

Sacred Ground: FAQ for 2027 - Including how to sign up!

The Systemic Impact Team of St. James Episcopal Church is excited to invite you to participate in the **Sacred Ground** series.

Background on Sacred Ground

Sacred Ground is a dialogue series on race, grounded in faith. Small groups use films and readings to walk through chapters of history of race in the United States, while weaving in threads of family stories, economic class, and political and regional identity. Participants are invited to peel away the layers that have contributed to the challenges and divides of the present day—all while staying grounded in our call to faith, hope, and love. Sacred Ground is part of Becoming Beloved Community, The Episcopal Church's long-term commitment to racial healing, reconciliation, and justice in our personal lives, our ministries, and our society.

Please Note: *Sacred Ground* is a “deep dive” into the history of race and racism in the United States. Prior individual work in this area is strongly recommended before taking *Sacred Ground*.

Frequently Asked Questions - Including “how to” sign up

1. How many circles will be offered in 2027?

- a. *We are currently planning for one circle (St. James' 10th!) but will consider adding a circle if there is interest and we can recruit additional co-facilitators.*

2. Have the dates and times for the circle meetings been set yet?

- a. *Yes! [Click here to see the dates and times](#). Please note that each session is 90 minutes long BUT the first AND the final session is each a full 2 hours (120 minutes).*
- b. *The 2027 Circle's **first meeting** is 1/10/27 and its **last meeting** is 5/30/27.*

3. How many people will be in a circle?

- a. *We have learned by experience that the ideal Circle size is between 7 and 9 people (that number **includes** the two co-facilitators). If more people sign up than can be accommodated, we will start a waiting list.*

4. What if I have to miss a session?

- a. *It is important for the members of the Circle to have trust in each other and that trust is built on “being there.” Even so, life happens.*

i. Therefore, we ask each person considering **Sacred Ground** to [compare the meeting dates](#) with his/her personal calendar. If you already know you will miss 2 or more sessions, then we encourage you to consider waiting until next year to sign up.

b. Once you are accepted into a Circle, please put the session dates in your calendar and do what you can to prioritize your commitment to **Sacred Ground** when planning new activities.

5. I'm not sure this topic is for me. Are there any materials I can view/read before I make my decision?

a. Sure! The **Sacred Ground** [home page](#) contains short videos and other introductory materials that you may find helpful in making your decision.

6. Also, I honestly don't think I have a racist bone in my body - is Sacred Ground for someone like me?

a. From the original Sacred Ground website (on organizing a dialogue circle):

"Some may think, 'Buying into this series means I must believe (or someone thinks) I'm racist and a bad person. I treat everyone with respect. Only bad racists need to be in a dialogue series designed for whites.' We [the authors of Sacred Ground] have not created this resource with a good/bad binary as the orientation. The vast majority of white Americans have forsworn intentional racism. The challenge is to look at how good, well-intentioned people still can have unconscious habits of mind and emotion that reproduce bias, can have systemic advantages in terms of life prospects that others don't have, and can be looking the other way as harms are reproduced."

7. What are the expectations around preparation for each Circle meeting?

a. We have found through experience at St. James that participants spend 3-4 hours preparing for each session. Of that time, at least 60-90 minutes is devoted to viewing films/documentaries and the rest of the time is spent on reading assignments.

8. What commitments do you ask of me before I sign up?

a. The power of the **Sacred Ground** experience depends on each participant making the following commitments:

i. Commit to the 3-4 hours of thoughtful preparation for each session.

- ii. *Commit to the meeting dates - ideally with no more than 1 “anticipated/known” absence AND the understanding that assignments for a missed class need to be completed to keep up with the group.*
- iii. *Commit to being open to exploring the sometimes painful topics covered in **Sacred Ground** - including the concepts of “white privilege” and “white fragility.”*

9. I am ready to make these commitments and sign up! What should I do next?

- a. *Because of the limited number of slots and the expectation that we will be oversubscribed, please know that submitting your name does not guarantee that you will make it into the new Circle.*
- b. *Email the church office (office@stjameswnc.org) with “Sacred Ground” in the subject line. Include the following in the message:*
 - i. *Your interest in participating in Sacred Ground,*
 - ii. *Your connection to St James and that duration (you do not have to be a member of the parish, but we do look for engagement in the life of the parish for a year or more),*
 - iii. *Your ability to attend the Sunday circle meetings as scheduled, and*
 - iv. *Your prior individual work in the area of race/racism, if any.*
- c. *Your email will be reviewed by Judith, our rector, who will reach out to folks to respond to questions and gauge readiness, as needed.*

10. How will I know if I am included in Circle 10?

- a. The **deadline for you** to email the church office to indicate your interest in participating in Circle 10 is **October 31, 2026**.
- b. ***Final decisions will be communicated*** to Circle participants by email no later than **November 19, 2026**.