The Board of Church and Society recommends that congregations read and discuss Debby Irving’s book *Waking Up White: And Finding Myself in the Story of Race* in an effort to better understand racism, white privilege and what we can do about it.

The book takes the reader on the author’s own journey of waking up to what it meant to be born white, to live in a predominantly white community and to perpetuate views of the white privileged world in which she lived. As she shares her own story of transformation, she illustrates through her own experiences, how she became aware of the reality of racism and how her own white privilege contributes to it. In the process, she acknowledges the struggle, the vulnerability and the pain that such a journey demands.

In the introduction to her book, Irving writes: “If I, a middle-aged white woman raised in the suburbs, can wake up to my whiteness, any white person can.”

By digging back into childhood memories of when, why and how she developed distorted ideas about race and racism and by exploring the origin of racism and it’s impact on social, economic and political systems, she uncovers the complexity of systemic racism and how it continues to be perpetuated in today’s society.

Particularly helpful are the questions at the end of each chapter. These offer both personal and group opportunities for exploration and reflection on white privilege and racialized ideas. Also, Irving offers resource suggestions for learning and engaging in racial awareness.

Rev. Karen Peters recently led a four session study group on Irving’s *Waking Up White* at St. Stephen’s UMC in Marblehead, MA. Following the study, congregants reported that the book was “revelatory” and expressed gratitude for the awakening of self awareness around the issues of privilege and racial justice.

One member said: “I’m working on my own awareness of what it means to be white: it’s taking small steps, but very important steps.” After reading the book, everyone agreed that racism is an issue that demands attention and action, Rev. Peters said.

Irving concludes her book on a similar note. She writes: “I can’t give away my privilege. I’ve got it whether I want it or not. What I can do is to use my privilege to create change.”

Meet Debby Irving in an online video and catch a glimpse of her story and her commitment to work for racial justice in [this video from TEDxFenway](this video from TEDxFenway).