

Working Document on Becoming an Antiracist, Multicultural Church

ASDIC Metamorphosis: April 2022

The following represents a process that a local congregation may take toward becoming an antiracist, multicultural church. The local church “Transformational Team” may draw from the following suggested actions as guides to becoming an antiracist, multicultural church:

1. Host a discussion on racism based on a short reading or video presentation — (ASDIC has these resources). Show and discuss the video using the study guide found in the text. The video is a wonderful introduction to the joy and challenge of a multicultural church. This discussion needs to be deepened by a discussion and study of racism in American society and in the church. Identify who might have an interest in furthering the conversation and organizing to address white privilege in the church and community. Bring together a group of committed individuals, a “Transformational Team,” willing to dialogue, study, and take action to address their own issues, to understand racism around them, and to be a force for change.
2. As soon as feasible and using the church’s established processes, obtain the congregation’s commissioning of the church Transformational Team and the approval of a line item in the budget for the Team’s work (i.e., whatever actions the Team is planning such as offering antiracism dialogues or purchasing texts and audio-visual resources). The Team keeps in very close contact with the Council and the congregation, staying in dialogue about the work and constantly reporting on what the Team is considering and reflecting upon.
3. Operate as a leavening agent within existing structures to raise issues, influence thinking and culture, and create support for the process.
4. Seek to engage congregational leaders, including Church Council and pastor, to commit to a journey of becoming antiracist and multicultural through a process of creating awareness, engaging in self-examination and assessment, and taking steps toward structural/institutional changes to dismantle white privilege and racism.
5. Build the process of becoming an antiracist, multicultural church on sound scriptural and sociological grounds, acknowledging that antiracism work is confessional—confessing that racism is a violation of covenant, and the relationship humans owe each other in their interdependence and that racism denies the other’s humanity, worth, and godliness. Racism is a violation of the justice each of us owes to the other.
6. Move beyond a superficial understanding of the dynamics and history of racism through congregational level education including guided, facilitated readings and dialogue on social, personal, institutional, and systemic racism. This means getting serious about study and reflection on racism and the strategies for dismantling racism. This could mean participating in the Antiracism Study-Dialogue Circle program (For information, go to: www.ASDICircle.org or contact info@asdicircle.org).
7. Seek to engage a substantial number of lay and ministerial leadership in an antiracism study-dialogue program or a series of church sponsored intensive, interactive workshops, adult forums, or study groups focused on racism, white privilege, and systemic and institutional racism (10 sessions of 3.5 hours length recommended). There is no quick-fix to the issue of racism that permeates all aspects of our lives and social identity—an ongoing, long-term commitment to study, dialogue, and reflection is needed to come to a significant level of understanding and readiness for transformative response.
8. Complete a multicultural survey and inventory of inclusivity and hospitality (document available). Compile and interpret findings, devise a congregational plan of action to address the issues and opportunities to dismantle racism in church life and culture, and in its policies, programs, and practices.

9. Set benchmark objectives, means, and a timetable for achievement of objectives for dismantling racism. Receive Church Council approval and congregational acceptance of benchmark objectives and the plan of action, and allocation of human and monetary resources to implement the plan.
10. Identify ways the congregation and ministerial team will sustain its commitment to antiracism and multiculturalism over the long haul (such as retreat topics, book studies, forums, video discussions, sermons, guest preachers, workshops, Sunday school curriculum for children and adults).
11. Develop, implement, and annually evaluate the congregation's plan for total inclusiveness in all settings of the church.
12. Create an institutional statement (within the mission or vision statement) expressing the church's commitment to be an antiracist, multicultural church and what the words of the statement mean in respect to membership, fellowship, worship, self-presentation, accountability, ministry, and outreach.
13. Connect the institutional statement to the congregational plan, delineating what the statement means in respect to members' personal transformation and the cultural transformation of the church.
14. Identify at least two members of the church, including at least one member of the Church Council, who will represent the church and attend an annual one-day gathering or retreat organized by ASDIC Metamorphosis so that the local church may be in covenantal relationship with other UCC antiracist, multicultural churches on the journey of antiracism and receive ongoing support and nurturance in the ministry of healing and reconciliation through antiracism study and action.
15. Commit to strategic involvement in, and engagement with, social justice issues in the wider society—the workplace, civic life, and politics. This would ideally begin to take place after the first year of study. Social action is to act with others not for or on others so not to reinstate the power dynamics of “power over” others. This means creating partnerships with people of color must be sought and engaging with collaborative work with them. Moreover, these partnerships must involve ongoing dialogue.

Multiculturalism recognizes the diversity of cultures and worldviews and their validity as ways of valuing, perceiving, and organizing human life. In espousing multiculturalism, people express appreciation for cultural products—unique creations of hand, mind and spirit, originating in various ethnic groups around the world. Multiculturalism is inadequate as a stand-in for antiracism work.

Antiracism names the work directed toward undoing the system of oppression and domination created to advantage whites over other ethnic / racial groups. The primary tasks of antiracism are to dismantle internal and external structures of unearned racial privilege and to build community. Antiracism cannot be spoken of outside the context of recognizing and addressing racial oppression and domination and the relational breach it causes. The word antiracism exists in a universe of action. To say the word suggests a sense of taking action against racism—action against oppression and domination.

Systemic racism refers to race-based system of hierarchical interaction, principally concerning the creation, development, and maintenance of privilege, economic wealth, and sociopolitical power in defense of the interests of the dominant racial group and its elites. In the United States, systemic racism includes a diverse assortment of racist practices; the unjustly gained economic and political power of whites (theft of land from American Indians and enslavement of Africans); the continuing resource inequalities; and the racist ideologies, attitudes, and institutions created to preserve white advantages and power (Feagin *Racist America*, 2000: 6).

System, in the context of *systemic racism*, refers to the arrangements, methods, procedures, and theories of organization whereby an assemblage of institutions (e.g., courts, legislatures, schools, churches, media, businesses and corporations) function in concert as a unified whole to preserve white dominance (racial supremacy). *Racism*, the ideology and practices that unify the whole includes—racist beliefs, values, goals, theories of social organization, and legal and illegal mechanisms of privileging white power and control. *Racism*, as an ideology and set of practices,

allows the assemblage of institutions to function more effectively in realizing the goals of each separate institution.