

Dear Editor,

Thanks for printing Carole Pinkett's article — depressing and threatening as it is to recognize shadows of unconscious prejudice. Like most of us, I'd rather avoid any evidence of racism in myself or my church; and it's easy to understand why even the most sensitive explorations of racial reconciliation trigger reactions, defensiveness and anger. It's easy to give up trying.

This past Advent, as the drama in Ferguson unfolded, we tried an experiment at St. James' Austin, an historically African-American congregation that prides itself on being "an inclusive, multicultural community." A group of about 30 parishioners, black and white, committed to sit with each other for an hour each Sunday morning and see the story from each other's perspective.

We didn't try to solve or justify anything. We didn't know what to do, so we just tried to be together, to hear and learn and let God work. People said it helped. They came back each week.

As Christ's body we can risk identifying with each other's deepest wounds, anger and shame, knowing by faith that God in Christ has overcome all divisions and can heal even the brokenness we can't bear to see. Even at an inclusive, multicultural church, the work of racial reconciliation seems as overwhelming as it is essential. We plan to continue our listening practice this Advent, confident that God's Spirit will keep surprising us.

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