

*“Let’s Talk About…” is a column in our monthly newsletter where we will learn one thing at a time about how we can love others the way they want to be loved. We will learn something each month that helps us understand and respect people who are different from us a little more deeply.*

This month, let’s talk about money. Jesus believed a poor widow could make a difference with a couple of mites, basically her literal two cents. Where she put that money mattered. Where we spend our money matters. This month is National Black Business Month, which highlights the achievements of Black entrepreneurs and Black-owned businesses.

If you haven’t already, take a moment to read Adam Kemper’s article for our Racial Justice Task Force in this newsletter. ...Now that you know the story of Black Wall Street, let’s talk about why spending our money with local, black-owned businesses makes a difference. In 2021, the median household income in Aurora for white families was \$80,922. At the same time, the median household income for Black families here was \$53,451. The percentage of white Aurora residents in poverty was 8.2%, compared with 15.1% for Black Aurora residents. (See this information and more, including the data for other racial and ethnic groups in our city, at this link: <https://www.city-data.com/city/Aurora-Colorado.html>).

Now, it is terrible that anyone lives in poverty, but it is embarrassing how easily I could predict these numbers. I could not have told you the specifics without looking it up, but across the country, Black families are about twice as likely to live in poverty compared to white families, and the median household income for Black households is a little over half of what it is for white households. In many major cities, the disparity is far worse; D.C.’s Black poverty rate is four times that of its white residents. Here, it’s a little better than that rule of thumb would say, but still says a lot about our country’s racial history.

This is why it matters when we spend our money at local businesses, and especially Black-owned local businesses. Consciously choosing where we shop makes a statement about what kind of economy and community we want.

That said, I confess that for grocery shopping, I default to big chain stores. It’s not realistic for most of us to transition to exclusively supporting small businesses, and certainly not overnight. So, here are 3 simple little things you can do to support local and Black-owned businesses without doing a bunch of research (although, that research is worthwhile!)

1. Try a new coffee shop. Have you heard of Endless Grind? It’s in the Target lot on Buckley, and Yelp says it’s the highest-ranked Black-owned business in Aurora. And I will personally add that their (always fair trade) coffee is great! But if that shop is too far out of your way, just try looking up coffee shops and pick one with a name you don’t recognize. Who knows, maybe you’ll find your new favorite drink and hangout!
2. Shop the vendors at festivals/fairs. We all know how amazing the artists are at our UWF Craft Fair in October, but there are also cool local vendors at Aurora Pride and Global Fest and many other community events. More often than not, you’ll actually meet the business owner at their booth and get to hear their story if you ask them. Even if you don’t have the cash to splurge too much on vendors at an event, listen to small business owners’ stories and share them in your circles. Maybe you’ll help someone find their new favorite artist.
3. Signal Boost: You know how there are people who make a career out of posting product promotions on social media? The cool thing is, you have that same power. You might even have more influence within your own circles because people know you’re not being paid to promote these things. So when you do #buylocal, take a picture and share it, and tag the business in your post. If social

media isn't your thing but email is, send an email to your friends who you think might appreciate knowing about the cool shop you found. And if computers are just a great big nope for you, then talk it up! Share the stories you've learned of entrepreneurs and their great local goods and services.

*Our "Let's Talk About..." column is one place where we can help one another learn how to be better allies for all our neighbors. If you have a question you'd like answered, or if there are things you wish others in our congregation better understood about your own marginalized identities or those for whom you are already a strong ally, please submit suggestions to <https://forms.gle/E9eRqZJGLgVagbDZ9> or email me directly at [virginiag@smokyhillumc.org](mailto:virginiag@smokyhillumc.org).*