the “secular” is contested.

Participants will engage foundational sociological and philosophical accounts of secularization, critically examine the colonial and Eurocentric genealogies of the secular, and explore constructive theological responses to secular public life. Special attention is given to the divergence between U.S. civil-religious models and Canadian or Quebecois frameworks of laicity, asking whose definitions of the secular have shaped North American public life and who is marginalized by them.

Far from treating laicity as the mere absence of religion, this module invites reflection on laicity as a potential positive framework for plural coexistence — and on the ecumenical resources available for reimagining faith’s public role beyond both theocracy and irrelevance.



## B. Three-Tiered Methodology

Tier	Description of Application for This Pillar
Intellectual	While the relationship between the secular and the sacred used to be thought of as a firm line, the relationship has come to be understood as much more permeable. Participants will engage the history of the development of this relationship and examine how it has changed over time, analyzing foundational texts and theoretical frameworks for understanding secularism and laicity in North American contexts.
Spiritual	Different religious traditions understand the relationship between the sacred and the secular differently. Participants will reflect on their own tradition’s understanding of how the sacred and the secular interact, and discern how their faith communities navigate increasingly pluralistic and secular public spaces.
Contextual	The question of the sacred in the public space has always been contested. Participants will explore how the relationship between the sacred and the secular has influenced politics over time, and will analyze contemporary movements such as Christian Nationalism to unpack their understanding of this relationship and its impact on public policy in both Canada and the United States.

## C. Learning Objectives and Intended Learning Outcomes

	Learning Objectives (What learning opportunity this pillar aims to provide)	Intended Learning Outcomes (What participants will be able to do after this pillar)
<b>Knowledge The content of your learning</b>	Participants will learn about secularism and laicity movements and how they have impacted both the church and the wider society. This includes engagement with sociological, philosophical, and theological accounts of secularization and its divergent expressions in U.S. and Canadian/Quebecois contexts.	Participants will be able to articulate a broad understanding of these movements and their impacts, distinguishing between different models of the secular and their implications for public religious expression.
<b>Competence The application of learning to specific situations</b>	During this pillar, participants will learn to analyze ideas of secularism and laicity in contemporary political contexts, with attention to the contested character of secular arrangements and their differential effects on religious communities across North America.	Participants will articulate the impact of secularism and laicity movements on the contemporary political and religious landscapes, and engage critically with movements such as Christian Nationalism that seek to re-sacralize political power.
<b>Skills The abilities developed during learning</b>	During this pillar, participants will construct their own understanding of the relationship between secularism and the sacred, drawing on theological, historical, and contextual resources to develop a grounded and nuanced public theology.	Participants will be able to articulate their understanding of this relationship and apply it to contemporary situations in the church and the public sphere, equipping them for faithful ministry in pluralistic and secular contexts.

## D. Guiding Questions

- How do we understand the relationship between the sacred and the secular, and how has this understanding changed over time?
- How does the particular political environment of 21st-century North America/Turtle Island impact our understanding of these ideas?
- What role should the church play in society to help individuals and institutions navigate these questions?
- How has the decline in church attendance in recent decades influenced our understanding of religion’s role in the public square?
- If this decline in church attendance and institutional religious affiliation continues, what impact will it have on the church’s continued role in these questions?
- Whose definitions of the secular have shaped North American public life, and who is marginalized by prevailing frameworks of laicity?
- What ecumenical resources are available for reimagining faith’s public role beyond both theocracy and irrelevance?

## E. Key Themes and Topics

- The relationship between the secular and the sacred: historical development and contemporary expressions
- Religion in the public square and government policy in Canada and the United States
- Impacts of the increasing secularization of society on ecclesial identity and mission
- Laicity as a framework for plural coexistence: possibilities and limitations
- Christian Nationalism and the contested boundaries of the secular in North American political life
- Colonial and Eurocentric genealogies of the secular: whose definitions shape the public square?

## F. Learning Activities

Activity Description	Format
Analyzing key texts for definitions and historical development of secularism and laicity, tracing the genealogy of the concept from Western modernity to its current North American expressions.	Small Group Work
Exchange about the secular and the sacred in your countries and churches: participants share contextual reflections on how the relationship between religious identity and public life is experienced in their own denominational and civic contexts.	Small Group Work
Mapping Commonalities and Differences: reporting on results from small group discussions and gathering data on the diversity of experiences with secularism and laicity across the Canadian and U.S. contexts represented by participants.	Large Group Discussion
Analyzing findings within theological frameworks: bringing the contextual data gathered into conversation with theological and ecumenical resources for constructing a faithful public theology in secular and pluralistic contexts.	Large Group Discussion

## G. Biblical and Theological Anchors

Text / Reference	Relevance to This Pillar and NATI-RETI Context
<b>Luke 4:18-19 / Isaiah 61:1-2</b>	Jesus’s inaugural sermon in the synagogue announces the Year of Jubilee as the animating vision of his ministry. This text speaks directly to the public and political dimensions of the Gospel, challenging any reading of faith that would confine it to the private sphere and offering a prophetic basis for the church’s engagement in the public square.
<b>Acts 5:29 / Romans 13:1-7</b>	The tension between Peter’s declaration — “We must obey God rather than human beings” — and Paul’s call for deference to governing authorities opens the central question of this pillar: how do Christian communities navigate the relationship between ecclesial and civic authority? This tension generates the ecumenical conversation about the legitimate boundaries of secular power and faithful public witness.
<b>National Council of Churches — “The Problem of Religious Nationalism, in the US and Globally: A Policy Statement” (October 2024)</b>	This statement explicitly addresses the dangers of conflating religious authority with political power in the North American context. It provides ecumenical grounding for the church’s commitment to responsible engagement with secular democracy, distinguishing prophetic public witness from theocratic political ambition.

## H. Readings and Resources

### Required Readings

6. Taylor, Charles. “The Bulwarks of Belief.” Chapter 1 in *A Secular Age*. New York: Belknap Press, 2007.
7. Kato, Julius-Kai. “Discerning Religion’s Holistic Character and Ecumenical Capability in a Pluralistic Society.” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 58, no. 4 (2022): 524-543.
8. Akande, Rabiati. “Neutralizing Secularism: Religious Antiliberalism and the Twentieth-Century Global Ecumenical Project.” *Journal of Law and Religion* 37, no. 2 (2025): 268-318.

9. National Council of Churches. “The Problem of Religious Nationalism, in the US and Globally: A Policy Statement.” Adopted October 18, 2024. <https://nationalcouncilofchurches.us/common-witness/the-problem-of-religious-nationalism-in-the-us-and-globally-a-policy-statement-of-the-national-council-of-churches/>

### Further Readings

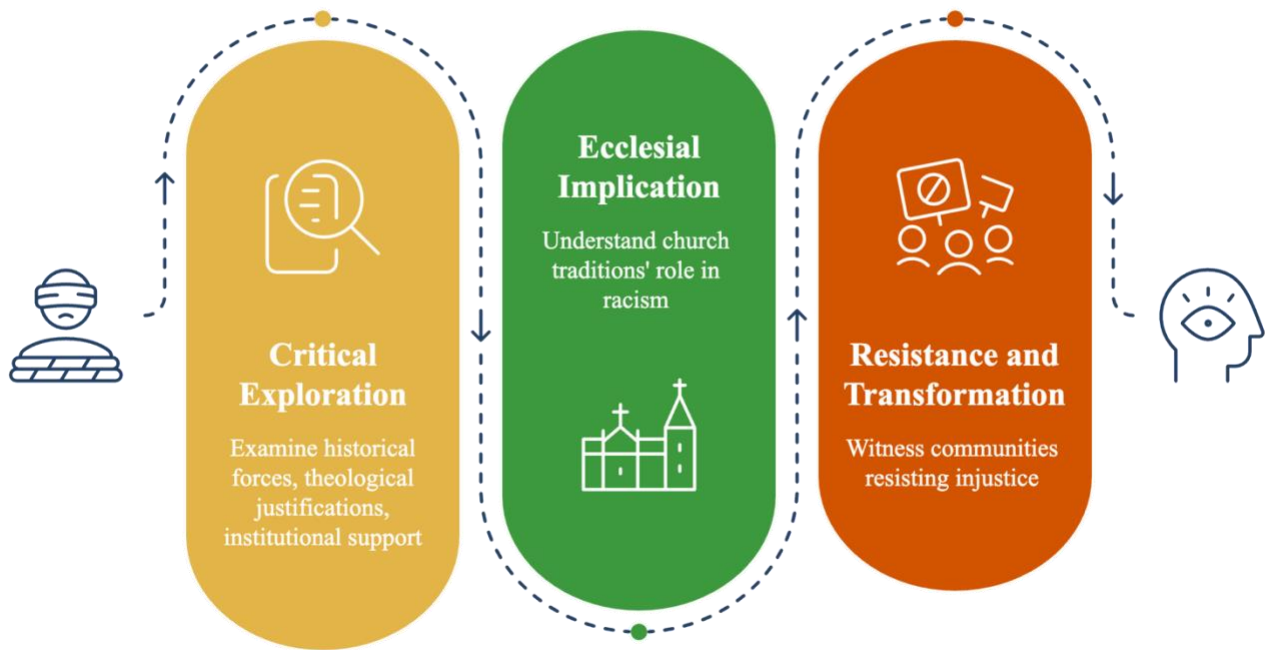
- Balibar, Etienne. *Secularism and Cosmopolitanism: Critical Hypotheses on Religion and Politics*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2018.
- Fiala, Andrew. *Christian Nationalism and the Paradox of Secularism*. Leiden: Brill, 2025.
- Gorski, Phillip S. and Samuel Perry. *The Flag and the Cross: White Christian Nationalism and the Threat to American Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022.
- Schmidt, Leigh Eric. *The Church of Saint Thomas Paine: A Religious History of American Secularism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021.
- Shrubsole, Nicolas D. “Secularization, Dispossession, Forced Deprivatization: The Conditions of Public Religion and the Protection of First Nations’ Sacred Space.” *Studies in Religion* 45, no. 3 (2016): 335-359.

## Pillar 3: Racism and Anti-Racism

### A. Pillar Description

This pillar engages participants in a critical and contextual exploration of racism as a structural reality that continues to shape both society and the life of the church. Moving beyond just individual understandings of prejudice, the pillar examines how historical forces produced racial hierarchies, how theologians justified them, and how institutions sustained them. Particular attention is given to the ways in which ecclesial traditions are implicated in these processes, as well as to the ongoing witness of communities resisting injustice and working toward transformation. Drawing on theological reflection, historical analysis, and lived experience, participants will encounter diverse perspectives that challenge dominant narratives and invite deeper discernment. The North American/Turtle Island context serves as the point of reference, including the legacies of settler colonialism, anti-Black racism, and Indigenous dispossession. Within this framework, the pillar invites participants to consider how questions of justice, reconciliation, and unity are inseparable from the work of confronting racism. This unit emphasizes that anti-racism is integral to Christian discipleship and to the Church’s vocation in the world.

### Pillar 3: Racism and Anti-Racism



## B. Three-Tiered Methodology

Tier	Description of Application for This Pillar
<b>Intellectual</b>	Participants engage key theological, historical, and social frameworks for understanding racism as a systemic and structural reality. This includes examining how theological concepts, ecclesial histories, and cultural narratives contribute to the construction and maintenance of racial hierarchies. Attention is given to developing shared conceptual clarity across diverse contexts.
<b>Spiritual</b>	The pillar incorporates practices of reflection, lament, and discernment as essential to engaging questions of injustice. Participants are invited to consider how spiritual practices can sustain processes of truth-telling, repentance, and transformation, both individually and communally. The emphasis is on cultivating deep postures of humility, attentiveness, and responsibility.
<b>Contextual</b>	Participants explore how racism and anti-racism is expressed within their own social and ecclesial contexts, with particular attention to the realities of North America/Turtle Island. Through contextual analysis and shared dialogue, they identify challenges, resources, and possibilities for transformation. The aim is to connect theological reflection with concrete practices of justice and reconciliation.

## C. Learning Objectives and Intended Learning Outcomes

	Learning Objectives (What learning opportunity this pillar aims to provide)	Intended Learning Outcomes (What participants will be able to do after this pillar)
<b>Knowledge The content of your learning</b>	Participants are introduced to the historical, theological, and structural dimensions of racism, including the role of the church in shaping and responding to these realities. Key concepts such as white supremacy, settler colonialism, and anti-racism are examined within both ecclesial and societal frameworks.	Building on existing knowledge and lived experience, participants will deepen their theological analysis of racism as a structural reality, and sharpen their capacity to name and challenge its ongoing expression within the church and society.
<b>Competence The application of learning to specific situations</b>	Participants expand their capacity to analyze concrete contexts through theological and anti-racist lenses, attending to the ways in which power, history, and identity shape experiences of injustice.	Participants are able to critically assess their own contexts, recognize patterns of systemic injustice, and articulate contextually grounded responses within ecclesial and social settings.
<b>Skills The abilities developed during learning</b>	Participants hone skills in theological reflection, critical engagement with texts and contexts, and dialogue across difference. Emphasis is placed on engaging complex and contested issues with clarity and care.	Participants are able to contribute constructively to conversations on race and justice, engage in practices that support anti-racist transformation, and participate in initiatives that promote more just and inclusive forms of community.

## D. Guiding Questions

- How do the histories of settler colonialism and anti-Black racism continue to shape the North American/Turtle Island context today? How is racism sustained within social and ecclesial structures, and how should it be understood theologically?
- In what ways has your own personal or familial context been shaped by histories of racial exclusion or privilege? Thought experiment: Name a theological idea you’ve assumed was “universal.” Then ask: whose cultural world produced this?
- What forms of accountability and repentance are required when addressing systemic injustice within the church? For example, in Cole Arthur Riley’s chapter on “Repair” (see *This Hear Flesh*), she reflects on Christ’s death as a form of reparation. What do Christian beliefs about Christ’s salvific work on the cross mean for the Church’s guidance on reparations?)
- How might biblical, theological, and denominational traditions inform our responses to racism and injustice?
- What insights emerge from faithful communities that have resisted racial oppression, and how might these shape our broader ecumenical practices? For example, the Belhar Confession was written as a confession of

faith, not a political statement. Does framing anti-racism as a matter of orthodoxy (right belief) change a faith community’s approach to justice compared to framing anti-racism as an ethical concern (right behavior)?

- What challenges or hesitations arise when engaging questions of race within our faith spaces, and how might they be addressed?
- What lived practices of faith and justice might contribute to more just and reconciled forms of shared social and religious life? Framed another way, how do justice and love intersect for you?

## E. Key Themes and Topics

- Theological constructions of race and critiques of white privilege and supremacy
- The church and the historical formation of racial hierarchies
- Anti-Black racism and its structural legacies
- Indigenous dispossession and theological responses to settler colonialism
- Race, power, and leadership within ecclesial structures
- Practices of lament, confession, and reparative justice
- Intersectional dimensions of injustice (race, gender, class, migration)
- Contemporary movements for racial justice and ecclesial witness

## F. Learning Activities

Activity Description	Format
Participants engage in structured dialogue, sharing experiences and perspectives in rotating inner and outer circles, with emphasis on attentive listening and mutual accountability.	Circle Method Dialogue
Small groups examine a contextual case related to racism and the church, identifying key issues and proposing theologically grounded responses.	Case Study Analysis
Participants work with the selected biblical texts, exploring themes of justice, liberation, and reconciliation, and reflecting on their relevance for our contemporary contexts.	Biblical-Theological Engagement
Participants, in groups, develop a short prayer, litany, or creative expression that responds to themes of injustice, lament, and hope, integrating intellectual and spiritual learning.	Creative or Liturgical Reflection

## G. Biblical and Theological Anchors

Text / Reference	Relevance to This Pillar and NATI-RETI Context
<b>Genesis 1:26-27</b>	From the UCC website: <a href="https://www.ucc.org/justice_racism/">https://www.ucc.org/justice_racism/</a> The call to be a multiracial and multicultural church is an acknowledgement that racial justice is the inclusiveness of all humans and never excludes anyone based on skin color, culture or ethnic origin. The United Church of Christ stands in solidarity with the creation narrative in Genesis 1:26-27, which clearly outlines what matters to God—all of humankind and a just world for all.
<b>Luke Chapters 1-4</b>	Connection to Esau McCauley’s “Reading While Black.” See his chapter that gives particular attention to the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55) and Jesus’ appearance in the temple (Luke 4:16-29)
<b>Ephesians 2:14-18</b>	The National Association of Evangelicals cites Ephesians 2:14–18 as evidence that the good news of Jesus Christ has the power to break down racial and ethnic barriers. Their site also offers Racial Justice and Reconciliation resources podcasts, books, and video clips: <a href="https://www.nae.org/topics/racial-justice-reconciliation/">https://www.nae.org/topics/racial-justice-reconciliation/</a>

Text / Reference	Relevance to This Pillar and NATI-RETI Context
<b>Confession of 1967 (see esp. Section 9.44* (see excerpt, below))</b>	Confession of 1967. The theological document has been reaffirmed by Reformed congregations across the years since its first publication in 1967 (most notably the change to inclusive language in 2002. This is a good example of a theological anchor that reflects the theological imagination of Reformed denominations. God’s reconciliation in Jesus Christ is the ground of the peace, justice, and freedom. The confession in its entirety is available here: <a href="https://pcusa.org/sites/default/files/confess671_0.pdf">https://pcusa.org/sites/default/files/confess671_0.pdf</a>
<b>Belhar Confession</b>	<a href="https://www.rca.org/about/theology/creeds-and-confessions/the-belhar-confession/">https://www.rca.org/about/theology/creeds-and-confessions/the-belhar-confession/</a>
<b>Canadian Ecumenical Anti-Racism Network</b>	<a href="https://www.interculturalleadership.ca/the-canadian-ecumenical-anti-racism-network-learn/">https://www.interculturalleadership.ca/the-canadian-ecumenical-anti-racism-network-learn/</a> This network is an expression of Canadian churches working together to support anti-racism programs and educators who are working in member churches, sharing resources and learning among anti-racism educators, and supporting long-term change in Canadian churches and church organizations.

## H. Readings and Resources

### Required Readings

- Jennings, Willie James. *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010. [PRIMARY TEXT] “Introduction,” pp 1-11.  
Jennings examines how race was constructed alongside Christian theology during the colonial period—not just socially but theologically. He challenges Eurocentric theological frameworks in ways that resonate across denominational lines. The invite deep reflection on how Christian formation, mission, and identity have been shaped by racialized thinking.
- McCaulley, Esau. *Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as an Exercise in Hope*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020. Chapter 4, “The Bible and the Pursuit of Justice,” pp. 71-95.
- Riley, Cole Arthur. *This Here Flesh* (New York: Convergent Books, 2022), “Rage,” “Justice,” and “Repair.” This text is accessible and guides learners to internalize the work, bringing their own stories (and prayerful reflection) into the conversation. It invites a balance of head and heart; intellect and spirituality practice.
- Belhar Confession. *Reformed Church in America*, 1982. <https://www.rca.org/about/theology/creeds-and-confessions/the-belhar-confession/>

### Further Readings

- Canadian Council of Churches. *Cracking Open White Identity Towards Transformation: White Identity, Power and Privilege*. Toronto: Canadian Council of Churches, 2024.
- World Council of Churches. *Anti-Bias Churches: An Ecumenical Anti-(Un)Conscious Bias Toolkit: Unlearning—Undoing—Relearning—Redoing*. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2024. <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/publications/anti-bias-churches>.
- Edwards, Dennis R. *Might from the Margins: The Gospel’s Power to Turn the Table on Injustice*. Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2020. Chapter 7, pp. 125-138.
- Canadian Council of Churches. Commission on Justice and Peace. *Journeys to the Well: An Ecumenical Devotional Towards Anti-Racism*. Toronto: Canadian Council of Churches, 2025.
- J. Kameron Carter, *A Theological Account* (need more here)
- Budde, Mariann Edgar. *How We Learn to Be Brave: Decisive Moments in Life and Faith*. New York: Avery, 2023. This adds a pastoral and narrative voice to balance the list of more academic and theoretical readings. Offers a focus on discernment in real ministry contexts within a mainline, mostly White, ecclesial tradition.
- Kwok Pui-lan. *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005. Introduction and Chapter 1, “Postcolonial Imagination and Biblical Interpretation.”
- Confession of 1967 (see Biblical-Theological Resources, above)  
9.44 a. God has created the peoples of the earth to be one universal family. In his reconciling love, God overcomes the barriers between sisters and brothers and breaks down every form of discrimination based on

racial or ethnic differences, real or imaginary. The church is called to bring all people to receive and uphold one another as persons in all relationships of life: in employment, housing, education, leisure, marriage, family, church, and the exercise of political rights. Therefore the church labors for the abolition of all racial discrimination and ministers to those injured by it. Congregations, individuals, or groups of Christians who exclude, dominate, or patronize others however subtly, resist the Spirit of God and bring contempt on the faith which they profess.

National Council of Churches USA Resources [https://nationalcouncilofchurches.us/anti-racism-resources//sites/default/files/confess671\\_0.pdf](https://nationalcouncilofchurches.us/anti-racism-resources//sites/default/files/confess671_0.pdf)

- “UN resolution urges reparations for slavery’s ‘historical wrongs,’” United Nations News, March 25, 2026: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2026/03/1167199>
- UN World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance: Declaration and Programme of Action 2001 [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/Durban\\_text\\_en.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/Durban_text_en.pdf) <https://www.ohchr.org/en/permanent-forum-people-african-descent>
- World Council of Churches-Programme to Combat Racism [https://brill.com/fileasset/downloads\\_products/31985\\_Brochure.pdf?srsId=AfmBOoqIfBQPowVEd9SVu3V9RJIPt11R3JlgxJn5Dx1YfVIUqZguRKjl](https://brill.com/fileasset/downloads_products/31985_Brochure.pdf?srsId=AfmBOoqIfBQPowVEd9SVu3V9RJIPt11R3JlgxJn5Dx1YfVIUqZguRKjl)

### Audiovisual and Digital Resources

- Link to sermon on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/91NNmHLLyHk> [Video of the Right Rev. Budde’s sermon preached on Inauguration of 47th United States President.]
- YouTube interview with Willie James Jennings, The Christian Imagination <https://youtu.be/MdZGfi76hII>
- CONVERSATIONS: Race Relations | ELCA Resources [This links to a curriculum produced by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America curriculum. There are “four conversations” that could be used during RETI for some good discussion starters as well as group exercises - though the curriculum is clearly directed toward a mostly White audience to introduce “white privilege” in spaces where this could be a relatively new topic.]
- Reparations Toolkit (2024): [https://rac.org/sites/default/files/2024-08/reparationstoolkit\\_2024.pdf](https://rac.org/sites/default/files/2024-08/reparationstoolkit_2024.pdf)
- National African American Reparations Commission: <https://reparationscomm.org/> [Established in 2015, the National African American Reparations Commission is a group of distinguished professionals from across the country with outstanding accomplishments in the fields of law, medicine, journalism, academia, history, civil rights and social justice advocacy.]

## Pillar 4: Interfaith Dialogue

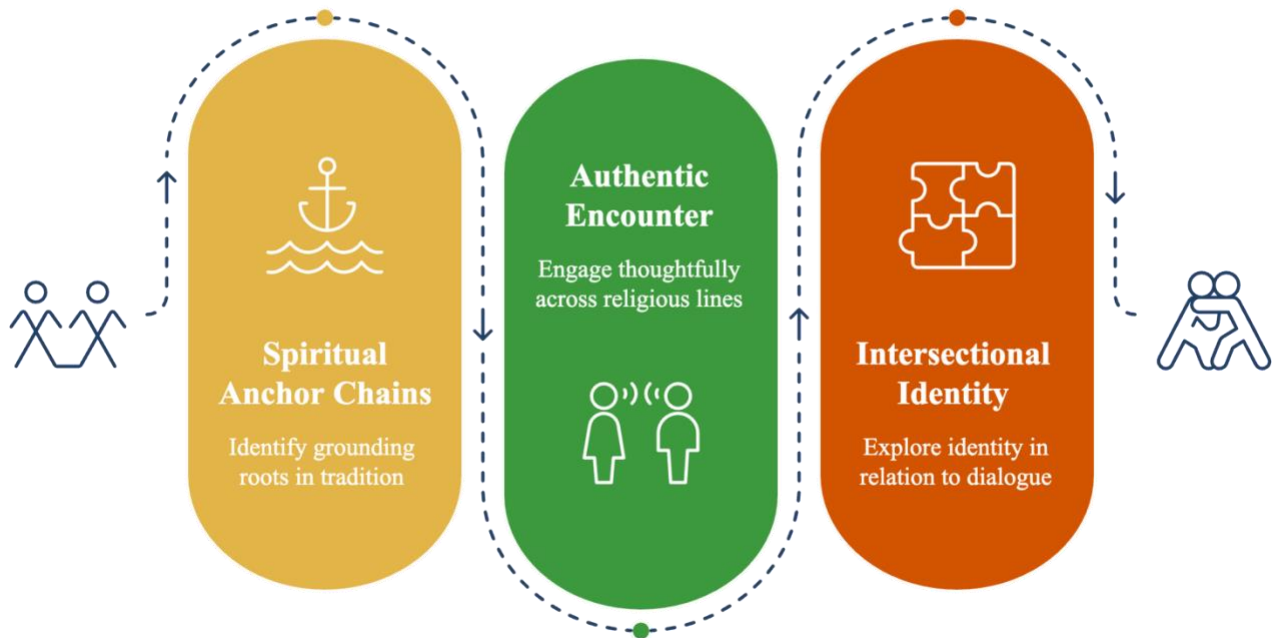
### A. Pillar Description

This pillar invites participants to develop competency in interreligious leadership by inviting participants to consider how and why they thoughtfully engage across lines of religious difference. Grounded in conversations about the relationship which developed between Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi — a founder of the Jewish Renewal Movement who taught for several seasons at the University of Winnipeg — and the Rev. Howard Thurman, an American Christian mystic and mentor to the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the pillar explores intersectional identity as it relates to interfaith dialogue.

Participants are invited to identify their spiritual anchor chains — the deep roots that ground them in their own tradition while enabling authentic encounter with others — and to enter into the work of transformation through dialogue. Engaging a panoply of North American voices in text, video, podcast, art, and more, the pillar seeks to engage a breadth of experiences and geographic communities across the United States and Canada.

This pillar explores the concept of truth not as fixed or singular, but as relational and emerging through encounter, difference, and ongoing engagement across traditions. Interfaith dialogue is approached not as a one-off activity, but as an ongoing relational practice of engaging difference across multiple identities in ways that confront power, foster solidarity, and recognize truth as emerging through plurality. Particular attention is given to the inclusion of marginalized voices and to the ways lived realities—especially those shaped by colonial history, racialization, and migration on Turtle Island—reshape both the purpose and practice of interfaith engagement.

### Pillar 4: Interfaith Dialogue



## B. Three-Tiered Methodology

Tier	Description of Application for This Pillar
<b>Intellectual</b>	<p>This pillar engages a variety of sources in contemporary interreligious/interfaith studies literature, inviting participants to engage excerpts of larger works with the hope of opening the imagination to larger conversations about interreligious and interfaith leadership. The required readings and activities are designed to invite participants to search for common ground, in the words of Howard Thurman. Participants will also critically examine how assumptions about religion, truth, and dialogue have been shaped by dominant theological frameworks, and how alternative approaches understand truth as relational and dialogical.</p> <p>Participants will also critically examine how assumptions about religion, truth, and dialogue have been shaped by dominant theological frameworks, and how alternative approaches understand truth as relational and dialogical.</p>
<b>Spiritual</b>	<p>Participants will be invited into practices of active contemplation and dialogue and provided with practical and intellectual scaffolding to support their practice. Engaging the dialogue of Howard Thurman and Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, participants will be asked to reflect on their spiritual anchor chains: what grounds them in their own tradition but enables them to interact and learn from others in different religious traditions. These practices will invite participants to encounter dialogue itself as a spiritual discipline through which transformation occurs, and through which deeper, relational understandings of truth are discerned.</p> <p>These practices will invite participants to encounter dialogue itself as a spiritual discipline through which transformation occurs, and through which deeper, relational understandings of truth are discerned.</p>
<b>Contextual</b>	<p>Participants will engage conversations of religious diversity in Canadian and United States contexts through group activities, readings emerging from multiple cultural contexts, and audiovisual and digital resources that represent geographic diversity. Participants will be asked to develop their own strategies for generative and constructive conversation and dialogue based upon their own strengths and the contours of their own communities. Emphasis will be placed on recognizing how power and social location shape interfaith encounters. Participants will be encouraged to consider how interfaith engagement can move beyond conversation toward practices of solidarity and justice within their specific contexts.</p> <p>Emphasis will be placed on recognizing how power and social location shape interfaith encounters. Participants will be encouraged to consider how interfaith engagement can move beyond conversation toward practices of solidarity and justice within their specific contexts.</p>

## C. Learning Objectives and Intended Learning Outcomes

	Learning Objectives (What learning opportunity this pillar aims to provide)	Intended Learning Outcomes (What participants will be able to do after this pillar)
<b>Knowledge</b> The content of your learning	During this pillar, participants will learn about historical and contemporary approaches to interfaith dialogue and gain an appreciation for the breadth of literature in interreligious studies.	Participants will also be introduced to theological perspectives that understand truth as relational, multiple, and emerging through dialogical encounter. Participants will be able to articulate how different understandings of truth shape approaches to interfaith engagement. At the completion of this pillar, participants will be able to select approaches to interfaith dialogue contextually appropriate to their home contexts and curate helpful materials in interreligious studies discourse to support interfaith dialogue.
<b>Competence</b> The application of learning to specific situations	During this pillar, participants will learn to critically engage with questions of motivation for interfaith dialogue and hone their own ability to articulate commitments to interreligious engagement.	Participants will also examine how power, identity, and social context influence both the need for and the limitations of interfaith dialogue. Participants will also be able to assess whether forms of dialogue meaningfully include marginalized voices and respond to lived realities. At the completion of this pillar, participants will be able to critically evaluate competing contextual commitments to interfaith dialogue.
<b>Skills</b> The abilities developed during learning	During this pillar, participants will develop capacity to participate in and facilitate generative and constructive conversation and dialogue.	Participants will also develop the capacity to engage dialogue as an ongoing relational practice that fosters mutual transformation and accountability. Participants will be able to facilitate interfaith engagement that attends to power, centers marginalized voices, and fosters solidarity across difference. At the completion of this pillar, participants will be able to apply conversation and dialogue skills to their home ecclesial, community, and geographic contexts.

## D. Guiding Questions

- Are my “anchor chains” long enough to engage in interfaith dialogue?
- What kinds of interfaith conversations are happening across North America?
- What is your church’s official position related to interreligious engagement and dialogue?
- How are interfaith conversations complicated by layers of intersectional identity?
- How can participants cultivate interreligious engagement within their own geographic contexts?
- What scriptural texts ground your own commitments to interreligious engagement?
- How do my assumptions about truth shape the way I approach interfaith dialogue?
- What would it mean to understand dialogue not just as a method, but as intrinsic to how truth is encountered?
- Whose voices are centered or excluded in interfaith conversations, and how does this shape outcomes?
- How can interfaith dialogue respond to lived realities of injustice while fostering genuine solidarity across difference?

## E. Key Themes and Topics

- Intersectional identity and its implications for interfaith leadership
- Strategies for constructive conversation and dialogue across religious difference
- Theological groundings for interreligious allyship
- Exposure to the breadth of interreligious studies literature as a resource for local engagement
- Exploration of the spectrum of means of interfaith engagement: from dialogue to shared leadership
- Truth as relational and emergent through dialogue
- Power, marginalization, and inclusion in interfaith engagement
- Lived realities and contextual approaches to dialogue

## F. Learning Activities

Activity Description	Format
“The Christmas Tree Crisis at Sea-Tac Airport”: Invite participants to read and wrestle with this case study in Elinor J. Pierce’s <i>Pluralism in Practice: Case Studies of Leadership in a Religiously Diverse America</i> (Orbis Books, 2023), exploring how religious diversity creates complex challenges in public institutions.	Case Study
Constructive Cycles of Conversation: Invite participants to engage in structured interfaith conversation using resources from Essential Partners ( <a href="https://whatisessential.org/resources/constructive-cycle-conversation">https://whatisessential.org/resources/constructive-cycle-conversation</a> ), practicing the skills of generative dialogue across difference.	Small Group Work
Museum of Contemporary Religious Art: Invite participants to engage with one or more of the online exhibits of the Museum of Contemporary Religious Art, housed at Saint Louis University ( <a href="https://mocra.wordpress.com/">https://mocra.wordpress.com/</a> ), and reflect on the utility of art as a medium for interfaith understanding.	Artistic/Creative Reflection
The Islamic Mary: Invite participants to engage with The Islamic Mary podcast, episode “Why am I starting this podcast?” ( <a href="https://dryounusmirza.com/podcast/">https://dryounusmirza.com/podcast/</a> ), and discuss their tradition’s conceptions and orientations toward Mary, Mother of Jesus, as a model for interreligious encounter around shared figures.	Small Group Work
Study Visit or Interfaith Dinner in partnership with the Intercultural Dialogue Institute in the Greater Toronto Area, <a href="https://toronto.interculturaldialog.com/about-us-2/about-idi-toronto/">https://toronto.interculturaldialog.com/about-us-2/about-idi-toronto/</a>	Study Visit or Community Event

## G. Biblical and Theological Anchors

Text / Reference	Relevance to This Pillar and NATI-RETI Context
<b>Matthew 22:36-39 (The Great Commandment)</b>	The text establishes the basis for Christian social concern — love for neighbor — grounding the imperative to engage respectfully and generously with those of other faiths in the foundational commandment of Jesus.
<b>Mark 3:31-35 (The Family of God)</b>	The text identifies that all who do the will of God are one’s siblings, expanding the boundaries of community beyond the ethnic, national, and religious boundaries that typically organize social life.
<b>World Council of Churches — “Guidelines for Dialogue and Relations with People of Other Religions”</b>	These guidelines serve as the basis of interreligious dialogue sponsored by the WCC and many churches around the world, providing a framework for respectful engagement that honors both Christian identity and the integrity of other religious traditions.
<b>CCC’s “Statement of the Commission on Faith and Witness on Religious Diversity”</b>	This text provides an introduction to the dilemma Christians may encounter in engaging in interfaith dialogue or living in a world of religious diversity.

Text / Reference	Relevance to This Pillar and NATI-RETI Context
<a href="https://www.faithandwitness.ca/statement-commission-faith-and-witness-religious-diversity">https://www.faithandwitness.ca/statement-commission-faith-and-witness-religious-diversity</a>	
<p>NCC’s “Interreligious Relations with a Focus on Peace”</p> <p><a href="https://nationalcouncilofchurches.us/common-witness/interreligious-relations-with-a-focus-on-peace/">https://nationalcouncilofchurches.us/common-witness/interreligious-relations-with-a-focus-on-peace/</a></p>	<p>This text provides NCC’s policy toward interreligious engagement with a focus on peace.</p>

## H. Readings and Resources

### Required Readings

14. Schachter-Shalomi, Zalman. “What I Found in the Chapel.” In *My Neighbor’s Faith: Stories of Interreligious Encounter, Growth, and Transformation*, edited by Jennifer Howe Peace, Or N. Rose, and Gregory Mobley. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2012.
15. Rose, Or N. “Howard Thurman’s Mentorship of Zalman Schachter-Shalomi.” In *Interreligious Studies: Dispatches from an Emerging Field*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2020.
16. Mikva, Rachel. “Dialogue.” In *Interreligious Studies: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023.
17. The International Dialogue Centre — KAICIID. “The Role of Interreligious Dialogue in Indigenous Communities Around the World.” December 8, 2021. <https://www.kaiciid.org/stories/features/role-interreligious-dialogue-indigenous-communities-around-world>
18. Patel, Eboo. “Introduction.” In *Interfaith Leadership: A Primer*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2016.
19. Cooper, Lynn A. “Humility, Courage, and Allyship.” In *Embracing Our Time: The Sacrament of Interfaith Friendship*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2025.

### Further Readings

- Rose, Or, Homayra Ziad, and Soren M. Hessler, eds. *Words to Live By: Sacred Sources for Interreligious Engagement*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2018.
- Mosher, Lucinda, Elinor J. Pierce, and Or N. Rose. *With the Best of Intentions: Interreligious Missteps and Mistakes*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2023.
- Gustafson, Hans. *Everyday Wisdom: Interreligious Studies in a Pluralistic World*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2023.
- Patel, Eboo, Jennifer Howe Peace, and Noah J. Silverman. *Interreligious/Interfaith Studies: Defining a New Field*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2018.
- Canadian Council of Churches. *Who is My Neighbour? A Window into the Interfaith Experience and Potential of Member Churches of the Canadian Council of Churches*. Canadian Council of Churches, 2010.

### Audiovisual and Digital Resources

- “Blessed be the Stranger: Islamic Ethics and the Anthropocene.” *Inter/sections Podcast*, Episode 6. <https://www.interreligiousstudies.org/podcast> [Podcast, with student reading guide and teaching materials]
- Abraham’s Bridge. <https://www.abridgefilm.com/> [Documentary about the Tri-Faith Initiative in Omaha, Nebraska]

“Diversity.” Armenian Diocese of Canada / Canadian Youth Interfaith Network.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EymhfjW2sKA> [Documentary] Pillar 1: Solidarity with Indigenous Communities

## Pillar 5: Solidarity with Indigenous Communities

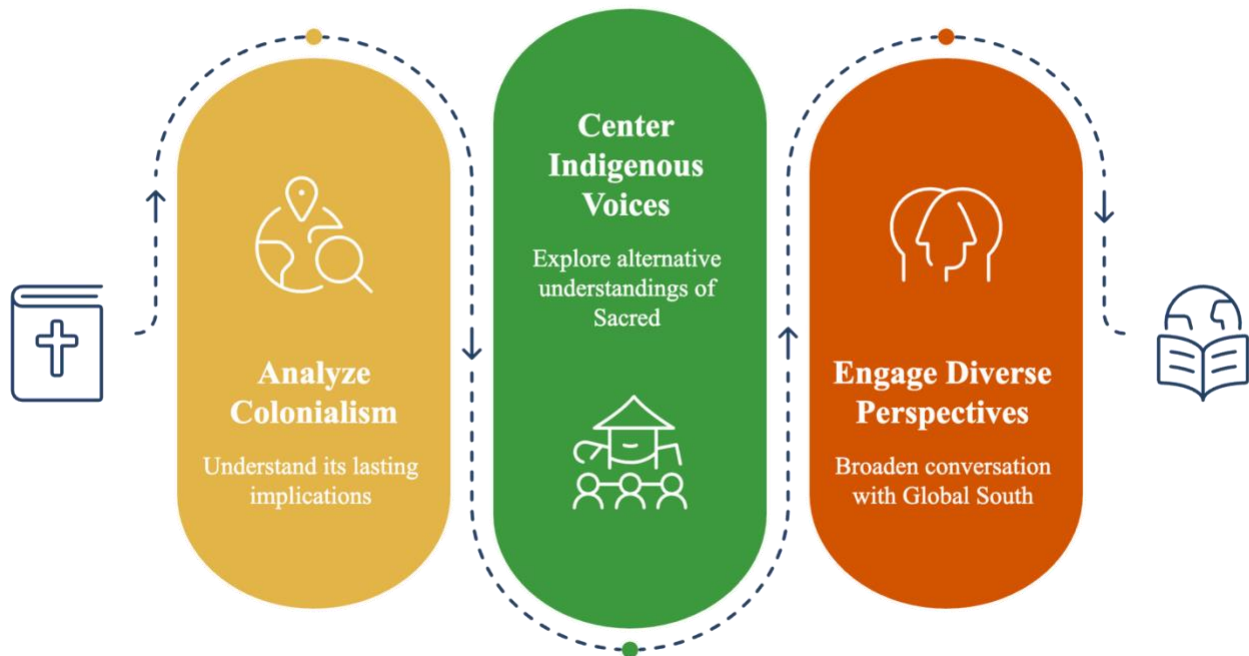
### A. Pillar Description

This pillar examines colonial mechanisms and their lasting implications for communities across the continent now known as the Americas, or Turtle Island. Centering Indigenous and decolonial theoretical frameworks, the pillar traces the insidious, web-like structure of colonialism as a concrete mechanism that continues to organize the logic of contemporary societies — shaping economies, gender relations, racial hierarchies, sexual norms, and ecological relationships.

Engaging these interlocking themes, participants will work with recent theologies from thinkers who decenter Western knowledge as a starting point for exploring alternative understandings of the Sacred, drawing on Indigenous philosophies and epistemological possibilities that exceed the boundaries of colonial thought. Participants will be able to recognize, name, and critically analyze the profound influence of coloniality within current Anglo-North American theological contexts.

Grounded in the specific realities of Turtle Island, the pillar invites participants to engage honestly with the colonial histories and ongoing structures that shape theological reflection in this land. Readings are drawn from authors working directly within North American contexts, as well as voices from the Global South, fostering a broader, multi-directional conversation about decolonial and liberative possibilities.

### Pillar 5: Solidarity with Indigenous Communities



## B. Three-Tiered Methodology

Tier	Description of Application for This Pillar
<b>Intellectual</b>	Participants will engage with Indigenous and decolonial theologies to explore the mechanisms of coloniality, developing the conceptual tools to recognize interconnected themes of economy, gender, racism, sexuality, and ecological responsibility. Drawing on critical texts from North America and the Global South, participants will examine how colonial logic has shaped — and continues to shape — understandings of the Sacred in Anglo-North American settings.
<b>Spiritual</b>	Drawing from Indigenous and decolonial works, participants will explore alternative pathways for engaging the Sacred and the spiritual. Relationships with the land, alongside Indigenous philosophies such as the Seven Grandfather Teachings, will provide participants with resources to reimagine their spiritual engagements and expand their theological imaginations.
<b>Contextual</b>	Participants will be invited to bring their own communal, ecclesial, and cultural contexts into conversation with the themes of coloniality explored in this pillar. Drawing on their diverse social and religious locations across Turtle Island and the Global South, participants will investigate how colonial mechanisms continue to operate in their specific communities, naming both the wounds of coloniality and the decolonial possibilities already present in their lived experiences and traditions.

## C. Learning Objectives and Intended Learning Outcomes

	Learning Objectives (What learning opportunity this pillar aims to provide)	Intended Learning Outcomes (What participants will be able to do after this pillar)
<b>Knowledge The content of your learning</b>	During this pillar, participants will learn key concepts of coloniality and settler-colonialism, examining dominant and normative epistemological structures and their influence on theological articulations within Anglo-North American contexts. Participants will also gain knowledge of Indigenous and decolonial theoretical frameworks, as well as alternative understandings of the Sacred drawn from Indigenous philosophies and voices from the Global South.	At the completion of this pillar, participants will be able to identify key elements of coloniality and dominant epistemological structures, explain colonial mechanisms and their function within current Anglo-North American contexts, and understand their profound influence on theological debates.
<b>Competence The application of learning to specific situations</b>	During this pillar, participants will critically analyze the web-like structures of coloniality across several interconnected areas. Through this analysis, participants will develop the skills to recognize colonial mechanisms within their own denominational traditions. Special attention will be given to building meaningful bridges of solidarity with Indigenous communities and perspectives. This theoretical grounding will equip participants to engage theologically across diverse ecclesial and ecumenical settings, centering Indigenous solidarity as a vital dimension of decolonial theological reflection.	At the completion of this pillar, participants will be able to apply decolonial and Indigenous epistemological frameworks within their own ecumenical and ecclesial contexts. Grounded in Indigenous solidarity as a central commitment, participants will be equipped to develop concrete mechanisms that engage in decolonial processes across denominations, congregations, and broader communal settings, translating theoretical and theological insights into tangible, community-oriented action.
<b>Skills The abilities developed during learning</b>	During this pillar, participants will develop practical capacities for cross-cultural and ecumenical dialogue, including the ability to facilitate conversations about coloniality and Indigenous solidarity within their own communities and traditions. Participants will also practice constructing theological reflections that draw on decolonial and Indigenous frameworks, strengthening their ability to communicate these	At the completion of this pillar, participants will be able to demonstrate facilitation and communication skills that support decolonial and ecumenical engagement in their ministry settings. Participants will use these capacities to design and lead inclusive theological conversations, advocate for Indigenous solidarity, and contribute constructively to decolonial processes within their congregations and broader ecclesial networks.

	Learning Objectives (What learning opportunity this pillar aims to provide)	Intended Learning Outcomes (What participants will be able to do after this pillar)
	insights across diverse denominational and communal contexts.	

### D. Guiding Questions

- In what ways have colonial mechanisms shaped your own spiritual formation, theological imagination, and ecclesial tradition — and what might it mean to begin decentering those influences in solidarity with Indigenous communities on Turtle Island?
- What are the particular colonial histories and ongoing structures that shape theological reflection on Turtle Island, and how do these realities call for a distinctly North American decolonial response rooted in Indigenous solidarity?
- What responsibility do churches and ecclesial communities bear in relation to Indigenous communities on Turtle Island, and how have diverse denominational traditions participated in — or resisted — colonial structures across ecumenical contexts?
- Where do you encounter the greatest tensions or obstacles when attempting to build genuine solidarity with Indigenous communities within your own theological and ecclesial context, and what power dynamics are at play?
- What concrete steps can your community, denomination, or ecumenical network take to move from theoretical awareness of coloniality toward meaningful and sustained solidarity with Indigenous communities on Turtle Island?
- How do Indigenous philosophies and alternative understandings of the Sacred on Turtle Island challenge or enrich your reading of theological and biblical texts across diverse ecclesial traditions?
- In what ways does engaging with decolonial and Indigenous frameworks within North American ecumenical contexts contribute to the vision of Visible Justice, and what does that justice look like on Turtle Island today?

### E. Key Themes and Topics

- Settler-colonialism on Turtle Island: colonial histories, ongoing structures, and ecclesial responsibilities
- Coloniality and Anglo-North American theology: dominant epistemologies and their influence on theological articulations
- Decolonial and Indigenous theologies: alternative epistemological frameworks and reimagined understandings of the Sacred
- Indigenous solidarity: theological grounding and ecumenical commitment to Indigenous communities
- Decolonial possibilities in ecclesial contexts: diverse denominational traditions and ecumenical dialogue on Turtle Island

### F. Learning Activities

Activity Description	Format
Biblical Text Analysis: Participants will engage with a selected biblical text — such as the Parable of the Prodigal Son or the Woman at the Well — first examining traditional Western interpretive approaches, and then applying the decolonial and Indigenous frameworks developed throughout the pillar to decenter those readings. Participants will produce a brief comparative reflection identifying how colonial assumptions have shaped classical interpretations and what alternative readings become possible through decolonial lenses.	Small Group Work
Ethical Case Study: Participants will engage with a facilitator-provided ethical case study exploring a concrete situation of coloniality in an ecclesial or community context on Turtle Island. Divided into two groups, participants will analyze the case from different perspectives and then reconvene to discuss their findings, producing shared theological and ethical responses grounded in Indigenous solidarity and decolonial thinking.	Small Group Work
Denominational Statements Analysis: Facilitators will provide participants with official statements from various Christian denominations regarding Indigenous communities. Participants will critically read and analyze these statements in small groups, identifying their flaws, limitations, and strengths, and exploring possibilities for	Small Group Work

Activity Description	Format
rewriting them in ways that more genuinely reflect Indigenous solidarity and decolonial commitments. Groups will then reconvene to share their findings and produce a set of criteria for what a decolonially informed denominational statement might look like.	
Seven Grandfather Teachings Discussion: Facilitators will introduce and read the Seven Grandfather Teachings with the full group, providing space for initial reflection and questions. Participants will then divide into smaller groups to discuss how these teachings challenge, enrich, or expand their own theological understandings and ecclesial traditions, exploring together how Indigenous wisdom traditions such as the Seven Grandfather Teachings can strengthen and inform ecumenical dialogue on Turtle Island.	Small Group Work

## G. Biblical and Theological Anchors

Text / Reference	Relevance to This Pillar and NATI-RETI Context
<b>Mark 7:24-30 / Matthew 15:21-28 (The Syrophenician Woman)</b>	A colonized woman’s direct confrontation reorganizes Jesus’s own understanding of solidarity, dismantling colonial mechanisms of exclusion and offering a model for ecumenical dialogue initiated from the margins.
<b>Micah 6:8 (Justice, kindness, and humility)</b>	This prophetic call proposes a vision of the world grounded in justice, mercy, and humility as foundational pillars for dismantling colonial and capitalist logics — a theological imperative shared across Indigenous and ecumenical traditions.
<b>Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada — Calls to Action 48-49 (2015)</b>	These calls to action demand that Canadian churches repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery, framing ecclesial accountability to Indigenous peoples not as charity but as a structural theological obligation rooted in histories of colonial harm.
<b>World Council of Churches — “Statement on the Doctrine of Discovery and Its Enduring Impact on Indigenous Peoples” (2012)</b>	This ecumenical declaration names the Doctrine of Discovery as a theological error, calling churches across traditions toward Indigenous solidarity as an act of faithful, prophetic witness.

## H. Readings and Resources

### Required Readings

20. Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action. Winnipeg: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015.
21. World Council of Churches. “Statement on the Doctrine of Discovery and Its Enduring Impact on Indigenous Peoples.” Executive Committee, February 17, 2012.
22. Medina, Néstor. “A Decolonial Primer.” Toronto Journal of Theology 33, no. 2 (2017): 279-287.
23. Mendoza, Breny. “Decolonial Theories in Comparison.” Journal of World Philosophies 5, no. 1 (2020): 1-16.
24. Quijano, Anibal. “Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality.” Cultural Studies 21, no. 2-3 (2007): 168-178.
25. Ontario Native Women’s Association (ONWA). “Seven Sacred/Grandfather Teachings.” Accessed 2024. <https://www.onwa.ca/7-sacred-grandfather-teachings>.

### Further Readings

- Carvalhaes, Cláudio. “A Decolonial Prayer.” In Decolonial Christianities: Latinx and Latin American Perspectives, edited by Raimundo Barreto and Roberto Sirvent. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.
- Medina, Néstor. On the Doctrine of Discovery. Toronto: Canadian Council of Churches, 2017.
- Lazreg, Marnia. “Decolonizing Feminism.” In African Gender Studies: A Reader, edited by Oyèrónké Oyèwùmí. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.
- Smith, Andrea. “Decolonizing Theology.” Union Seminary Quarterly Review 59, no. 1-2 (2005): 63-78.
- Marcos, Sylvia. “Mesoamerican Women’s Indigenous Spirituality: Decolonizing Religious Belief.” In Decolonial Christianities: Latinx and Latin American Perspectives. Cham: Springer, 2019.
- Verbos, Amy Klemm, and María Humphries. “A Native American Relational Ethic: An Indigenous Perspective on Teaching Human Responsibility.” Journal of Business Ethics 123, no. 1 (2014): 1-9.

- Moros, Matilde. "Inversion and Diasporas: Decolonizing Racialized Sexuality Transnationally." In *Decolonial Christianities: Latinx and Latin American Perspectives*, edited by Raimundo Barreto and Roberto Sirvent. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.
- Diouf, Sylviane A. *Dreams of Africa in Alabama: The Slave Ship Clotilda and the Story of the Last Africans Brought to America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.  
[https://www.sylvianediouf.com/dreams\\_of\\_africa\\_in\\_alabama\\_\\_the\\_slave\\_ship\\_clotilda\\_and\\_the\\_story\\_of\\_the\\_last\\_af\\_58311.htm](https://www.sylvianediouf.com/dreams_of_africa_in_alabama__the_slave_ship_clotilda_and_the_story_of_the_last_af_58311.htm)
- Equal Justice Initiative. *Transatlantic Slave Trade: Origins* (Chapter 1). Montgomery, AL: Equal Justice Initiative, n.d. <https://eji.org/report/transatlantic-slave-trade/origins/#chapter-1-origins-intro>
- Katz, William Loren. *Black Indians: A Personal and Historic Journey*. New York: Atheneum Books, 1997.  
<https://blackpast.org/african-american-history/black-indians-personal-and-historic-journey/>
- BlackPast. *Garifuna People*. n.d. <https://blackpast.org/global-african-history/garifuna-people/>

## Pillar 6: Wealth Disparity and Poverty

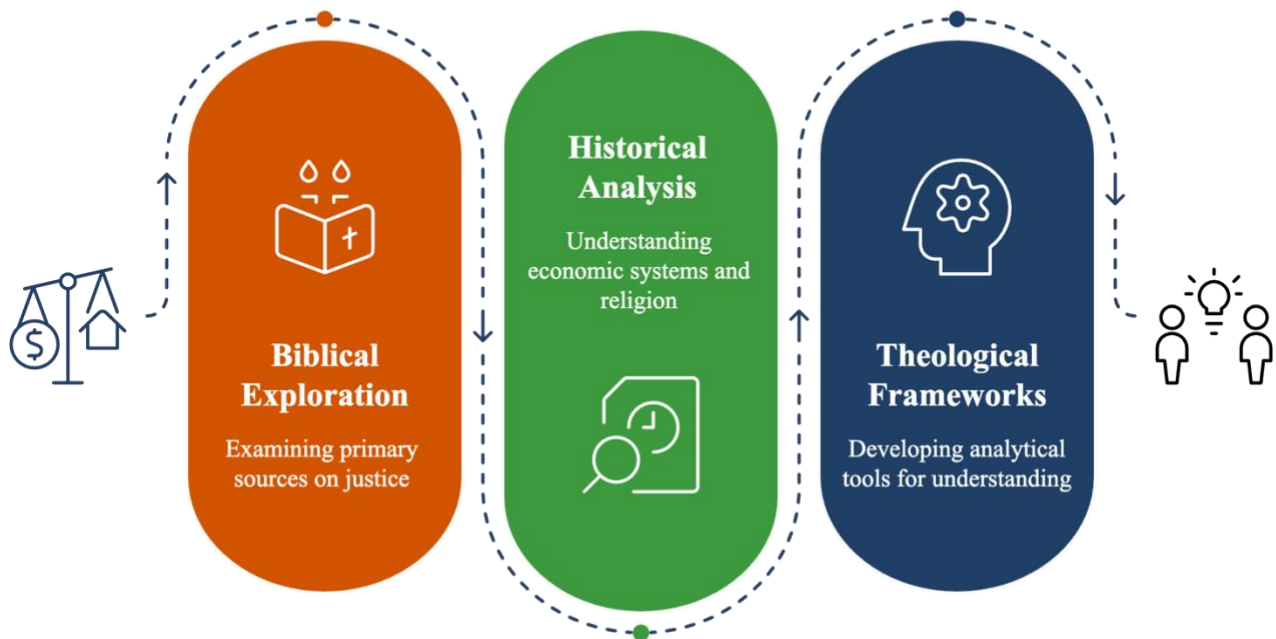
### A. Pillar Description

The Wealth Disparity and Poverty educational segment explores the history of ecumenical involvement and history of racialized wealth accumulation via intentional, structural, politically engineered systems, to promote justice activism with and in economically marginalized nations and communities in North American-Turtle Island contexts. We will examine and discuss primary biblical sources and secondary analysis focused on the ecumenical mandate for justice thinking and activism directly related to systemic wealth disparity and poverty.

Situated in two of the world’s wealthiest nations, this pillar confronts the structural contradictions of abundance and poverty coexisting within the same societies and ecclesial communities. Participants will examine how various economic systems have shaped — and been shaped by — religious ideologies, and how the ecumenical church has historically engaged and continues to engage with these realities.

Drawing on the work of scholars and practitioners across the ecumenical spectrum, the pillar provides participants with theological, historical, and analytical frameworks for understanding wealth disparity and poverty as matters of urgent Christian concern — and equips them to lead their communities in imaginative and constructive responses.

### Pillar 6: Wealth Disparity and Poverty



## B. Three-Tiered Methodology

Tier	Description of Application for This Pillar
Intellectual	Participants will engage ecumenical theological statements and US/Canadian research studies that address global, systemic wealth disparity and poverty, our responsibilities as Christians to prevent further economic polarization and marginalization and help bring about positive change, as well as exploring methodologies for tackling these tough conversations with our communities of faith and social relationships.
Spiritual	Spending time reflecting and dialoguing during small group work will assist in connecting the theoretical and theological with the practical and experiential. We will share our prayers and traditions that encourage both lament and hope for the state of the economically marginalized.
Contextual	The resources used for this pillar are primarily derived from US and Canadian sources both in and outside of the Church informed by broader global perspectives on systemic poverty. A variety of Christian backgrounds are represented by the theological texts. The participants, while spending one week in the US and one week in Canada, will experience their contexts on campus via dialogue, analysis, and discussions.

## C. Learning Objectives and Intended Learning Outcomes

	Learning Objectives (What learning opportunity this pillar aims to provide)	Intended Learning Outcomes (What participants will be able to do after this pillar)
<b>Knowledge The content of your learning</b>	Participants will learn about the historical and political development of wealth disparity and poverty in the North American context and will be introduced to the key concepts of economic justice activism through an ecumenical Christian lens that is regional and global.	Participants will learn about the particularity of the Turtle Island North American context of wealth disparity as a direct consequence of privilege and false exceptionalism and will learn key concepts and understand the roots of wealth disparity and how this is generated in the North American context and its effects regionally and globally.
<b>Competence The application of learning to specific situations</b>	Participants will learn to examine different approaches to addressing wealth disparity and poverty justice in different confessional, cultural, and social contexts.	Participants will be able to critically evaluate how various approaches to wealth disparity and poverty shape the present discourse on the issues and concrete efforts to enact justice.
<b>Skills The abilities developed during learning</b>	Participants will develop the ability to interpret biblical and historical-political texts and understand methodologies for bringing different theological and ecclesial positions together around wealth disparity and poverty justice.	Participants will be able to engage meaningfully in conversations about wealth disparity and poverty justice and contribute constructively to imagining and implementing real-life solutions.

## D. Guiding Questions

- Do you think wealth disparity and poverty should be addressed by the churches? Why or why not?
- What does wealth disparity and poverty look like in North America? What does that mean for you regionally in a global world?
- What primary source texts about wealth disparity and poverty do you find most compelling?
- As in the antebellum period in North America, when there were those on both sides of the slavery issue using the Bible to justify their positions, today there are those on both sides of the issue of wealth disparity and poverty. What are the source texts used by those who defend wealth disparity and poverty? What might be a reasoned ecumenical response?
- In the same vein, Mark 14:7 and 2 Thessalonians 3:10 are interpreted in a politically engineered capitalist context to justify not extending government assistance to the economically marginalized. What might the ecumenical church’s response look like when these sources are read in their contexts?
- In the Joseph Cycle in Genesis (chapters 36-50), Joseph is put in charge of managing the famine in Egypt. According to Genesis 41:46-57 and 47:13-26, what are the economic outcomes of this arrangement? Read

apart from the broader context, how can this narrative be used to justify wealth disparity and politically engineered poverty? Provide a thoughtful ecumenical response.

- Dr. Athena Peralta’s book (2015) *Economy of Life: Linking Poverty, Wealth and Ecology*, WCC, (*Economy of Life*) is used for the Wealth Disparity and Poverty segment, to provide intellectual intersectionality between the concerns of racism, climate justice, and wealth disparity & poverty. Reflect on the questions that arose in your mind as you read Dr. Peralta’s analysis. How did the intersectionality of the spacial-spiritual immersion of the underground railroad sites, the climate justice segment, and the Wealth Disparity and Poverty segment give complexity, perspective, and depth to your questions as they developed through the progression of the NATI-RETI experience? Discuss.
- Investigate the immersion to the Underground Railroad in Detroit and the economic issues at stake with chattel enslavement and the legacy of this today. In addition to this, we will explore activities like the racial wealth gap simulation as a tool for this question.

### E. Key Themes and Topics

- The history of wealth disparity and poverty in North America-Turtle Island and the ecumenical response.
- The various economic systems and their political and religious allies
- The relationship between wealth, poverty, and racism and the ecumenical church’s obligation to engage
- Chattel enslavement, systemic debt, reparatory justice/reparations and the ecumenical response.
- Intersectional dimensions of economic injustice: race, gender, and ecological crisis
- On chattel enslavement and dehumanization ... Theme-One-Background-Info-1.pdf
- On the brutality of American capitalism and its origins in chattel slavery ... American Capitalism Is Brutal. You Can Trace That to the Plantation. - The New York Times

### F. Learning Activities

Activity Description	Format
Participants will explore the history of the ecumenical church’s involvement in wealth disparity and poverty justice.	Racial Wealth-Gap Learning Simulation ... Racial Wealth Gap Learning Simulation - Bread for the World  Underground Railroad immersive experience small group discussion on wealth disparity, wealth accumulation, and deprivation of property through forced migration
Participants will reflect on the state of wealth disparity and poverty in their own respective communities and the systemic obstacles the church faces in addressing these local realities, sharing contextual insights across national and denominational contexts.	Small Group Work and Discussion
Participants will explore their church/communion’s resources as available online and will share with the group what resources or statements have been made about the wealth disparity and poverty crisis, critically assessing their strengths and limitations.	Small Group Work and Discussion
Participants will discuss sermon/teaching opportunities to address the wealth disparity and poverty crisis — including theological tenets, scientific studies, and courses of action — for children, young adults, and congregants who may be resistant to engagement with these issues.	Small Group Work and Discussion

## G. Biblical and Theological Anchors

Text / Reference	Relevance to This Pillar and NATI-RETI Context
<b>The Sermon on the Mount Matthew 5-7 (and parallels)</b>	These passages signify putting faith into practice by self-sacrifice and love in community, after experiencing almost a century and a half of a radical Roman dismantling of a long-standing indigenous economic system of subsistence farming and putting in its place an oppressive extraction economy.
<b>Jesus’s Apocalyptic Discourse: Matthew 24–25; parallels (and contexts)</b>	These chapters indicate a post-70 CE apocalyptic ethic in the context of a collapsed society controlled by Roman dominance and genocide.
<b>Acts 2.42–45; 4.32–37 (and contexts)</b>	These texts indicate the early churches’ practice of community of goods / sharing their property.
<b>Mark 14.7 and 2 Thessalonians 3.10 (and contexts)</b>	These texts have been used to shape political policies by misrepresenting the church’s response to systemic economic marginalization.
<b>Genesis 41.46–57; 47.13–26 (and contexts)</b>	These passages signify the bible’s positive presentation of colonizing oppression and exploitation, and the necessity today to read these texts critically as negative examples,
<b>James 1.9–11; 1.26–27; 2.1–7; 5.1–6 (and contexts)</b>	These passages are significant for understanding the early church’s response to economic marginalization & exploitation and theological identification with the poor and the oppressed.
<b>Luke 19.1–10</b>	Zacchaeus narrative about reparations to correct economic injustice.
<b>Isaiah 58.12; Amos 9.11; Isaiah 61.4</b>	These texts are expressions of the “Repairers of the Breach” concept that indicates full investment in all community members, in contrast to and condemnation of narrowed, short-sighted economies of extraction and exploitation by a few.
<b>Leviticus 25.8–55; Leviticus 27.17–24; Isaiah 61.1–2; Luke 4.18–19; Mark 1.1–8 and parallels</b>	These texts describe the principle of Jubilee and the just redistribution of property and wealth, including John the baptizer whose life was an expression of the eschatological jubilee fulfilled in the life of Jesus and the comprehensive justice of jubilee that Jesus’ life brings for all people of all times.

## H. Readings and Resources

### Required Readings

26. Peralta, Athena and Rogate R. Mshana. *Economy of Life: Linking Poverty, Wealth and Ecology*. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2015.
27. Hinson-Hasty, Elizabeth L. *The Problem of Wealth: A Christian Response to a Culture of Affluence*. *CrossCurrents* Vol. 64, No.1. (March 2014): 39-58.
28. Bauman, Robert. *Fighting to Preserve a Nation’s Soul: America’s Ecumenical War on Poverty*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2019. Introduction, “Setting the Context for the Struggle: Religion and the War on Poverty”; Chapter 2, “The Conscience of the Church: The National Council of Churches and the War on Poverty”; Chapter 3, “Creating an Ecumenical Anti-Poverty Coalition: IFCO, Black Power, and the War on

- Poverty”; Conclusion, “To Become as Radical as Christ: Faith-Based Activism and the Long War on Poverty in the Twenty-First Century.”
29. Keister, Lisa A. *Faith and Money: How Religion Contributes to Wealth and Poverty*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. Chapter 1, “Religion and Wealth”; Chapter 3, “Work, Occupation, and Income”; Chapter 8, “A Truly Complex Relationship”; Chapter 9, “How Much Is Enough?”
  30. Rieger, Joerg. *Theology in the Capitalocene: Ecology, Identity, Class, and Solidarity*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2022. Introduction, “Troubling Intersections in the Capitalocene”; Chapter 3, “Class and Its Discontents in the Study of Religion and Theology: Reconfiguring Relationships and Power”; Chapter 4, “The (Im)possibility of Deep Solidarity: Reclaiming Privilege, Power, and Identity”; Conclusion, “Solidarity and Reparations.”

### Further Readings

- Blanton, Thomas R., Agnes Choi, and Jinyu Liu, eds. *Taxation, Economy, and Revolt in Ancient Rome, Galilee, and Egypt*. New York: Routledge, 2022.
- Casey, Zachary A. *A Pedagogy of Anticapitalist Antiracism: Whiteness, Neoliberalism, and Resistance in Education*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2016.
- Choi, Jin Young and Gregory L. Cuellar. *Activist Hermeneutics of Liberation and the Bible: A Global Intersectional Perspective*. New York: Routledge, 2023.
- Hendricks, Obery. *The Politics of Jesus*. New York: Doubleday, 2006.
- Johnson, Sheryl. *Serving Money, Serving God: Aligning Radical Justice, Christian Practice, and Church Life*. 2023.

### Audiovisual and Digital Resources

- Bread for the World: Racial Wealth Gap Learning Simulation. <https://www.bread.org/racial-wealth-gap-learning-simulation/> [Simulation]
- What is chattel slavery and how did it dehumanize Black people? Theme-One-Background-Info-1.pdf
- In order to understand the brutality of American capitalism, you have to start on the plantation. American Capitalism Is Brutal. You Can Trace That to the Plantation. - The New York Times
- UN Statement on People of African Descent and Chattel Slavery. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2026/03/1167199> [Video]
- Fifth Session of the UN Permanent Forum on People of African Descent. <https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k13/k13zir6ukb> [Video]

## Academic Credit and Assessment

Participants who have enrolled for academic credit will receive credit equivalent to the course “Global Ecumenical Theology,” awarded by the Toronto School of Theology. Completion of the credit requires active participation in the full two-week program, the delivery of a reading presentation in a study session, and the submission of a satisfactory final paper.

### Academic Assignments

Academic credit is based on three components, weighted as follows: Participation (20%), Presentation (30%), and Final Paper (50%). Each component is described below.

#### 1. Participation (20%)

Active and engaged participation in the full two-week program is required. This includes attendance at plenary sessions, small group study sessions, contextual study visits, and community gatherings, as well as meaningful contribution to group discussions and intercultural exchange. Participants are expected to bring to each session a spirit of openness, critical inquiry, and ecumenical dialogue. Facilitators will assess participation on the basis of consistency, quality of engagement, and collegial presence throughout the program.

#### 2. Presentation (30%)

Each participant will deliver one oral presentation to their small group during one of the scheduled study sessions. The presentation must be based on one of the required readings assigned to the corresponding pillar or session. Participants are expected to summarize the key arguments of the selected text, situate it within the broader thematic context of the pillar, and facilitate a brief critical discussion with the group. Presentations should be approximately 15 to 20 minutes in length, including time for discussion.

#### 3. Final Paper (50%)

The final paper offers participants the opportunity to integrate the intellectual, spiritual, and contextual learning of the program into an original, theologically informed piece of written scholarship.

### Paper Requirements

The final paper must meet the following formal and substantive requirements:

- Length: 10 to 12 pages of body text, excluding title page, table of contents, bibliography, and appendices.
- Citation style: Chicago Manual of Style, 18th edition (notes-bibliography system). A complete bibliography must be appended.
- Language: The paper may be submitted in English.
- Typography: Double-spaced, 12-point serif font (Times New Roman or Garamond).
- Submission deadline: To be communicated by the NATI-RETI 2026 coordination team no later than the final day of the program.

### Scope and Focus

The paper must engage substantively with at least one of the six thematic pillars of NATI-RETI 2026 (Solidarity with Indigenous Communities, Racism and Anti-Racism, Secularism and Laicity, Wealth Disparity and Poverty, Climate Justice, or Interfaith Dialogue) and must demonstrate engagement with at least two of the three methodological tiers (Intellectual, Spiritual, Contextual). Papers are expected to draw on and beyond required readings from the program and to situate their argument within the broader ecumenical and contextual concerns raised by the central theme.

### Grading Criteria

Final Paper will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- Theological depth and coherence: The paper demonstrates a substantive, well-reasoned theological argument grounded in scriptural, doctrinal, or ethical reflection appropriate to the chosen pillar. (30%)
- Engagement with course material: The paper integrates readings, lectures, and activities from the program in a critical and constructive manner, moving beyond mere summary. (25%)
- Contextual analysis: The paper situates its argument within a concrete ecclesial, social, or ecumenical context, drawing on the participant’s own experience or community. (20%)

- Scholarly form and citation: The paper adheres to Chicago Manual of Style, 18th edition, demonstrates clarity of expression, and maintains appropriate academic conventions throughout. (15%)
- Originality and ecumenical perspective: The paper makes an original contribution and reflects the ecumenical spirit of NATI-RETI 2026, engaging across traditions and disciplines. (10%)

## TST Grading Scale

NATI-RETI will follow the Toronto School of Theology (TST) grading scheme for its conjoint degree students. The standard letter grade scale with percentage equivalents is as follows:

Letter Grade	Percentage	Descriptor
A+	90–100	Exceptional
A	85–89	Outstanding
A-	80–84	Excellent
B+	77–79	Very Good
B	73–76	Good
B-	70–72	Acceptable

## Submission

Papers must be submitted in digital format (Microsoft Word or PDF) to the corresponding NATI-RETI 2026 Facilitator of each student's group. Participants who do not submit a paper by the deadline will receive a certificate of attendance in lieu of academic credit.