



ARC

AntiRacism
Committee

Relate. Repair. Rejoice.

Video Link can be found here:

[Mending Walls: The Documentary](#)



"We Need to Talk"

A Discussion Guide for Mending Walls

Welcome

The documentary "Mending Walls" shows us what happens when artists choose to move toward each other during our experiences of deep pain and division. Like us, they didn't have all the answers. In this formation we might see that they were nervous, honest, and sometimes uncomfortable. But they started a conversation.

They said, "We need to talk."

This guide is an invitation for our churches to lead our communities and do the same. Not to become experts on race or politics overnight, but to become communities known for courageous listening and Christ-centered loving curiosity. Some of us might be wondering if

our church really "needs" to have these conversations.

The artists in the film wondered the same thing. They discovered that avoiding the conversation doesn't mend what's broken in our world.

The job of this curriculum is simple: to help our churches, educators, pastors and leaders to use this powerful video as a tool to open a door, or to take a first step.

Session 1: "We Need to Talk," Starting the Conversation

Use this session to create honest and brave space and set the tone for honest sharing.

Participants could watch the entirety of the film on their own, and clips can be watched again together during each session.

Watch: 0:00 – 6:44 (From the news montage to the vision for the project)

Opening Prayer *(Suggested)*

God of good justice and loving mercy, you see the pain in our world and in our own hearts. Calm our anxieties and open our spirits so we can listen deeply. To this film, to each other, and most of all to You. May our conversation be grounded in Your grace and truth. Amen.

A Quote to Ponder (Read aloud)

"I was like, yeah, and we need to listen... it was more about just starting the conversation in the community."

Discussion Questions

1. What is your initial emotional reaction to the opening of this film? What words or images stuck with you?
2. Hamilton Glass shares that a single, honest conversation with his friend Matt "changed my mood about why we're in this space in time." Have you ever had a conversation that profoundly shifted your perspective? What made the difference?
3. The film suggests that "we need to talk" must be accompanied by "we need to listen." In our current culture, what is it that makes listening so difficult sometimes?
4. A direct question for the group: Some churches feel these conversations are too political or divisive. What might be some fears or concerns about hosting a discussion like this in our church? Let's try to name them without judgment.

Looking Ahead to Session 2: Between now and the next meeting, think about a time you "saw something the way someone else saw it" for the first time. What helped that happen?

Session 2: Different Experiences, One Community

This session focuses on how our unique stories shape us and what it means to share them.

Watch: 6:44 – 17:40 (Artists collaborating, to the mural as a mirror)

Opening Prayer

Lord, you have made each of us in your image, yet our paths are so different. Help us to honor the story of every person here as sacred. Give us empathy to feel with one another, especially when experiences are foreign to us. In Christ's name, Amen.

A Quote to Ponder (Read aloud)

"It's that discomfort. Discomfort is going to be part of this process... We have to reconcile."

Discussion Questions

1. Two artists talk about their vastly different experiences with police: one recalls "very pleasant" interactions, the other remembers being put in handcuffs in middle school. How does hearing such starkly different realities in the same community strike you or make you feel? What does it bring up for you?
2. One speaker says, "Before we can reconcile, we have to reconcile." What do you think he means, and why would acknowledging that we haven't been truly connected an important first step?



3. Scan the QR code for Jowarnise and Ian's conversation. Their piece imagines a "monument to the end of racism." If you were to create a piece of art (a song, painting, poem) about hope for our community, what image would be at its center?

4. The mural is described as a "mirror in front of Richmond's face." What might a mirror hold up to our own congregation to reflect back about our life together across differences?

Closing Activity: Go around the room. In one or two sentences, complete this sentence: "A part of my own story that people often don't see or misunderstand is..."

Session 3: Moving from Words to Action

This session is about connecting the conversations to our faith and our public witness as a church.

Watch: 17:40 – 28:35 (Zoom calls with activists, to painting with volunteers)

Opening Prayer

God who acts in history, we don't want to be only hearers of the word. Show us how our conversations here can take on flesh in the life of our church and our neighborhood. Move us from comfort to courageous love. Amen.

A Quote to Ponder (Read aloud)

"What is my role in this? ...This design, this wall, this process was not about optics, it's about action."

Discussion Questions

1. A muralist is deeply shaken when she realizes "the police were literally harming people to protect" the walls she was decorating. This moment forced her to ask, "What is my role?" As followers of Christ, what is our role in the pain and divisions of our community?
2. An activist says, "We want you to feel our pain, our anger, our frustration... I actually trust the stories that will come out through you just because you're in community with me." What does it mean to earn that kind of trust? How is it different from a surface-level "unity"?
3. [Austin "Auz" Miles](#) and [Jason Ford](#), talk about feeling hesitant to raise a fist in solidarity. Have you ever felt unsure if you had the "right" to speak up or take part in healing racial division? Where does that hesitation come from?
4. The project involved volunteers painting over words of pain to create something beautiful. What are some tangible, beautiful actions our small group or church could take to be a "repairer of the breach" (Isaiah 58:12) in our specific context?

Closing Commitment: Each person shares one small step they feel called to take this week—read an article, have a coffee with someone different, learn about a local organization.

For facilitators:

- “Setting the Table”: Remind everyone this is a space for grace. The goal is not to be perfect or politically correct, but to be present and honest. We *can*, and sometimes should, disagree charitably.
- Using the QR Codes: The QR codes linked to artists' conversations are a perfect way to go deeper. The full list of artists is found at [mendingwallsrva.com](https://www.mendingwallsrva.com) to choose a story that resonates with your group if you want to choose something different or add in other conversations.
- Dealing with Discomfort: If things get tense, you call a short "pause and pray," or a break in some other coded language that makes sense to you. You might say, "Let's take a breath. Lord, in this tension, be present. Help us to love." This isn't a failure; sometimes these actions are where real mending needs to begin.
- The Point is the Process: Remember, this isn't a class with right answers. The conversation itself is a masterpiece, as the film says. A successful session is simply one where people genuinely talked and listened.
- You are Not Alone! The ARC committee members are here for you and to resources your church. We are happy to gather for conversations, brainstorming, or simply a meeting of support for the work you are leading in your context. ***Reminder***, any church who would like a copy of the book paid for by the ARC of the POJ may simply request one and it will be provided for you through our grant.



You can connect to the Mural Walking Tour here:

<https://www.mendingwallsrva.com/tours>

You can read about all the artists here:

<https://www.mendingwallsrva.com/artist>

And access all the mural conversation recordings from here:

<https://www.mendingwallsrva.com/walls>