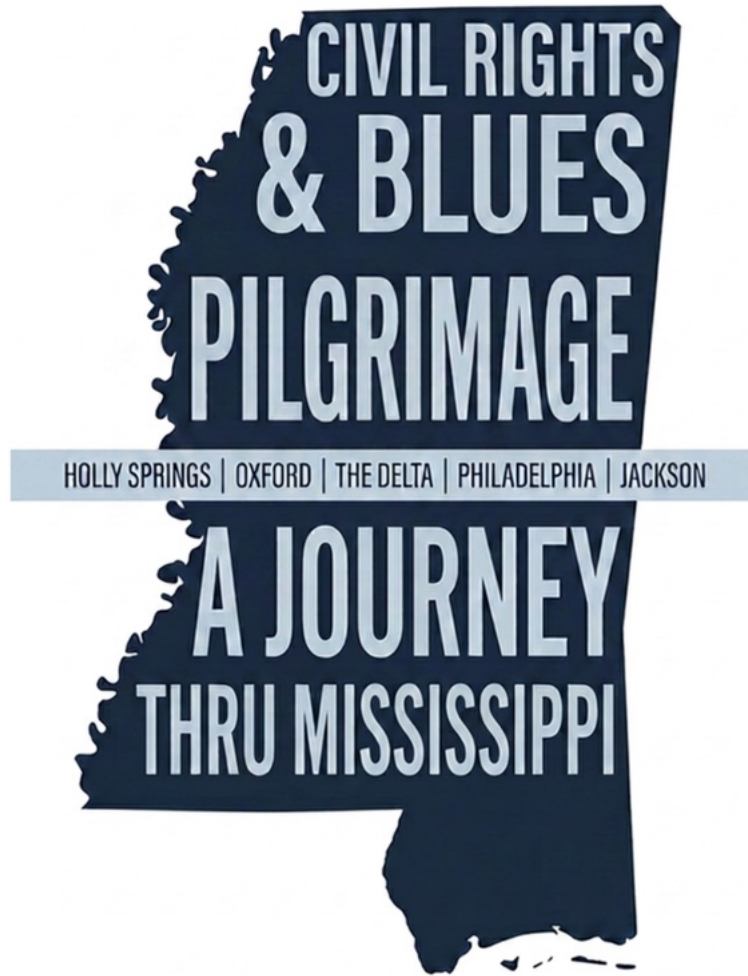




Mississippi and Memphis | July 17–25, 2027

APPLICATION DEADLINE

November 30 is the final application deadline, but there's no need to wait!

We encourage you to apply early, as applications will be reviewed as they are received.

EMAIL COMPLETED APPLICATIONS to mississippipilgrimage@gmail.com

“To understand the world, you must first understand a place like Mississippi.”

– William Faulkner

The pilgrimage. The Civil Rights & Blues Pilgrimage is a nine-day immersive journey through Mississippi that will end in Memphis. A small group of college students, graduate students, and young adults will travel through the Mississippi Delta, Jackson, Philadelphia, Oxford, and Holly Springs, exploring the connections between civil rights history, southern religious life, cultural arts, literature, and theology.

Our approach. This pilgrimage is rooted in community organizing, church life, Black theology, womanist thought, and the ethics of the Civil Rights Movement. Through visits to churches, colleges, museums, memorials, historic sites, and cultural spaces, students will encounter Mississippi not simply as a place where history happened, but as a living landscape shaped by struggle, faith, memory, creativity, and resistance.

Questions we will explore

- How did Black churches and educational institutions contribute to the Civil Rights Movement and what can they teach us about community organizing and social change?
- How can blues music be understood as a form of cultural memory, lament, and hope?
- What can Mississippi's history teach us about race, faith, justice, and the United States?
- How do we engage difficult histories with humility, curiosity, and ethical responsibility?

Learning together. The journey will include guided site visits, discussion, reading, music, prayer, and individual and group reflection. Participants will engage works by authors including Anne Moody, Charles M. Payne, James Cone, James Baldwin, Angela Davis, Simeon Wright, and Wright Thompson.

Anchor texts to be read before the trip

Coming of Age in Mississippi, by Anne Moody

I've Got the Light of Freedom, by Charles M. Payne

The Barn: The Secret History of a Murder, by Wright Thompson

Who We Are Looking For

This pilgrimage is for students and young adults ages 18–35 as of July 17, 2027, who are connected to a United Methodist ministry in the Greater Northwest Area. This includes local churches, campus ministries, camps and retreat ministries, and other ministries connected to a United Methodist congregation or institution of higher learning..

We are looking for participants who are willing to learn deeply, ask difficult questions, listen to perspectives different from their own, and engage honestly in meaningful conversation. Participants will explore Mississippi's history and culture while considering how that history continues to shape questions of faith, justice, community, and ministry today. The pilgrimage is intended not simply to teach participants about Mississippi's past, but to invite them to reflect on what that history asks of us in the present and how it might shape the way we live, lead, and serve in our own communities.

Mississippi will be our classroom, our text, and our pilgrimage.

COST

\$300 per participant

FUNDING

The Ministry Opportunity Fund of the Pacific Northwest Annual Conference has granted funding for 8 young adult participants.

All Travel (flights to and from Mississippi), Meals, and Lodging are provided.

TRIP LEADERS

Rev. Katie Ladd – Pastor, Queen Anne UMC, Seattle, WA
Superintendent, Crest to Coast Missional District, Pacific Northwest Annual Conference

Pastor Katie is passionate about new/old ways of being church; that is, learning from the wisdom of our spiritual ancestors while innovating for today's world. She grew up in Mississippi and Arkansas but came to the PNW in 1996. A graduate of Randolph-Macon Woman's College with degrees in biology and religion, she worked in environmental chemistry before receiving her MDiv from Vanderbilt University.

Katie's passions include interfaith/ecumenical work, public theology, empowering laity, and spiritual formation. She lives in Tacoma with her wife Melissa and she currently serves Queen Anne UMC and its intentional community, The Well, alongside being a superintendent in the Crest to Coast Missional District of the PNW AC.

Rev. Justin White – Pastor, Garden Street UMC & Wesley Club, Bellingham, WA

Pastor Justin is a native of rural Mississippi. As a lifelong United Methodist, he earned a bachelor's degree from Mississippi State University in 2006 and a Master of Divinity from Duke Divinity School in 2010. Ordained as an elder in the Mississippi Annual Conference in 2013, he served congregations throughout Mississippi for seven years before moving to the Pacific Northwest Conference in 2018, where he has served four churches.

Pastor Justin's ministry is grounded in the liberating love of Christ, with a particular commitment to social justice, advocacy for marginalized communities, authentic pastoral care, and creating radically welcoming faith communities. He believes worship can be a powerful force for transformation and justice. He is a lover of music in all its various forms. Though now serving in Washington, Pastor Justin remains deeply connected to Mississippi and its people.

MISSISSIPPI ACTIVISTS AND ORGANIZERS

Jessie Jaynes-Diming – Special Projects Associate, Emmett Till Interpretive Center

Jessie Jaynes-Diming is a passionate community activist wanting to see change for the future. Born in Chicago, she lived there for fifty-one years before becoming a transplant to Tallahatchie County. She was a founding member of the Emmett Till Memorial Commission preserving the story of Emmett Till and wants that story to be the cause for more healing and learning.

Gloria Dickerson – CEO and Founder, We2Gether Creating Change

Gloria Dickerson's life and work are deeply rooted in the struggle for civil rights, educational equality, and community empowerment. She was born and raised in Drew, Mississippi. In 1965, her parents, Mae Bertha and Matthew Carter, and their seven children became the first Black family in Sunflower County to sign "freedom of choice" papers, integrating the Drew public school system. Their courageous story is documented in *Silver Rights* by Constance Curry, *The School Is Not White* by Doreen Rappaport, and the documentary *The Intolerable Burden*.

In 2015, Gloria was elected to the Sunflower County Board of Supervisors, becoming only the second woman to serve in that role. She founded the Mae Bertha Carter Learning Center in 2017, continuing her family's legacy by supporting youth and adults through education, African American history, health, life skills, and career development. Gloria lives in Drew, Mississippi with her family.

more to come...

Application

Before you apply

- ☐ I am between the ages of 18–35.
- ☐ I have read and understand: The pilgrimage is 9 days in July 2027, including required travel days.
- ☐ I have read and understand: Required preparation—pre-trip gatherings and post-trip gathering(s)—is part of the commitment, not to exceed 4 pre-trip and 2 post-trip meetings.
- ☐ I have attached a letter of recommendation from a UMC leader and a character reference from someone of my choosing. (A UMC leader can be campus pastor, lay leader within the UMC, Superintendent, pastor, camp director)
- ☐ I understand that there will be a registration fee of \$300 upon acceptance as a participant.

Submission: Email the completed application and required recommendation/reference letters to mississippipilgrimage@gmail.com by November 30, 2026.

1. About You

Full name

Name you use, if different

Pronouns (optional)

Email address

Mobile phone

Date of birth (used to confirm eligibility and, if selected, assist with travel arrangements)

Home address

City, state, ZIP code

Congregation, community organization, campus ministry, or other affiliation

UMC recommendation note: A UMC leader may be a UMC pastor, campus pastor, camp director, or lay leader within the UMC.

2. School and Work

I am currently: ☐ in college or graduate school ☐ in vocational or certificate training ☐ working ☐ between school/work ☐ other: _____

If you are enrolled in school or training, where?

What are you studying, or what field interests you?

If you are working, what kind of work do you do? (optional)

3. Your Interest in the Pilgrimage

Please answer in your own voice. Prior academic knowledge is not required.

Why do you want to participate in this pilgrimage? (approximately 100 words)

What do you already know—or think you know—about the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi and the South?

There is no expected level of knowledge; this helps us plan the learning experience. (approximately 100 words)

What do you hope to learn, experience, or better understand? (approximately 100 words)

How do you imagine carrying what you learn back into your congregation, school, workplace, family, or community? (approximately 150 words)

Civil rights history includes racial violence, murder, white supremacy, grief, resistance, courage, faith, and organizing. What support or practices help you remain present when learning about painful history?
(approximately 150 words)

Tell us about an experience in which you participated in a group with people whose backgrounds, beliefs, or life experiences differed from yours. (approximately 150 words)

4. Participation and Community

- ☐ I commit to participating in the full pilgrimage experience.
- ☐ I can attend the required pre-trip and post-trip gatherings, or communicate promptly about a conflict.
- ☐ I understand that the pilgrimage may include long travel days, emotionally difficult material, group reflection, and visits to sites connected with racial terror and resistance.
- ☐ I am willing to participate respectfully in a multiracial, interfaith, and/or theologically diverse group.
- ☐ I agree to follow the community covenant and safety expectations provided to participants.
- ☐ I commit to reading the assigned materials in preparation for the trip.
- ☐ I recognize that part of the trip may include home stays/staying in people's private homes.
- ☐ I understand that submitting an application does not guarantee a place on the pilgrimage.

Is there anything that could affect your ability to participate fully in the dates, preparation, travel, or group experience? Please describe only what you are comfortable sharing at this stage.

5. Food and Accessibility

Food allergies or dietary needs. Please identify allergies that could cause a serious reaction.

Accessibility needs or accommodations that would help you participate fully. This may include mobility, sensory, communication, learning, mental-health, rest, or other needs. This information will not be used to disadvantage applicants.

Anything else you would like the planning team to know about your well-being or participation? (optional)

6. Emergency Contact

Emergency contact name

Relationship to you

Primary phone

Alternate phone or email (optional)

7. Additional Information

Have you previously participated in a pilgrimage, service-learning trip, civil rights tour, mission trip, or extended group travel? If yes, briefly describe. (You can attach on another page)

Is there anything else you would like us to consider or share that we did not ask?

8. Applicant Acknowledgment

- ☐ The information in this application is accurate to the best of my knowledge.
- ☐ If selected, I agree to communicate promptly with pilgrimage leaders and complete required registration, consent, and travel forms by the stated deadlines.
- ☐ I understand that detailed travel information—including my legal name as shown on identification, identification details if required, medical information, medications, insurance information, roommate preferences, and release forms—will be collected separately only from accepted participants.

Applicant signature

Date

Optional Demographic Information

The planning team may use the following information to understand who is being reached and to form a diverse cohort. Responses are optional and should be reviewed separately from selection decisions whenever possible.

Race and/or ethnicity (optional; describe yourself in your own words) _____

Gender identity (optional; describe yourself in your own words) _____

How did you hear about this pilgrimage? (optional) _____

For Planning Team Use Only

Date received

Reviewer notes

Decision: ☐ accept ☐ waitlist ☐ decline ☐ follow-up conversation needed