

Establishing an Anti-Racism Ministry

September 2020

Presented by

Charlayne Thompkins, Church of The Open Door (Congregational) UCC, Miami

Donna Cooney, United Church UCC-DOC, St. Augustine

Guillermo Márquez-Sterling, Pass-A-Grille Beach Community UCC, St. Pete

Haqqiqa Lynne McRee, United Church UCC-DOC, St. Augustine

Karen Curtis-Weakley, Hope UCC, Rockledge

Kim Wells, Lakewood United Church of Christ, St. Pete

Margaret (Peggy) Hayes, Hope UCC, Rockledge

Neal Watkins, Florida Conference Staff

Ngan Ling Lung, First Congregational Church of Winter Park, UCC

Patsy McDowell, Church of The Open Door (Congregational) UCC, Miami

Sabine Prather, Faith United Church of Christ, Bradenton

Star Valino, Arlington Congregational Church, Jacksonville

Victoria Snow, Community Congregational Church UCC, New Port Richey

We are a diverse group, active in local churches as lay leaders and clergy, who are both familiar with and affected by systemic racism.

Summary

As people of God, we remind ourselves that we are all created equal in the sight of God. We answer God's call to build a church and society that affirms the inherent worth and dignity of all people, promotes justice, equity and compassion, while striving to correct the injustices of the past in our churches and communities. Therefore, we present this resolution as an intentional effort to resist the culture of white privilege, white fragility, and white supremacy and develop congregations in the Florida Conference UCC that are anti-racist.

Because institutions reflect the people's history, we recognize that America's history of racism is reflected in many of its institutions and its institutionalized norms. The church is no exception. Because many institutions maintain the status quo through silence, we recognize the need for individuals, churches, and wider institutions in the Florida Conference UCC, to recognize they remain institutionally neutral if they only claim to be "not racist." Instead, we make the call to become expressively "anti-racist" as an action towards eradicating racism.

Biblical, Historical and Theological Grounding

Given that the United Church of Christ (UCC) seeks to create a Just World For All, believes that God Is Still Speaking, and shares the Covenant of Jesus, that they may all be one, (John 17:21), and

Given that the Church has a history of misusing the Bible to encourage racist practices and teachings such as misinterpreting Noah's curse as God's curse upon people of color and creating a Slave Bible which includes and excludes select verses, and

Given that the General Synod of the United Church of Christ adopted two resolutions in 2003: 1) Calling the UCC to be an Anti-Racist Church and 2) Calling the UCC to Renew the Battle Against Racism in All Its Guises, and

Given that the General Synod of the United Church of Christ in 2017 adopted the resolution Establishing Procedures for Cultural Diversity Training for Authorized Ministers, which includes Anti-Racism Training and,

Given that the United Church of Christ has consistently made available resources such as Sacred Conversations on Race, White Privilege: Let's Talk – A Resource for Transformational Dialog and most recently Sacred Conversations To End Racism (SC2ER) and,

Given that the Florida Conference, UCC at its 2019 Annual Gathering dedicated itself to further understanding the historical roots of racism in Florida and the extent to which imbedded racism has impacted the racial divisions throughout our state that continue until today, and

Given that social unrest continues in response to the murders of and violence against Black people by police departments and officers across the United States, including Jacob Blake, Rayshard Brooks, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, Arthur McDuffie and Trayvon Martin to name just a few and

Given that anti-racist protestors continue to be met with violence by an increasingly militarized police force, and

Given that racism manifests itself in myriad spheres of human life, including environmental, criminal justice, educational, social, housing, and public health, we submit this resolution.

Actions and Accountability

With the understanding that the UCC seeks to dismantle systemic racism and all its ills, and with the challenge presented to the local churches to join the broader anti-racist movement, this resolution seeks the following outcomes:

1. The creation of an Anti-Racism Ministry (ARM) comprised of clergy and lay leaders trained in a variety of settings and ways to guide churches in the Florida Conference UCC with curriculum and programs toward becoming Anti-Racist churches.
2. The development by the leadership of the ARM of four to six regional Anti-Racist teams that would promote dialogue, and Anti-Racist program opportunities in their regions of the Florida Conference UCC.
3. The proud proclamation of every congregation in the Florida Conference UCC of identifying as an Anti-Racist church.

Partnership and Staffing

The creation and development of the Anti-Racism Ministry (ARM) shall come under the leadership of The Minister for Faith Formation. Periodic reviews will be made by ARM with reports given during the Florida Conference's Annual Gatherings.

Programmatic expenses for this ministry will be drawn from the Faith Formation Ministries line item of the conference budget and other designated funding streams where necessary and appropriate.

Anticipated Social Change

The resolution is a first step to a continuous listening, researching, and action process that welcomes all to the table, and provides an opportunity to transform society as we follow in the footsteps of Jesus creating disciples whose thinking is transformed by new understandings of history, with an increased awareness of the experiences of others, equipped with alternative ways to respond to racism and hope-filled ways to move forward. These transformed individuals will then return to their respective

communities and their day to day activities which will inevitably include caring for families, participating on school boards, city or county commission meetings, interacting with local police departments, homeowner's associations, and grocery stores. The difference being they return empowered and inspired by the ARM to offer liberation, salvation, and healing to their corner of the world, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED that the Florida Conference UCC proclaims its intention to become an antiracist conference to meet the requirements of this time of crises in our communities and in our church.

As an expression of this intention we resolve upon the creation of an anti-racism ministry under the leadership of the Minister for Faith Formation of the Florida Conference UCC.

We further resolve that the ARM will be comprised of clergy and lay leaders who will have been trained in a variety of settings and ways to guide churches in the Florida Conference UCC with curriculum and programs toward becoming anti-racist churches.

We further resolve that the ARM will develop four to six regional anti-racist teams to promote dialog and present anti-racist program opportunities in their regions of the Florida Conference UCC.

We further resolve that every effort will be made by the ARM, with the support of Florida Conference UCC to encourage and enable every congregation in the Florida Conference UCC to proudly embrace these measures and proclaim themselves to be an anti-racist church.

We further resolve that we make these resolutions in furtherance of our discipleship of Jesus Christ and in solidarity with the National leadership of the UCC.

Additionally we recognize that since there is always a cost to discipleship we resolve to stand together with our sisters and brothers in the Florida Conference UCC to mitigate the costs of discipleship where possible and to bear each other's burdens in this endeavor, giving thanks to our Creator for sustaining us always.

The funding for the implementation of the Resolution will be made in accordance with the overall mandates of the Conference and funds available. There is no financial guarantee of any kind other than the annual budget determined by Conference Delegates and managed by the Board of Directors.

The Conference Board of Directors, in consultation with FLAUCC Conference Ministry Staff, and in collaboration with ARM, will determine the implementing strategy and timing.