

**MEETING MINUTES
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST BOARD
MARCH 3-5, 2023
THE WESTIN CLEVELAND DOWNTOWN
CLEVELAND, OHIO**

FIRST BUSINESS SESSION

Members Present:

David Ackerman, Joyce Bathke, Cameron Barr, Traci Blackmon, Emma Brewer-Wallin, Charles Buck, Molly Carlson, Rachel Chapman, Elly Chong, Jasmine Coleman Quinerly, Tyler Connoley, Tom Croner, Edward Davis, Courtney Dobbins, John Dorhauer, Jamar Doyle, Mark Dutell, Shernell Edney Stilley, Derrick Elliot, Gabrielle Fields, Julia Gaughan, Darrell Goodwin, Kevin Graham, Tim Hachfeld, Dick Hom, Eric Jackson, Gloria-Ann Muraki, Shari Prestemon, Gordon Rankin, Lawrence Richardson, Bethany Ruhl, Bob Sandman, Rushan Sinnaduray, D'Angelo Smith, Kylie Steever, Paul Tch , Karen Georgia Thompson, Elizabeth Walker, Marsha Williams, Jeanette Zaragoza-DeLeon

Members Excused and present by Zoom for Conversations with Karen Georgia Thompson and/or GMP Nominee vote: Brian Bodager, Hannah Cranbury, John Folk, Tracy Keene, Onyx Kuthuru, Careina Williams

Members Excused:

Keastin Bailey

Staff and Other Present:

David Anderson, Donyale Copeland, Sharon Fennema, Cynthia Gaffney, Charles Jefferson, Heather Kimmel, Alisa Lewis, Tami Marinella, Walter Reyes, Kent Siladi, Cheryl Williams, Yvette Wynn.

Roll Call and Declaration of a Quorum

Heather Kimmel, Secretary of the United Church of Christ Board, declared a quorum.

Welcome By Chair and Vice-Chair

Julia opens the meeting with striving toward openness and being together. Cameron opens his comments with gratitude for this in-person meeting.

Approval of Agenda

It was VOTED:

UCCB-23-03-01 To approve the Agenda as revised.

MOTION CARRIED

Approval of Consent Agenda

It was VOTED:

UCCB-23-03-02

To approve the Consent Agenda.

Supporting document: UCCB-23-02-02a-I Consent Agenda

MOTION CARRIED

UCCB-23-03-02a: to grant voice without vote to the following staff, guests and others making presentation to the UCCB: David Anderson, Donyale Copeland, Sharon Fennema, Cynthia Gaffney, Charles Jefferson, Heather Kimmel, Alisa Lewis, Tami Marinella, Walter Reyes, Kent Siladi, Cheryl Williams, Yvette Wynn.

UCCB-22-03-02b: to adopt the Governance Committee's recommendation that the United Church of Christ Board adopts the FINAL Group Exemption Compliance Report as set forth in Supporting Document UCCB-23-02-GOV-03 FINAL Group Exemption Compliance Report.

Supporting document: UCCB-23-02-GOV-03 FINAL Group Exemption Compliance Report

UCCB-23-03-02c: to adopt the Governance Committee's recommendation that the United Church of Christ Board release UCCB executive session minutes from February 2021 First Session; February 2021 Second Session.

UCCB-23-03-02d: to adopt the Governance Committee's recommendation that the United Church of Christ Board continues to hold the following UCCB Executive Session Minutes as confidential indefinitely due to a personnel matter: October 27, 2019; March 27, 2020; October 2, 2020.

UCCB-23-03-02e: to adopt the Governance Committee's recommendation that the United Church of Christ Board continues to hold the following UCCB executive session minutes confidential until further review: March 2021 (legal matter); July 2021 (legal matter); October 2021 (legal matter).

UCCB-23-03-02f: to adopt the Governance Committee's recommendation that the United Church of Christ Board continues to hold the following UCCB executive session minutes confidential permanently (personnel matter): October 2021.

UCCB-23-03-02g: to recommend that the United Church of Christ Board approve Emily McKenna, Rev. Freeman L. Palmer, and Charles Jefferson as nominees to the Board of Directors of UCC Media Justice Ministry (a.k.a. Office of Communication, Inc., OC Inc.), all for three-year terms.

Supporting document: UCCB-23-02-GOV-07-UCC Justice Media BoD Nominees

Supporting document: UCCB-23-02-GOV-08 UCC Media Justice Bd Demographics

UCCB-23-03-02h: to recommend to the General Synod Business Committee and on to the General Synod that the following group be accorded voice without vote at the 34th General Synod, under provisions of Rule 10 of the General Synod Standing Rules: Wellness Ministries

Supporting document: : UCCB-23-02-GOV-06_Wellness_Ministries_Voice_App

UCCB-23-03-02i: to receive the minutes and written reports from the following Committees and Task Forces:

Supporting document: UCCB-23-03-MKT-01 Report

Supporting document: UCCB-23-02-IE-02 Minutes of February 07,2023(89)

October 2022 Minutes Approval

It was VOTED:

UCCB-23-03-03 To approve the UCCB October Meeting Minutes.

Supporting document: UCCB-23-03-03 draft 10.21.2022 UCCB Meeting Minutes

MOVED: Cameron Barr

SECOND: Julia Gaughan

MOTION CARRIED

Governance Committee First Report: Election of New UCCB Members to Unexpired Terms By Marsha Williams

There have been several resignations recently for health and time constraints and not being able to focus on the board responsibilities.

It was VOTED:

UCCB-23-03-04 To approve the election of Cynthia Butts to fill unexpired board terms for the Class of 2025.

MOTION CARRIED

It was VOTED:

UCCB-23-03-05 To approve the election of Janese Murray to fill unexpired board terms for the Class of 2025.

Supporting document: UCCB-23-02-GOV-04-Cynta-Butts-and-Janese-Murray-Bios

MOTION CARRIED

GMP Search Committee: Process Discussion

By Emma Brewer-Wallin

Emma reviewed the GMP Search Committee's process. The release of the name of the selected candidate prior to the board meeting has created the need for further discussion as to trust and process. Confidentiality of names of the other candidates will remain.

Six candidates emerged as most aligned. In the winter of 2022, our semi-finalists emerged and then the finalist was determined.

Emma then took questions from members.

Can you share a general profile of the six candidates?

They currently serve in multiple settings of the Church. They represented well our commitments to uplifting women and people of color.

Who served on the search committee?

Information is available on the GMP search site.

What was the role of the search firm in the listening sessions and in support of the committee?

The contracted consultant, Isaacson Miller, served as staff to the committee, assisted in formulating questions and with record keeping. They assisted in drafting the position profile. The committee was responsible for the actual decision making. Once the nomination invitation period was open, Isaacson Miller individualized the outreach to potential candidates. Some candidates submitted their materials, and some were invited to apply. The consultant was the liaison with the 34 candidates, with whom they had a range of engagement. They held phone conversations and served in the first-round interview function. The committee received the information and decided how to proceed.

How did the committee use the information? What kind of rubrics did you use to say people were not going to be qualified, and did you have any interviews with those who were not part of the final six, or any interactions?

The committee used the information they received to determine which candidates were equipped to meet the challenges. Of the 34 candidates, 28 were not interviewed personally by the committee. Some left the process early. Semi-finalist interviews were held over Zoom and the primary rubric was closely aligned to the opportunities and challenges of the position as well as to the primary job description. The candidates were asked about leadership, financial knowledge, and previous experience in these roles. The opportunities and challenges were the key issues at this stage. The finalist stage was in-person and had four components – a meal, leading worship; sharing a significant accomplishment; and sharing their vision.

There was additional discussion about the rationale of not sharing the number of finalists.

The decision to release the name of the candidate before the vote came about with consultation with the Board Chair, the Office of General Counsel, and Human Resources. The intent was to set the candidate up for success. We anticipated that the candidate would meet with the CCM and heads of financial ministries, and that the National Setting would be notified. It got to a place of recognizing how many people would be on the inner circle. More than 100 people was significant and we wanted to eliminate rumors. The decision was motivated by clarity about who would know and when they would know.

Was there bias training? How did you discern the nuances, like what kind of worship experience the church needs?

The Search Committee had bias training with Velda Love, held listening sessions, and received additional training before any candidate applications were received. There was an emphasis on racial justice, but also brought in other bias issues. The committee discussed the subjectivity of the worship experience; the conversation included how we are showing up in the conversation.

A question was raised about not giving the Board the details it needs and further perpetuating distrust. The reply noted that the confidentiality of the other candidates, identity and number, was about the commitment the committee made to the candidates and those will not be revealed.

How did you mitigate familiarity bias so the decision could be neutral?

There were candidates that many of the committee knew and some that we did not know. Knowing the person was part of the discussion and was shared – we collectively held each other accountable on the clouding of personal experience.

Was the decision unanimous?

The process was as close to consensus as possible. In the end, everyone had the ability to live with and support the candidate. It was not unanimous as the first choice, but everyone was supportive of the candidate.

What was your prayer life like during this time? How did the Spirit show up in this process?

We frequently held candidates and members in prayer; it was part of our practice together. The Spirit showed up in the ways we were surprised – through conversation feeling us being moved and the level of honesty shared with the committee. It also showed up in the way the committee members were pastored by our candidates.

Were members of the search committee on the same page? Did everyone feel their opinion was valued?

The committee did not come to the decision lightly. All the finalists could have done the job well. We made sure everyone was heard. We went through the materials and conversations multiple times. We had conversations with committee members to ensure they could support the candidate.

What did you find was the benefit of using the search firm and were there any places where the committee experienced it as challenging?

The search firm had to understand the United Church of Christ. Isaacson Miller constituted part of the leadership team of the committee. The senior partner originally trained as a Baptist minister which has similar polity. The search firm were additional facilitators in the room and provided guidance. One challenge was that the committee took a while to feel they were steering the “ship” and the search firm provided guidance.

Was there training about dual role relationships?

No; it was a part of our internal culture we shared with one another.

If this candidate is not approved, what is the process? How do we mitigate the tension?

It depends on the nature of the conversation with this Board. We will continue to be in discernment with one another.

Questions were raised regarding the multiple step deliberative process.

The final decision is not simply relying on the search committee. There are multiple opportunities to discernment. There is the search committee, the Board, and then General Synod.

Questions were raised about when to release the candidate’s name.

Nearly all the work of the Board is public. A “no” vote would have been public information. In the most recent GMP search process, when John Dorhauer was nominated in 2015, we used a similar announcement timeline. The candidate's identity was revealed publicly between the search committee's decision and the Spring meeting of the UCCB.

SECOND BUSINESS SESSION

Shernell Edney Stilley opened the session with a devotional.

General Minister and President Report

By John Dorhauer

John Dorhauer began by saying that he is now in a season of transition; he continues to work on the foundations of his ministry as he transitions to next GMP. Highlights of his term include Three Great Loves and Join the Movement campaigns, a pandemic informed church, the sale of hotel and office building, and the newly built office areas. The Adese Fellowship is a collaboration between Church Building & Loan Fund and FaithINFO. We also experienced our first virtual General Synod, introduced weekly Tuesday and Thursday webinars, and held live worship services when the situation warranted. Frontline Faith was built, and UCC Everywhere was made available to congregations and Conferences. We eliminated medical debt, and formally engaged in coordination with the United Nations. We have envisioned new pathways. He noted Mel Toomey’s leadership and coaching: register the accomplishments and notice the difference they made.

He gives thanks for the last eight years which bears witness to the fact that we matter. Personally he gave thanks to his family, National Setting Senior Leadership, Conference Ministers and Board Chairs and National Setting staff.

Presentation Of GMP Candidate And Q&A Session
By Emma Brewer-Wallin and introducing Karen Georgia Thompson

Emma Brewer-Wallin introduced Karen Georgia Thompson as the nominee for General Minister and President. This is a non-verbatim summary of her presentation. She detailed her 14-year history as staff of the National Setting. The UCC is in a period of declining membership. By 2070 Christianity will be a minority religion. What lies before us as UCC. Her vision for UCC is to be a denomination spiritually engaged and diverse to welcome those marginalized due to their beliefs. Spiritual diversity should be added to what we welcome. There is a rise of the “non’s” – those who are spiritual but not claiming any particular religion or practicing one religion, including those who identify with more than one religious tradition. Decolonization Only one way to God. Can the church accommodate those who do not share expectations of membership, attendance and baptism? We have done this during the pandemic. We need to be present for those seeking and searching but not willing to make a permanent home. Mission – being mission minded – mission about accompaniment and presence. Connect the love of neighbor as the love for all. Mission allows us to be the justice seekers we are. Being church is locally rooted and globally engaged. Justice is the heart of UCC. Theological education is the grounding. We are justice focused. Mission and justice journey together. Decolonizing the church on all levels is a priority. We have work to do in the reframing.

Questions and Answers

What is the vision for the Board and relationships with it?

Cultivating and nurturing is another layer of relationship in the GMP position. We need to find ways to collaborative work together. Relationships facilitate the hard work to be done.

How do we grow the church and not alienate those not willing to change or where diversity does not exist?

We need to listen to where they are and consider the conversations we need to have. We need to create space for divergent opinions and that comes in a multiplicity of ways. We need to make space for diverse conversations. How do we make space for the ends of the bell curve – hold to core values and hold space and respect in the moment?

What is your vision for expanding with partners around the world?

We are working with Disciples of Christ and partners. We have 290 partners in 90 countries. We need to be aware of who our partners need to be and we will take recommendations from Global Relations Ministers.

How will you address the disparity of women in ministry?

Just showing up in spaces in a position of leadership speaks volumes. There are challenges in the placement in women. There are still places in which women are not ordained. There are critical issues around equity and value.

The GMP and JLCM have been the face of prophetic voice in the U.S. – what is our prophetic voice in the U.S. going to look like now?

Karen Georgia Thompson has had her voice in international issues and places. John Dorhauer and Traci Blackmon are the domestic voices. Moving into the GMP role will mean expanding domestic public theology.

What may the board of the future do to support the role of GMP?

Time and space for self-care is important. Prayer. We make space to listen to each other with mutuality and respect. Open communication. Avoid being paternalistic to women's leadership and black leadership.

What is your vision for Local Church – how do we prepare clergy for churches, sustainability, bi-vocational ministries, changing ministry in the Local Church?

Small churches are a significant part of who we are. The Conference Ministers are a significant part of the vision for Local Churches. They can name the different resources that may be needed and address issues in their context.

What is your vision for the UCC endowment?

We need to determine how to grow them over time and determine how are they working for us. Some funds are no longer serving mission and purpose. We also need to look at our relationship with UCF. There is a lack of endowed funds for OGMP; we have not yet found a reasonable way to about administration as ministry.

What do you see as ways to strengthen leadership and how can the National Setting support our Conferences and Associations and our clergy who feel called to serve the church but not in a Local Church?

We need to have everyone at the table and recognize who is not there and who is marginalized.

How do we get youth and young people back at the table?

We need to recognize that they are not an "add-on" and space needs to be made for them. We need to be willing to fund it.

Supporting document: UCCB-23-03-GMP Search-01 Recommendation to UCCB

Supporting document: UCCB-23-03-GMP Search-02 Isaacson Miller Report

Supporting document: UCCB-23-03-GMP Search-03 KGT Cover Letter

Supporting document: UCCB-23-03-GMP Search-04 KGT Resume

Supporting document: UCCB-23-03-GMP Search-05 KGT Doc

Subcommittee On Disposition

By Shernell Edney-Stilley and David Anderson

Seventeen resolutions have been submitted. Fifteen are Resolutions of Witness and two are Prudential Resolutions. The Resolutions of Witness will go to committees and then go to the plenary floor. One of the Prudential Resolutions can go directly to the General Synod floor and the other to the implementing body which is MESA. MESA is already taking on this work to amend the Manual on Ministry.

Two resolutions have similar titles. It is possible that the same committee will work on them.

Sending a resolution to the implementing body does not create controversy. General Synod will have it before them, but it does not go to committee since Synod has already spoken on this in the Bylaws.

**It was VOTED:
UCCB-23-03-06**

Sitting as the General Synod Committee on Disposition, to adopt the Report of the Subcommittee on Disposition.

Supporting document: UCCB-23-03-SoD-01 Report of the SoD

MOTION CARRIED

Abstentions

Bob Sandman

David Anderson asked for fourteen board members to serve as liaisons to the Committees that will be reviewing the resolutions, and he will be in touch with board members on this.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Executive Committee

By Cameron Barr

The minutes of the latest Executive Committee meeting are in BoardEffect. There is no major action before the committee.

Governance Committee Second Report

By Marsha Williams

**It was VOTED:
UCCB-23-03-07**

To nominate for election by the General Synod to the General Synod Nominating Committee Class of 2029 Andria Davis.

MOTION CARRIED

**It was VOTED:
UCCB-23-03-08**

To nominate for election by the General Synod to the General Synod Nominating Committee Class of 2029 Stephanie Perdew.

MOTION CARRIED

**It was VOTED:
UCCB-23-03-09**

To nominate for election by the General Synod to the General Synod Nominating Committee Class of 2029 Rebecca Sausser.

MOTION CARRIED

It was VOTED:

UCCB-23-03-10 To nominate for election by the General Synod to the General Synod Nominating Committee Class of 2029 Amy Roon.

MOTION CARRIED

Supporting Document UCCB-23-02-GOV-05 GSNC Nominee Bios amended 02.23.2023

Ministry Committee
By Emma Brewer-Wallin

The Committee maintains the relationship between the Manual on Church working group. There have been periodic updates and updates from AM21 and integrating feedback. General Synod will receive an update this summer. The intention to bring the current working definition of the Local Church and the draft version of the marks of faithful and vital churches. Neither require action by General Synod. A board game has been developed to help local congregations to engage in a relational way. It will be available for purchase at General Synod.

THIRD BUSINESS SESSION

Racial Equity Advisory Task Force
By Traci Blackmon and Yvette Wynn

In the last biennium we began to look into the history of racism with surveys and deep listening. We began by framing the work and being grounded in our statement of faith. Our goal was to build capacity for overcoming racism and be a model for local settings of the church. Our action plan included leveraging our cultural assets in the community and training; making vendor selections which take into consideration of the racial equity work; making sure we are transparent and build trust relationships by being in better communication with local church with a newsletter. There is still work ahead.

Yvette Wynn and Traci Blackmon provided a comprehensive report on the Racial Equity Strategic Action Plan, which is attached to these minutes as Exhibit A.

AMG Report: Justice & Local Church Ministries
By Traci Blackmon and Sharon Fennema

Justice & Local Church Ministries is actively involved with the Join the Movement campaign which is a hub of anti-racism stories. There are currently 2200 subscribers. We have 21 stories, 18 resources, and 12 commentaries posted. A youth curriculum launched in Wisconsin. We have community and global partners. There is also a JTM covenant to anti-racist practices as well as a social media campaign. We are offering a series, engagement videos, facilitated discussions, and a Juneteenth celebration. The focus at General Synod will be connecting generations.

Traci Blackmon provided a comprehensive report on JLCM's attention to the Strategic Priorities Initiatives through 2022, which is attached to these minutes as Exhibit B.

Finance And Budget Committee

By Derrick Elliott

Derrick Elliot described the various factors affected financials for 2022, including but not limited to: receipts for basic support continue to decrease, Pilgrim Press sales were under budget, various position vacancies, attrition of retired mission personnel and the new build out of the space.

It was VOTED:

UCCB-23-03-11 To receive the preliminary and unaudited Combined Operating Income Statement and Balance Sheet for the year ended December 31, 2022, as presented.

*Supporting Document UCCB 23-02-FB-03 Prelim IS & BS as of 12-31-22
Motion from committee*

MOTION CARRIED

It was VOTED:

UCCB-23-03-12 To adopt and recommend to General Synod for adoption:

1) A projected National Basic Support allocation of \$3.67 million for the budget year 2024 and \$3.49 million for the budget year 2025; and

2) That the percentage allocations for 2024 and 2025 be based on the recommendation of the United Church of Christ Board.

Supporting Document UCCB 23-02-FB-04 Basic Support Projection

MOTION CARRIED

Abstentions

Traci Blackmon
Jeanette Zaragoza De Leon
Bob Sandman

General Synod Program & Planning Committee

By Bob Sandman and Rushan Sinnaduray

Meetings of the General Synod Program and Planning Committee were held in September and February. We discussed the policy for the educational intensives for each Resolution of Witness.

The purpose of the intensives is to provide background information on the resolutions to the delegates. These will be held in person in Indianapolis. They will be neutral in perspective. There is interest in a consensus decision making process and are exploring how we can have consensus decision making at General Synod. There are 118 days to opening gavel; to date we have 267 total registrations.

**Additional Conversation with General Minister and President Nominee
Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson**

Emma reminded board members that the search process had the core values of confidentiality and ensuring the success of the candidate.

Karen Georgia answered questions from board members.

Can you unpack how you collaborate with multiple decision makers?

The co-executives of the Common Global Ministries Board make decisions together and that requires collaboration and conversations with our counterpart, the Division of Overseas Ministries. On the other hand, DOM and WCM are structured differently, and decision-making within each denomination is done differently. We function as one staff but we are two denominations.

There is a tension to being GMP; it is two jobs. How are you holding the tension?

The General Minister is the public theological voice. As President, the position is the head of staff of the National Setting and has interaction with the Board. It is internal, external, and international. The position requires fluidity and not rigidity.

This organization sometimes seems staff driven and we are not active as a board; what is your perspective on that?

The Board is a governance board and that means something about the relationship that the board has with staff; the day-to-day work falls to the GMP and is held in conversation with the Board chair for reporting dynamics. There is a tension with a governance board as to how they engage programmatically and day to day.

How do we build space for the ministers to be authentic and not follow the typical construct?

We are spiritual people with a sense of heritage and culture – challenge as Christians – the heritage and culture were interrupted. We need to decolonize the church. The theology is very rooted in colonialism. We need to talk about what it really means. The United Church of Christ in the Philippines is making space in the recovery of practices of indigenous peoples and recognizes that there needs to be inclusion of their culture and spirit. We decolonize by deliberately including.

There was a brief discussion of the IEUPR Resolution and what it looks like for us to be in conversation with that independent denomination.

What are the plans to establish collaboration with multiple stakeholders such as COREM & racial equity groups?

We need to meet with the groups and attend to the support and hear them. The ongoing struggles are real and we need to hear from the groups. What commitments are being made to aid in collaboration?

What is your perspective on the future financial sustainability of the UCC?

For the future sustainability of the denomination, we need to start thinking differently about development and such a large portion tied to endowments. Can we diversify our funding stream by reaching out into grant funding? The larger change is the offering plate mentality. People want to engage differently. They want to know how it is spent and what difference it is making. We need to communicate better. Given a purpose, people will give.

It was VOTED:

UCCB-23-03-13 To move into Executive Session (Board members only).

[Minutes were not kept for this session, which was a confidential discussion of personnel matters.]

It was VOTED:

UCCB-23-03-14 To return to Regular Session.

It was VOTED:

UCCB-23-03-15 To accept the recommendation of the GMP Search Committee to nominate Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson for election by the General Synod to the office of General Minister and President.

Secretary's Note: UCC Bylaw 219 provides: "The candidate chosen by the search committee is confirmed by a two-thirds vote of the United Church of Christ Board before the candidate's name is placed before the General Synod."

*The UCCB is constituted at 51 members.
A two-thirds vote requires 34 affirmative votes.*

Results of the Election (conducted by anonymous ballot)
39 in favor
7 against
3 abstentions

The candidate's name will be placed before the General Synod for election to the office of General Minister and President.

FOURTH BUSINESS SESSION

Shernell Edney Stilley provided closing worship.

AGM Report – Wider Church Ministries

By Karen Georgia Thompson

In response to war in Ukraine, we visited four countries and partners working with refugees. Three million dollars were collected to assist the work in that area. Churches were opening their homes and building for the refugees. Church World Service created mini grocery stores for basic necessities and food items. We are contributing to refugee centers with access to services to develop skill training programs. We have raised \$70,000 to assist in the earthquake areas of Turkey & Syria. The need is greater than what has been raised. We work with those affected by the hurricane season and climate change disasters. We receive daily updates from partners on the ground. The provision of sanctuary and shelter to the homeless continues to be important.

We continue with Thursdays in Black campaign. We continue to work on ending gender-based violence and period injustice. Women and girls who do not have what they need to attend to their cycle.

Karen Georgia discussed some governance issues relating to the Common Global Ministries Board and this Board's responsibilities and noted that proposed changes would be forthcoming in the UCCB Standing Rules.

WCM owns properties in Japan, and a discussion of the possible transfer of the property will be brought to this Board.

AFFILIATED & ASSOCIATED MINISTRIES

Pension Boards

By Walter Reyes

The Pension Boards provided over \$2 million to post-retirement needy clergy. The Ministerial Vitality Financial Program is thriving. Generations provides financial resources for refinancing clergy debt. The Credit Union has been in discussion for some time as part of a General Synod resolution. We will be looking for more conversation at General Synod.

Pension Boards, United Church Funds and the Council for Health and Human Services Ministries provided comprehensive reports which are attached to these minutes as Exhibit C.

Council of Conference Ministers

By Darrell Goodwin

The Council of Conference Ministers met in a spirit of welcome and inclusion. Half of the Conference Ministers are new Conference ministers. We are dedicated to being a collective voice for the local church. We have a commitment to be a Ministry of presence and partner with each other.

Cameron Barr provided additional comments related to the AGM renomination:

Karen Georgia Thompson has withdrawn her candidacy for Associate General Minister. While she is not presuming the action of General Synod, she cannot stand for two positions at one time. The leadership of the Board has discussed the vacancy. There isn't the time to fill it and the position will not be vacated (presuming) until General Synod. It is the intention in the months prior to General Synod that there will be an acting AGM for two years through the next biennia and then there will be an election for the position. This is consistent with what was done in the past.

The Board has authority the to appoint an acting officer. Further discussion is needed for the process.

It was VOTED:

UCCB-23-03-16 To move into Executive Session.

MOVED: Cameron Barr

SECONDED: Beth Walker

MOTION CARRIED

[See separate minutes]

It was VOTED:

UCCB-23-03-17 To move into Regular Session.

MOTION CARRIED BY CONSENSUS

It was VOTED:

UCCB-23-03-18 To approve the minutes of October 21, 2022 Executive Session.

MOVED: Cameron Barr

SECONDED: Emma Brewer-Wallin

MOTION CARRIED

Abstentions

Cynthia Butts

Janese Murphy

New Business

Board leadership, on behalf of Kevin Graham spoke about the upcoming need for the next Chair & Vice-Chair for UCCB. All those interested should contact him. The Vice-Chair is traditionally elevated to Chair but the Committee is still looking for the Vice-Chair. The nominee would need to be in the Class 2025 and Class of 2027.

Kent Siladi provided Join the Movement development training for the Board.

Adjournment



RACIAL EQUITY
STRATEGIC
ACTION PLAN

2023

building a just world

PREFACE

In 2020, the United Church of Christ Board (UCCB), acting in compliance with a General Synod 33 resolution of public witness to declare and respond to racism as a public health crisis and develop strategies for the Church to address these findings, commissioned the national setting of the United Church of Christ to establish a Racial Justice Task Force for the purpose of acknowledging the history of racism within the Church and its impact on our prophetic witness and discipleship today.

Some members of the task force were appointed by the United Church of Christ Board, others were appointed by the Council of Conference Ministers, and others were selected through a denomination-wide selection process. The Task Force chose to issue a [Request for Information](#) in hopes of finding a suitable accompanying organization for such a task. After a robust search the Task Force selected [Culture Brokers](#) as our consulting partner for this effort. Over the course of a year data was collected and compiled from more than 900 partners in varied stakeholder ministry groups representing a wide variety of religious interest. Survey participants self-identified as local church pastors, ministry partners, denomination leadership, national staff, laity, and historically underrepresented groups (HUGS), to name a few. Survey questions were crafted to solicit response in eight categories: Cultural Capital, Financial Investments, Human Development, Natural Environment, Political Capital, Social Capital, Spiritual Capital & Built Environment. The tabulated results served as a guide for the Racial Justice Task Force as it identified areas of strength and needed growth for both immediate and long-term attention. Understanding the work of dismantling systems and embedded patterns of racism is life-long work, the Task Force, along with national setting senior leadership, identified three dimensions for immediate redress. The immediate actions are designed to be accomplished in 12 months or less and provide encouragement for the long work ahead.

Our Equity Strategic Action Plan (ESAP) is a strategic and tactical plan to help get the most important measurable results within the first 12 months. Our prioritized improvements were identified by the task force based on the surveys. Strengths represent areas either the people or the church is perceived to handle well. Cultural Capital was selected to represent our area of strength or things respondents perceived the church to do well. Likewise, there are things we do less well and our perceived Dimension of Weakness is Financial Investment. Our Dimension of Opportunity is Political Capital, which leverages core competencies and supports existing strategic initiatives. The ESAP provides structural support for effective behavior, with a focus on improving our policies, practices, and situations. It is a first step on our journey to systematically and rigorously deliver on our racial equity promise. This work is a long-term commitment because becoming more equitable is a developmental process that never ends. As we develop this first ESAP—the first of many—we engage in active learning—conducting an iterative process of harnessing the inherent power of the organization’s structural, social, and individual influences.

Yvette Wynn
Racial Justice Task Force, Chair

Rev. Traci D. Blackmon
Associate General Minister
Justice & Local Church Ministries

“It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences.”

—Audre Lorde, poet.

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UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST STATEMENT OF FAITH IN THE FORM OF A DOXOLOGY

authorized by the Executive Council 1981

We believe in you, O God, Eternal Spirit, God of our Savior Jesus Christ and our God, and to your deeds we testify:

You call the worlds into being, create persons in your own image, and set before each one the ways of life and death.

You seek in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin.

You judge people and nations by your righteous will declared through prophets and apostles.

In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Savior, you have come to us and shared our common lot, conquering sin and death and reconciling the world to yourself.

You bestow upon us your Holy Spirit, creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ, binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races.

You call us into your church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship, to be your servants in the service of others, to proclaim the gospel to all the world and resist the powers of evil, to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table, to join him in his passion and victory.

You promise to all who trust you forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace, courage in the struggle for justice and peace, your presence in trial and rejoicing, and eternal life in your realm which has no end.

Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto you.

Amen.





PREAMBLE

The United Church of Christ believes wholeheartedly in the establishment of racial equity reflected in our practices, behaviors, and governing documents. With vigilance we are committed to pursuing deep understandings of the ongoing persistence of racial inequity and animus in our existing structures. We are committed fully to rooting them out in order to establish and maintain a culture of racial equity.

For many years, there has been concern in the UCC about the lack of ethnic and racial diversity in UCC pulpits and congregational life. Currently the National Setting of the UCC focuses on complementing and supplementing the work of our Conferences and congregations, creating greater welcome and inclusion in the UCC, strengthening people's experiences of UCC praxis and faith and thereby strengthening congregations, and enhancing growth, diversity and inclusion within the entire denomination.

As the church continues to align our operations, culture, and ministries with our values around racial diversity, equity, and inclusion, we recognize denominational leadership must lead by example. **We dream that our ESAP process is informative, transformational, and inspirational. Although the focus of the Assessment is on the UCC National Setting, we hope that it will provide a model and specific ideas for change in our congregations.**

THEOLOGICAL GROUNDING

The history of the United Church of Christ provides a guide as we continue to reflect on our Christian responsibility to strive for *a just world for all*. Bringing together as we do the history and wisdom of our predecessor traditions, we have learned the importance of allowing our diversity in opinion, embodiment, and expression to be a manifestation of our unity as a church. We have also learned the importance of grounding our theological reflection within the texts and traditions that have been passed down to us. These texts and traditions are crucial resources for our own reflection, guiding us, but not dictating to us, in our ongoing search to create a church that reflects Christ's teaching and embodies what it means for us to live as the "body of Christ."

The faith which has animated the United Church of Christ and our predecessor traditions has given primacy to what God is *doing* in creation and who we are called to be in that work. This has been called in the broad Christian tradition the *Missio Dei* and encapsulated in our life as *God is Still Speaking*. This inclination to shape our life as a Church as response to God's very active presence in the world is deeply eschatological. Meaning deeply entwined with our understanding of the anticipated consummation of God's plan for creation. The promise of the Resurrection—the content of our eschatology, has been for us not just a distant hope but, rather a significant guide for who and how we ought to be in the world. It is part of the now but not yet character of our faith. This theological commitment has reflected itself in the habit of our predecessor traditions—Reformed, Evangelical, Congregationalist, Afro-Christian and others to build institutions that reflect our understanding of how the world *ought to be* in light of the world promised to us in scripture.

The institutions we have built that reflect this theological inclination have drawn on other parts of wisdom from of our predecessor traditions. Namely, that the experience of participation in God's work in the world—the experience of redemption, takes shape in local contexts. This has meant that as a church we have been as concerned about the internal relationships which comprise us as we have been about our external relationships with the world. A key insight motivating our life as a church is that *we belong to one another*. This impels us to listen to one another, particularly those whose voices are muted in our culture and society. In this, we are noticing of who Jesus was most attentive toward thus creating a model for his earliest followers.

Our history as a church demonstrates an outsized concern for not only the condition of "marginalized outsiders" in our midst but also hearing their wisdom for living into our calling. A calling to reflect in our current world and circumstance what we believe to be the world God promises us in Christ Jesus, a world filled with justice and peace.

Much of our theological framing of the ESAP work in the National Setting is rooted in our understanding of the UCC Statement of Faith. It expresses the unique expression of the historic Christian faith that is the United Church of Christ. We see throughout the Statement an emphasis on the common humanity that we share as beings created in the




image of God. That common humanity implies a fundamental equality which conditions of injustice and inequity obscure. We see also that injustice, inequity, and oppression emerge from the human tendency to turn away from God and to pursue our own needs, wants, and desires.

This is what is meant by sin. We “miss the mark” when we do not focus on how God intends us to live together. It is only by seeking to overcome sinful social conditions that we can create a more equitable world. The Statement bears witness that it is the grace manifested in Jesus Christ which gives us guidance and strength in this work.

Finally, we are reminded that the primary way in which we as Christians strive to make a more equitable world is in and through the ministries and witness of the Church.

While our churches are no less flawed and human than any other institution, and while the church’s history provides ample evidence that sin, oppression, and inequality can find a home even in the body of Christ, we nevertheless believe that, in the power of the Holy Spirit, the church is always striving to become a community that truly and fully reflects the community of love, equality, and mutual care that God calls us to be.

In light of this theological reflection, we make explicit particular theological assumptions about the UCC National Setting that we hope may be of guidance and source of hope for the work of our broader Church.

We are connected...

We believe in God, the Eternal Spirit. Our belief in God is made known to us in Jesus our brother. Intentionally seeing Jesus in the light of “our brother” helps us to then see our relational connection intentionally to our human brothers (and sisters) in our world today. God calls the worlds into being, creates humankind in the divine image, and sets before us the ways of life and death. We unashamedly proclaim that the divine image is revealed in everyone regardless of race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, age, social economic status, etc. Thus, we are not only connected to one another in the life of humanity, but we are connected to God in divine relationship. In a world that seeks to proclaim that some of us are not loved by God, our connection on earth with one another is a radical act of justice which reaffirms God’s connection with each of us, individually and collectively.

Our connection fosters the sacred act of love. As James Baldwin asserted, in *The Fire Next Time*, “Love takes off the masks that we fear we cannot live without and know we cannot live within. I use the word “love” here not merely in the personal sense but as a state of being, or a state of grace—not in the infantile American sense of being made happy but in the tough and universal sense of quest and daring and growth.” God seeks in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin. God judges all humanity and all nations by that will of righteousness declared through prophets and apostles. In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Lord, God has come to us and shared our common lot, conquering sin and death and reconciling the whole creation to its Creator.

We are called...

Because of various oppressions that exists in our world today, many persons enter our faith communities searching and longing for divine inspiration in their lives. Many arrive on the

steps of our faith communities seeking to grapple with the proverbial question, “What is God doing in my life and the lives of those whom I love?” As the Church, we answer the clarion call to justice. God bestows upon us the Holy Spirit, creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ, binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races. God calls us into the church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship, to be servants in the service of the whole human family, to proclaim the gospel to all the world and resist the powers of evil, to share in Christ’s baptism and eat at his table, to join him in his passion and victory.

God promises to all who trust in the gospel forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace, courage in the struggle for justice and peace, the presence of the Holy Spirit in trial and rejoicing, and eternal life in that kingdom which has no end. Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto God. Amen.



UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

PURPOSE STATEMENT (FROM THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW):

To love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength and our neighbor as ourselves.

VISION STATEMENT:

United in Christ's love, a just world for all.

MISSION STATEMENT:

United in Spirit and inspired by God's grace, we welcome all, love all, and seek justice for all.

Our History

The United Church of Christ (UCC), a united and uniting church, was born on June 25, 1957 out of the union of five religious streams that shared common theology: the Congregational Churches, the Christian Church, the Evangelical Synod of North America, the Reformed Church, and the Afro-Christian Church. The denomination is served by 36 Conferences divided into 7 regions comprised of approximately 4,700 churches and 745,000 members that span the United States. According to our [2022 Statistical Profile](#) 83% of United Church of Christ churches identify as White. In this context, 17% of congregations identify as Black, Indigenous, or People of Color churches with the second largest group being Black congregations who are less than 5% of the denomination. While most mainline Protestant churches are experiencing membership declines, UCC membership is 1/3 of its size at inception. Larger congregations (more than 50 people on a Sunday) are commonly urban or suburban and consist predominantly of collegeeducated people with few in attendance in their 20s or early 30s. In spite of decreasing size, the UCC remains a respected and robust global witness to progressive faith, justice, and ecumenism. The rich history of the denomination can be further explored [here](#).

The Role of National Setting

The UCC currently has a staff of 115 (approximately 1/3 of its size when the National Setting relocated from New York City to Cleveland 32 years ago.) The National Setting of the UCC is governed by the United Church of Christ Board (UCCB), which is comprised of representation across the breadth of the denomination. We believe our work has had a significant impact. Both the UCCB and National Setting are purposefully racially diverse. Nevertheless, we still are a denomination of predominantly white ministers and congregations, and non-white enculturation remains challenging. For years, there has been concern in the UCC about the lack of ethnic and racial diversity in UCC pulpits and congregational life. There have also been formal and informal allegations of racism and/or racial bias within the National Setting.

The National Setting works collaboratively with Local Churches but not prescriptively. Currently the National Setting of the UCC:


- Services the needs of our conferences and local congregations
- Stewards the resources of the denomination
- Shepherds our ecumenical and interfaith relationships
- Supports global ministry through partnerships and presence
- Strengthens our collective public witness for justice, supported by scripture and Synod [resolutions](#)

The National Setting takes seriously its call to follow the teachings and ministry of Jesus by centering the humanity of those who may have been relegated to the margins by society. As such, we employ staff who work to center the voices of those burdened by the sin of injustice. Through scripture and Synod Resolutions the concerns of the people are heard. In response the National Setting employs staff to advocate nationally and globally for economic justice, creation justice, immigration justice, gender justice, racial justice, LGBTQIA justice, disability justice, mental health, historically underrepresented groups (HUGS), youth and young adults. Because we are multidimensional beings our lives often intersect with multiple broken hearts and systems. The historical reality of human exploitation in this country means racial inequity meets us at many of these intersections. When we fail to honor the full humanity and divinity of one another beyond difference we grieve the heart of God. The National Setting is committed to the eradication of the sin of injustice wherever it is found.

Currently we have a Minister of Racial Justice who has developed [anti-racism trainings](#) that are outward facing for congregations and affiliate ministries. Some Local Churches, partner ministries, and Conferences use these resources. Others do not. Some Local Churches and Conferences have either constructed their own anti-racism trainings or contracted with outside vendors. Some churches have not engaged at all.

In addition to anti-racism training, the Minister of Racial Justice:

- Builds and supports regional racial justice cohorts.
- Supports the Council for Racial and Ethnic Ministries (COREM)
- Creates, disseminates, and facilitates the National Setting's signature platform: Sacred Conversations to End Racism. (SC2ER)
- Advocates and advances the cause of justice wherever injustice is found.



However, the work of dismantling racism is the work of the entire church, and as such there is no ministry and/or minister excused from this cause. In 2016 the General Minister and President led a group to author [The White Privilege Curriculum](#), a study guide for the whole church. United Church of Christ by-laws mandate racial/ethnic balance in General Synod delegations and on the United Church of Christ Board, The Daniel Hand Fund provides annual scholarship aid to UCC related AMA institutions that educate persons of African descent. Modest financial allocations are provided annually to amplify the vital work of racial/ethnic groups that comprise less than 20% of the membership. The Human Resource Department has procedures and policies in place that are designed to prevent racial discrimination in the hiring and operational practices of the National Setting. We have made some significant strides and the United Church of Christ is committed to the ongoing journey toward eradicating the sin of racism and removing barriers to equality that divide the body of Christ against itself. We know that there are other ways in which we are not a fully inclusive denomination. Many young adults continue to report that they feel marginalized. Members with physical and other disabilities often feel unsupported. Approximately 30% of our Local Churches are designated Open & Affirming, a designation adopted by churches that are welcoming of LGBTQIA+ individuals. Both working class and upper-class people who worship in our congregations sometimes report experiencing exclusionary bias.

Our 20/30 clergy group, members of the Next Generation Leadership Initiative, a new pastor mentoring program, and our international interns are overwhelmingly White. Ultimately, we want to understand the barriers to inclusion in all these areas as we work to become a more whole organization—welcoming and fully inclusive to all.

While we acknowledge the need to address all these concerns, there are several reasons why the focus currently needs to be on race. Some of the reasons include:

- The desire to build on the racial equity work that preceded our union and has remained a primary undertaking of the church for 66 years.
- The General Synod has passed 86 [resolutions](#) concerning race and/or ethnic concerns.
- Reports of anti-black racism at several levels of the denomination.
- The recognition that Black, Indigenous, and People of Color who are engaged with the UCC have asked that we undertake an Institutional Assessment focused on race and racism.
- Acknowledgement that several Conferences, affiliate ministries, plus several congregations, have formal communications endorsing becoming anti-racist bodies.
- The realization that a race-focused plan will generate more concrete and meaningful institutional change needed to fully live into the community scripture calls us to be.¹

¹Often, race-focused conversations derail because people are using the same terms in different ways. One of the of communicating effectively about race is to move people from the narrow and individualized definition of racism to a more comprehensive and systemic awareness. To illuminate racism, we need to “name it, frame it and explain it.” Establishing a shared language to present data, describe conditions and outcomes and identify root causes of inequities serves an important function. A common language creates a narrative that makes it easier to communicate the commitment to racial equity, both internally and externally, and it creates a platform for coordinated work toward equitable outcomes.

Our Commitment

The National Setting fully commits to the long-term work of becoming a racially equitable and culturally competent workplace by recruiting, hiring, retaining, and developing a staff whose demographics more closely mirror the full human community.² We will seek to build mutually rewarding relationships among people with diverse racial, cultural, economic, ages and religious identities, as well as those with varying physical abilities, gender identities and sexual orientations, by intentionally reaching beyond our traditional allies and constituencies and entering intercultural relationships with humility, prepared to listen, learn, follow their lead, and adapt our methods and practices to achieve mutual benefit.

Goals for Our Racial Equity Assessment

Building institutional capacity around seeing and overcoming structural racism. The UCC wants to acquire the skills to continue this work without the help of outside consultants. Naming the barriers to full participation in the UCC at all its levels. The UCC wants to be thorough in examining all levels and aspects of the institution.

Revealing steps and pathways that will lead us to be the racially inclusive church that we know God is calling us to be. The UCC seeks to be a more welcoming, racially inclusive organization.

Providing clear sense of next steps—both content and direction. The UCC wants clear goals that we can hold ourselves accountable to in the next 1 to 3 years.

Helping the UCC articulate change goals and develop wide ownership of these goals. The UCC wants to develop a vision for inclusion that is broadly owned by staff, governance, and our member bodies.

We dream that the Assessment and the resulting work undertaken by the national setting is informative, transformational, and inspirational. Although the focus of the Assessment is on the UCC National Setting, we hope that it will provide a model, specific ideas for change, and an entry point to dialogue with our Conferences and local congregations, some of whom have launched similar endeavors. Our long-term vision is UCC congregations throughout the US which by and large mirror the changing demographics of society and the communities they are in—in terms of race, class, gender, educational attainment, age, ability, etc.—and that congregations will exist in a wide variety of places.

The main purpose of this Equity Strategic Action Plan (ESAP) is to facilitate a disciplined, measurable approach that will guide the UCC National Setting's goal of achieving racial equity.³

²We acknowledge the United Church of Christ has many congregations located in regions bereft of significant racial/ethnic diversity and we also acknowledge that the eradication of racism is more than diverse representation and involves an unlearning of race as a social construct as opposed to God's design. Anti-racism is about honoring God's image in the other.

³Equity vs. Equality

Equity involves trying to understand and give people what they need to enjoy full, healthy lives. Equality, in contrast, aims to ensure that everyone gets the same things in order to enjoy full, healthy lives. Like equity, equality aims to promote fairness and justice, but it can only work if everyone starts from the same place and needs the same things.

The plan will guide the development and implementation of policies, practices and behaviors that facilitate opportunities and confront barriers to full inclusion.

The plan will address diversity, equity and inclusion issues within the National Setting. It will also address racial equity issues in relationship to programmatic initiatives under the direction of the National Setting.

In addition to the benefits to the National Setting and the overarching scope of programming directed by the National Setting, it is our intention to use our goals, learning, and results to encourage Conferences, Associations and local churches in the advancement of their own work to address racial and ethnic inequities.

The following principles must be front and center when executing this Equity Plan:

Use Disaggregated Data and Information

One of the drivers of disparity is the inability or unwillingness to examine results of policies and activities for segmented racial, ethnic or cultural groups. To achieve equity, therefore, we must collect and analyze quantitative and qualitative information in this way. Collect data segmented (at minimum) by census-based racial and ethnic categories to the degree that it is available and use that data to create options and make decisions.

Make Data-Driven Decisions

Another driver of disparity is the unwillingness to use segmented data, both qualitative and quantitative, to make decisions that ensure parity. Consider racial and ethnic information as we work, both within the National Setting and within the governance structure of the National Setting. Compare results for each group against their presence across programmatic, governance, and ministerial areas and against results of the other groups. Provide these analyses when making recommendations.

Leverage Existing Assets

We have valuable assets at our fingertips: the experiences of those directly impacted by this work, knowledgeable staff, board members as well as local churches, conferences, other/wider settings of the church, partners, community members, professional services, to the extent this information is shared with the National Setting. Tap into these institutional resources at all phases of our work.

Use Existing Authority

The Officers of the United Church of Christ, the Board of Directors of the United Church of Christ (UCCB), the Senior Leadership Team, staff members within the National Setting, committee members for all standing and ad hoc committees and task forces empaneled by the UCCB have individual powers within their jobs and roles. Explore and utilize these authorities as necessary to deliver on this Equity Plan.

Make Policy Changes

We have numerous policies across the life of the National Setting and UCCB. While delivering on this Equity Plan, uphold or strengthen policies that will deliver strong equity results. Be ready to create new policies as appropriate to support this Equity Plan and change policies that create barriers.

Use Equity to Balance Decisions

When making decisions, give equity sufficient weight. Use segmented data, historical information, and quality comparisons. Develop a method for considering equity results balanced against financial impacts and other programmatic or ministerial goals, such as a decision matrix¹ or balanced scorecard². This will center the interests of People of Color.

Other Diversity and Inclusion Activities

Diversity and inclusion work are happening in many ways throughout the organization. This plan is not intended to restrict that work, but rather identify our required efforts necessary to achieve key racial equity goals over the next year. Leaders and managers are welcome to support additional opportunities to deliver equity results as their resources allow, if the enclosed strategic improvements are accomplished within the timelines we establish.⁴

Main Audience

This plan is written specifically to guide the Officers of the United Church of Christ, the United Church of Christ Board of Directors, National Setting staff, and all committees engaged in work on behalf of the National Setting in:

- Deciding how to allocate organizational resources, both financial and human resources.
- Supervising others to ensure strategic plans are implemented; and/or
- Supporting planned equity work.

The target audience for this plan is the National Setting of the United Church of Christ as represented by the Officers, Board, and staff, as well as anyone engaged in work on behalf of the National Setting. We will refer to the Equity Plan as decisions about, where and how to assign people, money, materials, time, energy, and attention. We will also help hold our direct reports accountable to achieving these equity goals.

Other Audiences

This plan will be easily accessible to all settings of the United Church of Christ, all ecumenical and lay partners to the National Setting, and anyone seeking to be in relationship with the United Church of Christ so they are knowledgeable about our path forward and our progress.

Plan Oversight

The Racial Equity Advisory Task Force, as appointed by the United Church of Christ Board and including members of the Senior Leadership Team will be responsible for ensuring governance and workplace accountability to the Equity Strategic Action Plan.

Plan Coordination

The Senior Leadership Team of the National Setting and the United Church of Christ Board Chair (or designee) are responsible for managing the Equity Strategic Action Plan to assure consistent application of the plan and its principles and coordinate with the appropriate partners to provide excellent leadership and support to others as they implement the plan.

⁴Please note that it is our strong belief that, since this strategic plan is being developed in response to and/or as a component of a Race Audit, a significant opportunity and meaningful resource to address the racial elephant in the room is active partnership with the program, Sacred Conversations to End Racism (SC2ER). In addition our intent is that this plan engage the General Synod and UCC Board as appropriate in re-education processes and conversations must be advised to both the General Synod and the workplace environments.

Responsibilities include:

- Tracking workplace progress regularly.
- Briefing staff, board, and other key stakeholders semiannually on work plan progress.
- Coordinating quarterly meetings with designated individuals and teams who are engaging decided metrics.
- Collectively assess, clarify, and update Equity Plan decisions.
- Identify and address the need for additional and updated resources and identify leadership and staff with access to relevant resources as needed.
- Track and celebrate accomplishments, large and small Essential elements to achieve desired outcomes include:
- Adequate financial investment, in the form of an annual budget allocation, to staff and support the operational and programmatic racial equity work across the life of the UCC.
- Inclusive and transparent decision-making processes, with equity as an essential lens through which outcomes of decisions are viewed.

One important sign of success of the Assessment will be that members who previously felt marginalized will comment that they see positive changes toward belonging.

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST EQUITY STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN (ESAP)

This Equity Strategic Action Plan (ESAP) is the next logical step toward operationalizing our commitment to diversity, inclusion and equity. It is based on results from the 2021 Diamond Inclusiveness Assessment (DIA) (*Appendix I Results Report and related listening sessions, feedback and lessons learned, as well as efforts and methods used by other organizations seeking to improve racial equity and culture inclusiveness*)

We believe this plan shows careful consideration of high-impact actions, understanding of individual and organizational capacities, a desire to authentically engage people from racial and ethnically diverse backgrounds as key assets, and a commitment to getting measurable results from our chosen activities.

Following analysis of the Diamond Inclusiveness Assessment, Focus Group Transcripts, and Staff Input, the Racial Justice Task Force identified three initial areas of focus that may yield positive measurable impact over the next 12 months. These chosen areas will provide opportunities for innovation and improvement in an effort to create ownership of these processes across the staff. Performance over the next 12 months in these three areas will help gauge the effectiveness of our efforts⁵. As progress is made, additional foci will be added. The three initial foci are as follows:

1. Cultural Capital:

The United Church of Christ National Setting fully commits to the long-term work of becoming culturally competent, welcoming and inclusive community. This includes (but is not limited to):

- Supporting, engaging and including people with different racial, cultural, economic, ages and religious backgrounds as well as those with varying physical abilities, gender identities and sexual orientations.
- Reaching beyond our traditional allies and constituencies.
- Entering intercultural relationships with humility, prepared to listen, learn, follow their lead, and adapt our methods and practices to achieve mutual benefit.
- Recruiting, hiring, retaining, and developing a culturally competent staff whose demographics more closely mirror the full human community.

⁵The Racial Justice Task Force recognizes the national setting already has many racial equity policies and processes in place, and in this way is a unique entity within the denomination. It is our hope that our journey will contribute to this foundation and provide for other expressions of the church the opportunity to use and adapt any portions of the work they might find helpful.



2. Financial Investment:

The UCC National Setting will allocate an annual operating and programmatic budget to support racial equity work of the national setting. The national setting will also employ industry standard minority inclusion practices when issuing all request for proposals and vendor contracts. Where appropriate, financial home, reports will include work clear and measurable goals segmented by race, ethnicity, culture and language.

3. Political Capital:

The UCC National Setting has a transparent programmatic decision-making process that requires input and feedback from employees, constituencies of the broader church and its ecumenical and community partners, with special emphasis given to those most impacted by the issue at hand.

The UCC Board and National Setting will constantly communicate and entrust our racial justice practices, including antiracist practices) and intercultural statement, expectations, and habits to all groups involved in or affected by the UCC National Statement.

By December 31, 2023, the UCCB or Task Force will assess our progress and determine if we are achieving our stated goals. An annual assessment will determine our next steps re-evaluating and revising goals if necessary as we work toward racial equity and inclusion within the National Setting. An evaluation of resources is also important to ensure they are sufficient, useful and appropriately applied to get results. Finally, we will analyze our new results and revise our plan as needed.

CULTURAL CAPITAL—ESAP⁶

Strategic Improvement—Dimension of Strength

The United Church of Christ Board of Directors (UCCB) and the National Setting will constantly communicate, endorse, and entrust its intercultural values, statements, expectations, and habits to all groups involved in or affected by the organization.

SMART Goal:

By December 31, 2023, UCC National Setting will have secured “official alliances” with at least 20 of its Cleveland-based neighbors and organizations for its racial justice and equity work. Official support” means funding, a letter, partnership agreement or other written document.

Proposed Actions:

- Undertake an environmental assessment of existing neighborhood demographics and existing and potential community alliances/partnerships.
- Cultivate relationships with 20 community alliances that have shared values with the UCC relative to racial justice, diversity, equity and inclusion.
- Establish a coalition of community alliances that support racial justice, diversity, equity and inclusiveness, neighborhoods surrounding the National Setting’s geographic location.
- Position the new UCC National Setting headquarters as a community commons—a gathering place for regional alliances whose primary mission is to support and flourish racially just, diverse, equitable and inclusive neighborhoods.
- Publicly engage and communicate with Local Church and Conference Settings, UCC Board, General Synod and other settings of the UCC, about the work proposed above and the ongoing programs and ministries of the National Setting.

Benefits of achieving this goal:

- Meets the values of the National Setting relative to racial justice, diversity, equity and inclusion.
- Ensures that our outreach and justice advocacy in our geographic region will be in alignment with our outreach and justice advocacy in the wider church and world.

⁶In a collective effort to establish milestones, strategy, and action plan(s) for the Cultural Capital Dimension, it should be noted that the broad and general use of the term “cultural” within the context of this Dimension could imply a deviation from our understanding of the overall purpose and purview of the GAP Report. It is our understanding that we were conducting a Race Audit; this action plan aims to consistently reflect a focus on Race throughout, as the word “culture” itself has historically often been used to rewrite the Race narrative and deter the intended focus.

- Raises public awareness of the UCC National Setting’s presence in the region and its social justice platform, particularly as it pertains to racial justice, equity and inclusion—a hallmark of the denomination.
- Sensitizes the UCC National Setting to the current state of our surroundings as it pertains to race.

PLAN: Measure and Plan

MILESTONES	RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE	RESOURCES REQUIRED
Creation of Template of Partnership Agreement	Minister for Racial Justice	8/2023	OGC, Senior Leadership Approval
Create criteria to identify high-potential prospects for community alliances, reaching beyond our typical partners	Minister for Racial Justice	8/2023	JTM Committee, CARDD Team,
Cultivate relationships with the identified prospects	Minister for Racial Justice	1/2024	Team Leaders & Directors, Elected Officer approval, \$ for networking/partnership fees/sponsorships;
Invite NEO organizations whose values are centered in racial justice, diversity, equity and inclusion to the National Setting Office for UCC and community partnership events re race and DEI; keep current centralized list of these organizations	GMP with AGM's	within the first 12 months of implementation	Current list of NEO organizations that share these values, and current contact info; database of prospects.

DO: Execute Work Plan(s) and Measure Results

MILESTONES	RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE	RESOURCES REQUIRED
Conduct activities. Get feedback. Follow up on feedback.	CARDD	4 th quarter of 2024	Budgeted resources for data collection
Measure and report results.	CARDD	4 th quarter of 2024	Budgeted resources for data collection

CHECK: Learn and Improve

MILESTONES	RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE	RESOURCES REQUIRED
Confirm that at least 20 community outreach organizations that support racial justice, diversity, equity and inclusiveness are included in the National Setting's endorsed list for coalition and volunteer support	HR Team	12/2023	JLCM staff, Budgeted institutional outreach dollars for financial community grants
Review and document the learning from this effort.	ongoing	ongoing	ongoing

Make it Habit

MILESTONES	RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE	RESOURCES REQUIRED
Institutionalize the changes that work.	Everyone	ongoing	the will to change

SMART Goal #2:

By December 31, 2023, UCC National Setting has a sustained plan with measurable goals to engage UCC stakeholders including the UCC Board and General Synod in leveraging intercultural values, cultural assets and culture brokers to the benefit of those in our ecosystem as it pertains to race, racial justice, equity and inclusion. (Gap Cultural Statement #3, #5, #7)

Proposed Actions:

- Accomplish /mapping of cultural assets available across audiences, educate about Cultural Assets and leverage these as faith-based assets.
- Convene regular summit/symposium, gathering stakeholders to share resources, engaging diverse stakeholder groups (HUGS, Seminaries, Affiliated Ministries, CHHSM, CCM and Conference Staffs, etc.)
- Establish an “Asset Hub”: Determine resource and asset needs per stakeholder group and connect cultural assets to requests/needs
- Leverage Join the Movement to actively engage, educate, and partner with the public and local churches.
- Create no less than annually a gathering of pastors of color who are serving white congregations to create an opportunity for fellowship, support and unique challenges that go into serving

Benefits of achieving this goal:

- Meets the values of the National Setting relative to race, racial justice, diversity, equity and inclusion.
- Puts a public engagement strategy in place to recognize, raise awareness, steward, educate and share assets towards elevating racial justice, diversity, equity and inclusion.
- Positions the UCC National Setting’s (including the UCCB and General Synod) crucial role as the optimal convener of the diverse settings of the denomination as it pertains to important matters of race, racial justice, diversity, equity and inclusion that are shared across our value stream, even if not lived out loud at the same level across the ecosystem.

Oversight for the Improvement:

GMP

PLAN: Measure and Plan

MILESTONES	RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE	RESOURCES REQUIRED
Clarify definitions and educate about Cultural Assets and leverage these as faith-based assets. Determine who will clarify and develop educational packet and process	Minister for Racial Justice	January 2023	Budgeted funds for educational resources, staff support for rolling out educational process
Undertake survey/mapping of cultural assets available across a few key audiences.	Director of CARDD	First Quarter 2023	Minister for Racial Justice, CARDD Team, expertise, Networking Affiliates
Convene initial Stakeholder Symposium gathering stakeholders to share resources, engaging diverse stakeholder groups (HUGS, Seminaries, Affiliated Ministries, CHHSM, CCM and Conference Staffs, etc.)	Minister for Racial Justice	September 2023	Team Leaders & Directors, Elected Officer approval, \$ for networking/partnership fees/ sponsorships;

SMART Goal #3:

By December 31, 2023, United Church of Christ Board & National Setting will make a commitment to actively engage racial diversity, equity, and inclusion training (5 week-Sacred Conversations) as a mandatory component of new hire or Board orientation, and complete⁴ hours of continuing racial equity training annually as a commitment to the awareness and transformation we seek.

Proposed Actions:

- Present to/engage in racial equity training—utilizing the resources provided through Sacred Conversations to End Racism—as a mandatory component of orientation to each new UCCB class; rolling out a different component of the 5-week training across each UCCB biennium.
- Regularly promote and encourage to UCC stakeholders the resource that is Sacred Conversations to End Racism, and Join the Movement Campaign, as a means of education and training in areas of race, diversity and inclusion.
- Include 5-week Sacred Conversations to End Racism curriculum as regular mandatory staff training.

Benefits of achieving this goal:

- Acknowledges cultural assets we already have and leverages them to bring the church together in the education and language of Sacred Conversations to End Racism
- Ensures that a unified curriculum is presented leading to unified language and unified aspirations
- UCC Board leadership is trained and able to train others in their local settings
- National Staff are moving through the awareness journey together.

Oversight for the Improvement:

UCCB Chair w/GMP

Responsible for the Improvement:

HR Director

PLAN: Measure and Plan

MILESTONES	RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE	RESOURCES REQUIRED
Plan launch SC2ER as mandatory curriculum for the UCCB, and then regularly for each new class	Board Chair	1/2024	SC2ER Leader and curriculum; Time on each UCCB Agenda
UCCB development and approval of a policy to mandate SC2ER as mandatory curriculum for new UCCB class members	Board Chair	3/2024	Board Staff, SC2ER leadership and resources, Committee assignment
Plan and Confirm 4 hours of ongoing regularly scheduled follow up racial equity training for UCCB members already in service	Board Chair	2/2024	Board Staff, with Minister for Racial Justice
Plan the implementation of a mandatory 5-week SC2ER training for UCC National Setting employees	HR Director	within the first 12 months	SC2ER Leadership and curriculum; HR Coordination across the staff
Develop and approve a sustained policy for mandatory SC2ER Staff training	HR Director	within the first 12 months	Senior Leadership, SC2ER Leadership and curriculum
Plan and Confirm 4 hours of ongoing regularly scheduled follow up racial equity training for staff	HR	within the first 12 months	Senior Leadership
Communicate this unfolding training as it occurs to the wider church.	GMP w/ Board Chair	within the first 12 months	MarCom staff expertise

AS THE WORK PROGRESSES THE NATIONAL SETTING WILL IMPLEMENT POLICIES AND PROGRAMS THAT ENSURE EXECUTION OF WORK PLANS IN WAYS THAT PRODUCE MEASURED RESULTS TOWARD INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE.

FINANCIAL INVESTMENT—ESAP CHALLENGE DIMENSION OF CHALLENGE

Strategic Improvements

The UCC-National Setting has an annual operating budget for diversity and inclusion work that allows it to meet clear and measurable goals segmented by race, ethnicity, culture, and language.

SMART Goal:

For Year 1 following the adoption of the ESAP Strategic Initiatives, the UCC National Setting will allocate 20% of its Expense budget with BIPOC vendors and maintain or increase its commitment going forward. The Finance team will report at least annually to the UCCB and wider church on this progress. This change is intended to be ongoing and evergreen.

Benefits of achieving this goal:

- Meets [organizational values, business goals, moral obligations, etc.]
- Making staff, board, and other stakeholders aware of connections between investment and outcomes, so we become champions for improvement.
- To better identify actions, efficiencies, partnerships, innovations, and resources that can deliver on or improve results.
- Improving trust in the organization.
- Aligning financial resources with the policies, practices and situations to achieve our goals - ensuring we “walk our talk”.

Oversight for the Improvement:

The CFO will report progress to the GMP, who will update the UCCB semi- annually

Responsible for the Improvement:

UCC Finance Team

GOAL I: Expense Budget

MILESTONES	RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE	RESOURCES REQUIRED
Monitor diversity inclusiveness in purchasing to meet the goals outlined in the Equity Strategic Action Plan.	Finance	12/31/2023	Staff time ESAP Staff Input
The Finance team will develop a policy that defines BIPOC vendor I.e. BIPOC owned, board of directors, % of employees.			
<p>Research and add new purchase order system into 2024 budget that allows us to track the above. Upon adoption by management, the Finance team will make process improvements to incorporate a 20% allocation to BIPOC vendors in 2023 and implement the necessary system changes no later than Q1 2024.</p> <p>It may leverage external organization knowledge including Culture Brokers clients who have implemented a similar change.</p>	Finance	3/31/2024	Finance Staff, external consultants and Culture Brokers clients if needed
<p>The UCC National Setting will create and maintain a record of the BIPOC status of all vendors at the inception of the relationship and update if additional contracts are proposed with said vendor. The file shall align with the approved UCC BIPOC definition I.e. ownership, board leadership and/or employee demographic.</p>	Finance	12/31/2023	Finance staff, external consultants (Culture Brokers clients)

AS THE WORK PROGRESSES THE NATIONAL SETTING WILL IMPLEMENT POLICIES AND PROGRAMS THAT ENSURE EXECUTION OF WORK PLANS IN WAYS THAT PRODUCE MEASURED RESULTS TOWARD INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE.

GOAL 2: Vendor Policy

MILESTONES	RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE	RESOURCES REQUIRED
Develop a baseline database indicating current status.	Finance	Q2 2023	Current excel data bases
GoResearch current certificate vendor policies utilized by city, state and other established companies/agencies.	Finance	Q2 2023	State of Ohio Cleveland and other entities that have issue certificates
Set criteria and poll vendors to determine where they are within the criteria we set—minority owned, woman owned, veteran-owned, disability owned, small business owned, LGBTQIA owned. Those meeting these criteria and including price, quality and service will be added to Preferred Vendor list in the data base.	ESAP Finance	within the first 12 months	
Develop policy with input from team and staff. (If staff have opportunity to give input you will have better buy-in.)	DI Team chair or staff liaison	within the first 12 months	Diversity Inclusion Team, Other entities that have a Diversity Purchasing Policy Staff input

DO: Execute Work Plan(s) and Measure Results

MILESTONES	RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE	RESOURCES REQUIRED
Implement policy with incremental growth measurement.	Finance/Staff	2023 & Ongoing	New Vendor Policy and database
Conduct activities. Get feedback. Follow up on feedback.	Finance/Staff	2023 & Ongoing	Industry Best Practices
Measure and report results.	Finance/Staff	Annually—Year End	Industry Best Practices

CHECK: Learn and Improve

MILESTONES	RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE	RESOURCES REQUIRED
Review and document the learning from this effort.	Finance staff & department heads	Ongoing	Training & Industry Best Practices

Make it Habit

MILESTONES	RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE	RESOURCES REQUIRED
Institutionalize the changes.	All Staff-Financial Policy Handbook or Training	Ongoing	CFO and Staff to advise all staff of Diversity Finance Policies annually (can be by training)

POLITICAL CAPITAL—EASP DIMENSION OF OPPORTUNITY

SMART Goal: 1

To have leadership and staff at the national setting who possess competency in consensus-based decision making, with all leadership in Chair and Director positions trained in facilitating consensus-based decision making.

Benefits of achieving this goal:

Equip staff and National leadership (including UCCB) with an understanding and appreciation of seeking and finding consensus in how we work together. An example of such training opportunities may be found at <https://www.consensusdecisionmaking.org/>

Oversight for the Improvement:

HR for Staff, Executive Committee for Board

SMART Goal: 2

HR to do a Responsible Accountable Consulted and Informed (RACI) type analysis and produce a quarterly newsletter relevant to issues related to

- transparency,
- relationship building,
- building trust among national staff and senior leadership

A new online resource entitled How We Work Together in the National Setting is meant to increase transparency about programmatic decision-making processes.

Benefits of achieving this goal:

The national setting office and workspace has the potential to support all the various ministries. The office/workspace allows for more collaboration, networking, face-to-face communications, and camaraderie during social events and meetings.

Office collaboration and open communication results in developing processes for transparency in decision making and organizational development given the number of essential staff working remotely, deployed, and regionally. The UCCB members and partners are invited to participate in quarterly scheduled sessions with national staff fulfilling mandates within the new handbook How We Work Together in the National Setting.

The new online resource will include a column available in the UCC HR Newsletter and available on a UCC webpage. This will be a space that invites ministry teams to share their processes, to share who they are and how they function, contributing to and building transparency. This will be invaluable for teams and departments to be internally aware

of how decision-making processes happen strategically and operationally. This type of transparency builds trusts and provides opportunities to observe and record the impact internal decisions are making toward building capacity and intentional collaboration. A RACI quarterly analysis would provide information regarding areas of improvement, collected feedback, and encourage the development of an organizational chart of National Setting staff and leadership. While an organizational chart of the National Setting, even one in process of evolution, would be helpful- such a task might best be built with each ministry team. Updates to the handbook resource How We Work Together provides opportunities for commentaries and stories for publication.

Finally, quarterly assessments and reports benefit the National Setting with impact reports related to inclusiveness and ongoing improvements based on staff input and feedback.

Oversight for the Improvement:

Elected Officers of the UCC

Responsible for the Improvement:

Department Leadership for the RACI analysis, HR for the newsletter.

SMART Goal: 3

To engage with local members/churches throughout the country on how the National Setting works together through quarterly Town Halls about How We Work Together with each of the 4 ministry teams taking responsibility for one Town Hall each year.

Benefits of achieving this goal:

Engagement with people in local congregations across regions and Conferences. The implementation of regional spaces where groups can gather and participate in faith-based discussions about the future of building capacity to maintain spiritual, theological, biblical, political, and social awareness and engagement impacting society and the Christian Church.

The Town Hall gatherings include an overview of the organizational structure of the ministry, its strategic goals, and objectives, and long and short-term sustainability goals available for review and discussion. Gatherings are recorded to maintain and record attendance, and relevant information to sustain ongoing growth and development toward more inclusive engagement.

Purposeful gatherings are also a transparent process allowing participants space for conversations, ask questions, put forth requests, and provide feedback for full inclusion and awareness of what's taking place in their respective communities, congregations, and municipalities.

Oversight of the scheduling of the Town Halls:

GMP

Oversight of the Content of the Town Hall:

The ministry area responsible for the Town Hall.

PLAN: Measure and Plan

MILESTONES	RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE	RESOURCES REQUIRED
Consensus Training/Skill Development for Staff	HR Director	3 year plan, 1/3 rd of staff per year	Staff time and cost for consultant
Consensus Training/Skill Development for Board Members	General Counsel	A part of annual/ biannual training	Board member time and cost for consultant/ Trainer. Additional training required for leaders.
Publish a column in the HR Newsletter for National Setting on How We Work Together using a RACI analysis (or approach that provides clarity about who is responsible, accountable, consulted and informed) on the various strategic, tactical and operational decisions made in the National setting and the accomplishments and learnings that come from that process.	HR Director with input from National Setting Departments.	Ongoing regular publication once process of RACI analysis is underway. Should be started by September 2023. Analysis should be one with 1/3 rd of organization each year completing analysis/ publication should be launched and populated with articles, even if it is basic overview by GS 2023.	Consultant to assist in creating analysis structure/ data gathering/ reporting format
Quarterly Town Hall Sessions interfacing with Local Settings/people on Organizational structure, strategic goals and objectives	Elected Officers with Communications Department	First Quarter of 2024 as kick off for these Town Halls	Communication tools/staff time/ stipends to participants beyond national setting

AS THE WORK PROGRESSES THE NATIONAL SETTING WILL IMPLEMENT POLICIES AND PROGRAMS THAT ENSURE EXECUTION OF WORK PLANS IN WAYS THAT PRODUCE MEASURED RESULTS TOWARD INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE.

3. UCC—United Church of Christ Board & National Setting will make a commitment to actively engage racial diversity, equity, and inclusion training (5 week-Sacred Conversations) as a mandatory component of new hire or Board orientation, and complete 4 hours of continuing racial equity training annually as a commitment to the awareness and transformation we seek.

Criteria/Definitions: In getting input and feedback, FringeArts should be able to disaggregate (segment) that by culturally diverse stakeholder group. Data, information, input, and feedback should be used to make decisions.

SMART Goal:

Benefits of achieving this goal:

- Meets organizational values, business goals, moral obligations etc

Oversight for the Improvement:

TBD Responsible for the Improvement:

TBD

AS THE WORK PROGRESSES THE NATIONAL SETTING WILL IMPLEMENT POLICIES AND PROGRAMS THAT ENSURE EXECUTION OF WORK PLANS IN WAYS THAT PRODUCE MEASURED RESULTS TOWARD INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We acknowledge, with sincere appreciation, the physical and financial support of the Council of Conference Ministers for their physical and financial contributions to this effort, as well as the tireless work of the Racial Justice Task Force to bring this initial phase of our work to the implementation stage for the benefit of the Church. It is our prayer that the time and seeds of wisdom they have planted in this process will yield good fruit toward racial equity for the national setting, conferences, and willing congregations.

Racial Equity Task Force

Rev. David Gaewski

Ms. Julia Gilmore Gaughan

Rev. Michelle Higgins

Dr. Vivian Jackson

Rev. Linda Jaramillo

Ms. Jane Joseph

Rev. Dr. Stephen Ray

Rev. James Ross II

Rev Tim Tutt

Ms. Beth Walker

Rev. Marsha Williams

Rev. Diane Wieble

Dr. Sonya Williams

Rev. Dr. Velda Love - Task Force Consultant

[Join The Movement](#) Coordinator & Racial Justice Minister

The Racial Justice Task Force would like to express our gratitude to Rev. Dr. Danielle J. Buhuro, Rev. Dr. Stephen Ray, and Dr. Scott Paeth for providing our theological framework.

APPENDIX

Diamond Inclusiveness Assessment™ (DIA)

To get to our destination, we must first know where we are in relation to it. This requires us to know at the individual, team and enterprise levels just what our current capacity is to engage in the level of intercultural knowledge and experience required to excel with culturally diverse stakeholders. We used the Diamond Inclusiveness Assessment (DIA) to get a baseline understanding of how well our organization policies, practices and situations support cultural inclusiveness, as perceived by a culturally diverse set of respondents. It identified our organizational strengths and opportunities for improvement. While not yet independently validated, the tool has proven useful to more than 24 organizations and helped them make measurable improvements in their results with culturally diverse employees and customers.

A culturally diverse group of internal and external stakeholders participated in 2022 DIA assessment and feedback sessions. A group that included the senior leadership team, and staff and board equity teams, analyzed this information, selected [three] focus areas for improvement, and developed this Equity Strategic Action Plan.

Definitions of Core Concepts

EQUITY:

“the state, quality or ideal of being just, impartial and fair.” The concept of equity is synonymous with fairness and justice. It is helpful to think of equity as not simply a desired state of affairs or a lofty value. To be achieved and sustained, equity needs to be thought of as a structural and systemic concept.

SYSTEMIC EQUITY:

Systemic equity is a complex combination of interrelated elements consciously designed to create, support and sustain social justice. It is a dynamic process that reinforces and replicates equitable ideas, power, resources, strategies, conditions, habits, and outcomes.

Definitions⁸

BIAS

A tendency or preference that inhibits impartial judgment, such as a bias toward or against a person or group. A concentration on or interest in one area or subject, such as a bias toward action.

BIPOC

The acronym for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. It is used to undo Native invisibility, and anti-Blackness with the intention of dismantling white supremacy and advancing racial justice.

⁸These definitions are used by Culture Brokers in the Diamond Inclusiveness System. They are adapted from multiple sources.

“Pronounced “bye-pock,” this is a term specific to the United States, intended to center the experiences of Black and Indigenous groups and demonstrate solidarity between communities of color.” The term BIPOC centers racial justice with the use of evolving language to acknowledge the diverse lived experiences of Black and Indigenous people groups. BIPOC is used to rightfully acknowledge North America as belonging to Native populations before settler color before being enslaved and forcibly brought to South and North America. BIPOC also recognizes the diverse histories and experiences of all groups of color. BIPOC intentionally dismantles what it means to be white, expose whiteness as a false category, and eradicate white supremacy.

The term may be used by Culture Brokers as shorthand to describe people who identify as member(s) of at least one of the following racial and ethnic census categories: Black or African American, Asian, American Indian, and Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander and Hispanic or Latino

We recognize the problems inherent in using such a broad term. However, we use it to increase document readability.

BIPOC may be used interchangeably with “People of Color”.

Many resources are available on the internet for additional insights, including The BIPOC Project¹⁰ and the YWCA¹¹.

CULTURE

Culture is a social system. It includes such things as a group’s shared language, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions. It is passed down from generation to generation.

Culture is the sum of our everyday practices and “texts—the ways we live everyday life; our behavior, beliefs, social interactions; and all human production, such as food, clothing, art, ideology, institutions, and most important language.

Culture affects our thoughts and actions, often without us even being aware.

CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Cultural competence refers to an ability to interact on personal and professional levels, including the ability to work with, and worship alongside effectively with people of different cultural/ethnic, regional, and geographical, linguistic, diverse faith orientation, gender identity, sexual orientation, citizenship and immigration status, age, ability, and socio-economic backgrounds.

Developing cultural competence is a dynamic and complex process requiring ongoing self- assessment and continuous expansion of one’s cultural knowledge. It evolves over time, beginning with an understanding of one’s own culture and ethnic identity, including one’s ancestral lineage, and continuing the journey through interactions with individuals from various cultures, and extending through one’s own lifelong learning.

⁹<https://www.census.gov/topics/population/hispanic-origin/about.html>

¹⁰<https://www.thebipocproject.org>

¹¹<https://www.ywca.org/ywca-and-racial-justice/>

CONSTITUENTS/SERVANT LEADERS: CLERGY AND LAY

The UCC is made up of members/affiliates—congregants, lay leaders, clergy etc.

An actual or potential user of an organization's products, programs, services, or efforts. Constituents/Servant Leaders must be satisfied by the organization; they are the ultimate judges of performance. The organization depends on the membership, stewardship, and their ongoing engagement throughout the life of the Church.

The goal is to maintain and increase full participation and membership. Their departure or change in membership decreases the abilities of the organization to function at full capacity.

An actual or potential user of an organization's products, programs, services, or efforts. They are who must be satisfied by the organization; they are the ultimate judges of performance—if they leave or we stop getting new ones, the organization will end.

DISPARITY

A condition of inequality in which services to one segment of the community, relative to other segments, are presumptively allocated, poorly provided or inadequate in addressing underlying needs; it also means that these differences are not justifiable based on identified need, available agency resources or other objective criteria. The effect is that differences may appear unnecessary, avoidable, unfair, or unjust. Disparity puts individuals, families, and their institutions at risk causing intergenerational harm. Disparities are often social, political, economic, and attitudinal in nature. Disparities are often interconnected in a way that produces a ripple effect and may cause individuals and groups to experience disparate treatment at multiple points throughout their relationships with the broader society.

DIVERSITY

The presence of variety in one place. For humans, variety is often measured quantitatively as differences in age, communication style, class, culture, ability, education, ethnicity, familial status, non-binary gender expression and sexual orientation, acquired knowledge, language of origin, learning style, partner and marital status, national origin, occupation, physical & mental health, politics, race, regional origin, religion, socio-economic status, viewpoints, etc. The benefit of diversity is in providing the components for adapting or constructing novel combinations; the value of diversity is that major innovations might be generated.

It is common to find people using the word “diversity” to also describe a set of actions geared to accommodating variety (i.e., acknowledging, understanding, accepting, valuing, and celebrating differences). As the pool of knowledge and experience of diversity work continues to evolve, professionals are increasingly differentiating between activities that increase variety (diversity) and behaviors that leverage variety to create belonging (inclusion).

EFFECTIVE

How well a process or a measure addresses its intended purpose. Determining effectiveness requires (1) evaluating how well the process is aligned with the organization's needs and how well it is deployed, or (2) evaluating the outcome of the measure as an indicator of process or product performance.⁷

EQUITY

Performance results that do not vary across meaningful socio- economic differences, particularly across racial/ethnic groups. Results are described by data around: Opportunity, Accessibility, Quality, Fairness, Outcomes, Impact, Repair, and Restoration.

Freedom from systemic bias or favoritism. Parity across differences.

72021-2022 Baldrige Excellence Framework

ESAP

Acronym for Equity Strategic Action Plan, a Culture Brokers deliverable. It lists the fewest, most impactful improvements and the actions your organization will take to achieve them. It follows a specific format that has been proven effective in helping clients get measurable results.

ETHNICITY

Describes a group of people who share a distinct culture, common ancestry, traditions, language or dialect, and place of origin. It is a category independent of Race. Therefore, in the U.S., people of the same ethnicity may be members of different cultural groups, such as people of African and Latin descents (such as people from the Caribbean, Cuba, Brazil, or Dominican Republic).

INCLUSION

Interactions among diverse people and objects that create opportunities for diversity, mutual learning, benefit, and growth. The benefit of inclusion is reciprocity; the value of inclusion is increased trust, cooperation, and effectiveness. Inclusion has generally been measured through surveys asking subjective questions about an individual's feelings of belonging, respect, support and engagement. But inclusion can also be measured more objectively by observing the patterns of interaction and their results.

NETWORK

Interconnected relationships among people and/or organizations.

Formal Network: Interconnected relationships among people and/or organizations that is centralized, managed, and involves a process for engagement.

PEOPLE OF COLOR (OR OTHER COLLECTIVE TERM, IF USED. SEE "BIPOC")

The term used in this plan as shorthand to describe a person who identifies as a member of at least one of the following racial census categories: Black or African American, Asian, American Indian, and

Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, Some other race, and Hispanic. We recognize the problems inherent in using such a broad term. However, we use it only to increase plan readability

RACE

In the U.S., race is a construct that established various categories of people and a hierarchy of their value to society. In that worldview, people have, according to their physical characteristics, innate qualities that define them as different. Race has the express purpose of establishing and perpetuating caste, i.e., superiority and dominance for the group at the top of the hierarchy. In the U.S. race is an ideology created to

perpetuate the myth and presents people of European descent in positions of power and dominance.

The U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) sets the standards on race which guide the Census Bureau in classifying written responses to the race question. The main race categories are:

American Indian or Alaska Native—A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America) and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment. This category includes people who report entries such as Navajo, Blackfeet, Inupiat, Yup'ik, or Central American Indian groups or South American Indian groups.

Asian—A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent. It includes people who report other detailed Asian responses.

Black or African American—A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa. It includes people who report entries such as African American, Kenyan, Nigerian, or Haitian.

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander—A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands. It includes people who report entries such as Chamorro and other detailed responses.

White—A person having origins with peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa. It includes people who report race entries such as Irish, German, Italian, Lebanese, Arab, Moroccan, or Caucasian.

Race is a false classification of people that is not based on any real or accurate biological or scientific truth. Race is a political construct created by people for political purposes. Race is an artificial social construct, and it serves a social function.

RESULTS

Outputs and outcomes achieved. Results should be evaluated based on current performance; performance relative to appropriate comparisons; the rate, breadth, and importance of performance improvements; and the relationship of results measures to key organizational performance requirements.

STAKEHOLDER

A person or group who is (or could be) affected by the organization's actions, goals, and policies.

WORKFORCE (OR OTHER TERM FOR THIS GROUP OF PEOPLE)

All people actively supervised by our organization and involved in accomplishing our work, including paid employees, volunteers, and interns (paid or u

Additional Definitions provided by Sacred Conversations to End Racism (SC2ER)

INCLUSION

Inclusion is the action or state of including or of being included within a group or structure. More than simply diversity and numerical representation, inclusion involves authentic and empowered participation and a true sense of belonging.

RACIAL JUSTICE

Racial justice is the systematic fair treatment of people of all races that results in equitable opportunities and outcomes for everyone. All people are able to achieve their full potential in life, regardless of race, ethnicity or the community in which they live.

A “racial justice” framework can move us from a reactive posture to a more powerful, proactive and even preventive approach.

RACE

Race is a socially constructed system of categorizing humans largely based on observable physical features (phenotypes), such as skin color, and on ancestry. There is no scientific basis for or discernible distinction between racial categories.

The ideology of race has become embedded in our identities, institutions and culture and is used as a basis for discrimination and domination.

RACISM

The concept of racism is widely thought of as simply personal prejudice, but in fact, it is a complex system of racial hierarchies and inequities. At the micro level of racism, or individual level, are internalized and interpersonal racism. At the macro level of racism, we look beyond the individuals to the broader dynamics, including institutional and structural racism.

INTERNALIZED RACISM

Internalized racism describes the private racial beliefs held by and within individuals. The way we absorb social messages about race and adopt them as personal beliefs, biases and prejudices are all within the realm of internalized racism. For people of color, internalized oppression can involve believing in negative messages about oneself or one’s racial group. For white people, internalized privilege can involve feeling a sense of superiority and entitlement or holding negative beliefs about people of color.

INTERPERSONAL RACISM

Interpersonal racism is how our private beliefs about race become public when we interact with others. When we act upon our prejudices or unconscious bias – whether intentionally, visibly, verbally or not – we engage in interpersonal racism.

Interpersonal racism also can be willful and overt, taking the form of bigotry, hate speech or racial violence.

INSTITUTIONAL RACISM

Institutional racism is racial inequity within institutions and systems of power, such as places of employment, government agencies and social services. It can take the form of unfair policies and practices, discriminatory treatment and inequitable opportunities and outcomes.

A school system that concentrates people of color in the most overcrowded and under-resourced schools with the least qualified teachers compared to the educational opportunities of white students is an example of institutional racism.

STRUCTURAL RACISM

Structural racism (or structural racialization) is the racial bias across institutions and society. It describes the cumulative and compounding effects of an array of factors that systematically privilege white people and disadvantage people of color.

Since the word “racism” often is understood as a conscious belief, “racialization” may be a better way to describe a process that does not require intentionality. Race equity expert John A. Powell writes:

“‘Racialization’ connotes a process rather than a static event. It underscores the fluid and dynamic nature of race...‘Structural racialization’ is a set of processes that may generate disparities or depress life outcomes without any racist actors.”

Systemic Racialization

Systemic racialization describes a dynamic system that produces and replicates racial ideologies, identities and inequities. Systemic racialization is the well-institutionalized pattern of discrimination that cuts across major political, economic, and social organizations in a society.

Public attention to racism is generally focused on the symptoms (such as a racist slur by an individual) rather than the system of racial inequity.

RACIAL PRIVILEGE AND RACIAL OPPRESSION

Like two sides of the same coin, racial privilege describes race-based advantages and preferential treatment based on skin color, while racial oppression refers to race-based disadvantages, discrimination and exploitation based on skin color.

“It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences.”

—Audre Lorde, poet.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

[What is Ethnicity?—YouTube](#)

[Why Do We Say “African American”?—YouTube](#)

[The myth of race, debunked in 3 minutes—YouTube](#)

[The Origin of Race in the USA—YouTube](#)

[What Does “BIPOC” Mean?—YouTube](#)

[The Evolving Language of DEI: POC vs. BIPOC—YouTube](#)

CONTINUE LEARNING ABOUT RACIAL EQUITY AND INCLUSION HERE:

The Annie E. Casey Foundation offers a variety of reports and resources to help promote racial equity and inclusion in America. Explore the resources below to learn more and help promote equity and inclusion in your life:

Learn 7 steps to advance and embed racial equity and inclusion within your organization in the [Race Equity and Inclusion Action Guide](#).

Learn about institutional racism and how to develop and support leadership that contributes to racial justice in [Leadership and Race](#).


Learn about children living in high-poverty areas across the nation and the risks of concentrated poverty on children in [Children Living in High-Poverty, Low-Opportunity Neighborhoods](#).

Learn how work requirements have changed over time and the efforts that are underway to help low-income workers build greater economic stability in [Taking Action: Positioning Low-Income Workers to Succeed in a Changing Economy](#).

Learn about adultification bias, the stereotypes commonly applied to Black women and girls, and how Black female students are treated differently than their white peers in [Listening to Black Women and Girls: Lived Experiences of Adultification Bias](#).

Annie E. Casey Foundation

<https://linkprotect.cudasvc.com/url?a=https%3a%2f%2fwww.aecf.org>



**UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
1300 EAST 9TH STREET
CLEVELAND, OH 44114**

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WWW.UCC.ORG**

Thursday, March 2, 2023

UCCB Report for Justice & Local Church Ministries (JLCM) - Spring 2023

Strategic Priorities Initiatives - thru 2022

- Innovative Exploration:

- 2017 - Released the second Environmental Justice Report: Breath to the People
- 2018 - Completed Manual on Ministry
- 2018 - Relunched The Pilgrim Press (TPP). **TPP direct sales to customers increased from \$15.8k in 2019 to \$173.8k in 2022 - an 11 fold increase in revenue.** (This does not include trade book, ebook sale, and other standard sales)
**A new management system, necessary regardless of whether or not TPP relaunched is a significant cost that has not yet paid for itself, but we project this will be the case by 4th quarter 2025.*
- 2018 - Restructured the Faith Formation Team into Faith Education, Innovation and Formation to reflect an expanded focus beyond resourcing to direct engagement, adding focused staff for rural churches.
- 2019 - Completed Manual on Church.
- 2019 - Launched Tuesday for Nurture/Thursdays for the Soul (establishing database accessed by national setting for direct contact with local churches & communities. **For 2022, we hosted 103 engagements eliciting 17,996 registrants from which 10,513 people actually attended.**
- 2020 - Launched Manual on Church (MOC) Working Group - initial draft of MOC is currently being tested with focus groups.

- Inclusive Excellence:

- 2016 - Collaborated with Franklinton Center and the UCCB to devise a debt forgiveness and revenue generating plan for Franklinton Center resulting in \$1.5m gradual debt forgiveness over 5 years, and Franklinton Center closing the year with net revenue of \$300k for the first time since 2010.

- 2019 - Collaborated with OPTIC to launch the first 24 hour UCC ecumenical prayer marathon with 235 written prayers from Heads of Communion, Local church pastors, laity and legislators and youth.
 - 2022 - Invited by the Lilly Foundation to apply for Faith Formation Grant Nurturing the Spiritual Development of Young Children. *Received \$50k planning grant to prepare for the \$1.25m grant.*
 - 2023 - **Secured \$250k seed grant from The Fetzer Institute to launch: Launched Center for Lived Faith & Organizing** - A joint initiative with Eden Theological Seminary & The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) - Spring 2023.
 - 2023 - Launched First Rural Church 3 day Conference - 130 individual registrants and 8 churches with 70-80 in attendance daily.
 - **2020** - Collaborated with Unitarian Universalist to revise the Our Whole Lives curriculum and trained trainers nationally and in Germany.
 - 2019. - Sole Faith leader for the first Trans-visibility weekend and leading Faith entity annually since inception.
- **Technological Readiness**
- 2018 - Launched Frontline Faith On-Line Learning Portal (**2022 - 32 new courses/558 students with \$3890 in revenue *great untapped potential still exist**).
 - Launched Tuesday for Nurture/Thursdays for the Soul (establishing database accessed by national setting for direct contact with local churches & communities. **For 2022, we hosted 103 engagements eliciting 17,996 registrants from which 10,513 people actually attended.**
 - 2020-2022 - Cultivated a direct access mailing list of 18,000+webinar attendees that provides direct communication with congregational and community webinar attendees.
- **Curricula, Training, & Development for “a just world for all.”**
- 2017 - Launched Encuentros Latinx to strengthen relationship and provide resources to our Latinx siblings.
 - 2019 - Collaborated with MRSEJ (Ministry for Racial, Social, and Economic Justice) and Dr. Paula Hall to release a seven part course on Sexuality in the Black Church for

congregations and which is now certified training for the United States Air-force in Kuwait.

- 2023 - Collaborated with the Afro-Christian Historical Society, the UCC Historical Council, and Franklinton Center to underwrite the publication of *The Fifth Stream*, a historical account of the Afro-Christian presence in the founding of the United Church of Christ. Book will be out for General Synod 34.
- 2023 - 4th quarter release of Faith INFO Faith-based organizing book for congregations: *Building a Better World*.

- **Strategic Organizational Alignment**

- Collaborated with Council of Conference Ministers, RIP Medical Debt, and 21 Conferences and hundreds of Congregations to raise \$580,000 to abolish \$100m in medical debt from families in every region of the United Church of Christ across the United States.
- 2020- Launched Common Application Granting Process for JLCM directed grants & scholarships, streamlines the application and review process for four different grants: NIN; CASA; Operation Support; Pension Board - New Church Start) **As of 2022 this initiative has increased grant applications from rural, first-time grantees, and BIPOC by 40%.**
- 2016- present -The Associate General Minister has been assigned both Justice & Witness Ministries and Local Church Ministries, separate ministries acting in concert. During this time all support staff has been cross-trained to assist in any ministry area and a Frontline Faith product line has net revenue of \$120k to imagine new ways of being without impacting programmatic dollars.
- 2022 - Environmental Justice Fellow and Climate Justice Youth Postcard Campaign because of the grace of a generous benefactor, and our goal is to have 12 environmental fellows in place by the fourth quarter of 2024.

The Associate General Minister also grateful to have had the following opportunities to serve in the following ways:

2016-present - Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference Trustee

2016-2020 - Chicago Theological Seminary Trustee

- 2019-2022- Festival of Homiletics Preacher
- 2021-present - Staff to Racial Justice Task Force
- 2020-2022- Project Manager & Design Lead for Suite 1100 at AECOM (new office space).
- 2022 - Acting GMP during John's sabbatical
- 2022 - Byberg Preaching Conference (ELCA) - Theologian in Residence
- 2023 - Parliament of World Religions Board of Directors
- 2020-president - Pastor in Residence - Eden Theological Seminary
- 2023 - Bishop Michael Curry Preaching Series - Evening Preacher for the week.
- 2023 - Ecumenical Kirchentag 2023 - German Partners - Preacher

It has been a challenging season of illness and death for many of our staff.

As you attend to your prayer list. Please include us. Sometimes, those who serve in such ministries are so busy praying with and for others, they forget to pray for themselves as well. Your prayers and support are needed and deeply appreciated. I also request your prayers as I prepare to take my sabbatical.

THE ROCK CHAPEL
PRESENTS
7-WEEK EDUCATIONAL
COURSE WITH RAP
SESSIONS

*EACH SESSION WILL BE SHOWN
TWICE PER WEEK*

*At 6:00 or 8:00 that explores
SATURDAYS 1:40-1:60*

STARTING 22 FEB
An educational course that explores
historical, cultural, and theological
challenges around fully embracing all
expressions of sexual orientation and
gender identity in the Black Church.

There are seven sessions. Each session
will be shown twice. All are welcome.

- Academic
- Facts-Based
- Voluntary
- Inclusive
- Open to All

Instructors

Rev. Dr. Paula Hall – Howard University and

Doctors Ronald Hopson, Sherry Molock and Paula Hall (Rev. Traci Blackmon & Rev. Dr. Ruth Harvey too),

Good news! Just wanted to let you know that I am sharing your coursework “Sexuality & the Black Church” with military members in Kuwait ([see the announcement in the email thread](#)). There is also a flyer attached.

I am here serving as an Air Force chaplain in this deployed location. We had to get many approvals (EO, JAG, Commanders, Majcom) to share/screen the course here at the Base chapel with Air Force service members, but we did it. Yay!

In addition to the scholarship exhibited and the pleasant demeanor of Rev. Blackmon and the facilitators, it made a difference that the United Church of Christ & MRSEJ sponsored the course. Approving officials were able to see that the course did not promote any particular political viewpoint or religious ideology.

Very grateful for your work. My motivation is twofold: to educate or raise awareness & to prevent suicides.

Each week, we are showing a new session. This week, we are on session #2.

Just wanted to let you know that your work is making a difference... on another continent and to military service members. It is my hope that they will spread messages of “new light” and uplift as they travel the world in their military capacity. They are Warriors of Hope in the Black Church...and so are WE! J

Peace and Blessings,

Chaplain Countess Cooper

COUNTESS COOPER, Lt Col, USAF

Deputy Wing Chaplain
386th Air Expeditionary Wing/ Chaplain Corps (AEW/HC)
Ali Al Salem, Kuwait