

## District Reports: Dismantling Racism

### What Are You Working On To Dismantle Racism?

#### Finding Out Where We Are:

- Attended the OARs training and developed a plan for us to go out, offering ourselves to churches and groups who want to begin their own journey to look honestly at where they *are* in terms of equity for people and where/how they want to get to a better/stronger place
- Developing a survey to be sent to all clergy and church lay leaders to allow anonymous participation that will gauge perceptions about racism and the current climate of churches in the district
- Working to build trusting relationship among team members – sharing OUR life stories pertaining to racism...all isms!

#### Getting Organized:

- Working to develop a team that will deal solely with dismantling racism

#### Training:

- Included a class on dismantling racism in the annual district workshops (Jan 2018). The class will become a permanent part of the annual training workshops.

#### Events:

- Co-sponsored (with another district) a trip to the Civil Rights Museum (Greensboro) & met with leaders of the Beloved Community
- Took a group to the National Museum of African American History & Culture (Washington, DC)
- Took a group to the International Civil Rights Center & Museum and The Beloved Community Center (Greensboro, NC)
- Visited the Race Exhibit at the NC Museum of Natural Sciences in conjunction with another district (fall 2017) & participated in conversations
- Planning a day trip to the NC Civil Rights Museum & The Beloved Community Center (Greensboro) with another district and possibly two other districts
- Did a prayer/history walk around southeast Raleigh
- Initiated & hosted *Racial Taboo* event (Feb 2017)
- Initiated & co-hosted with another district the Crossroads Retreat - “widening the net” and extending invitation to NC Conference

#### Supporting Church Activities:

- Encouraging and supporting area work with churches participating in cross-cultural work and worship
- Encouraging churches to insure that church leadership includes members of the minority in their charge conference nominations
- Working to identify churches that are willing to work with a sister church of a different race in a study and discussion utilizing the *Racial Taboo* material

#### Planning / Supporting District Activities:

- Research on positive engagement with diverse communities in the district
- Planning collaborative work with neighboring districts (meetings, events, training, etc.)

## Forming Relationships Within the Community

- Formed relationship between the UMC and AMEZ districts
  - Discussions began between leadership of the UMC and AMEZ districts to explore opportunities to get the pastors of our two districts together to start building relationships (2013).
  - Held first joint fellowship gathering for pastors of UMC and AMEZ churches in both districts (2014).
  - Leadership meetings and joint activities continued (2015-2016).
  - Two districts held first joint worship service during MLK week (2017).
  - Pastors and laity from UMC and AMEZ churches put on a Community Care Day (2017).
  - AMEZ pastors and business leaderships attended United Methodist Business Leaders Network event (2017).
  - UMC and AMEZ districts held a joint self-defense class for UMC and AMEZ women (2017).
  - One AMEZ church hosted an Officer Appreciation Service, and UMC district leaders facilitated introductions among the leaders involved (2017).
  - Two districts held their second joint worship service (2018).
  - Upcoming: *Racal Taboo* event hosted by a UMC church and an AMEZ church

## **What Is The Biggest Challenge To Your Current Work?**

- Defining & understanding *What is Racism?*
- Sensitivity to both sides of the spectrum
- The process of navigating our way around the issue of racism
- Our group quickly realized that we couldn't effectively help others address their racism unless we addressed our own. After a year of that internal work, many of us felt the need to receive further training and begin the journey toward greater activism.
- Apathy on the part of district clergy and laity
- Belief that systemic and institutional racism is no longer a problem
- Getting laity involvement

## **What Things Might You Do Differently?**

- Hold more workshops and training with clergy and laity to bring the current issues to light
- Encourage frank and open discussion in a moderated setting with churches of differing racial makeup
- In every rural town in the district, you will find at least two churches that are United Methodist. One is predominately Caucasian and the other is predominately African-American. These churches are generally located less than a mile apart. Encourage bonding between these churches and provide resources to strengthen community building between local churches – more than the occasional “pulpit exchange”
- Enough talking - let's start acting
- Learn to be inclusive, accepting, loving

- Open to change / be brave

#### **What Resources Would Be Helpful To You?**

- Conference-wide gathering of 8 DDRTs to share ideas, experiences, resources, etc.; communication among DDRT chairs
- Help in determining which programs and workshops to include in district and local training
- Unified template for training/curriculum

#### **How May the CCT Help You?**

- Develop a general plan for what a DDRT would do.
- Develop a list of resources to address racism that are outside the UMC and NCC. A NCC endorsed list, or at least a listing of resources to check out related to dismantling racism, would be helpful.
- Unified template for training/curriculum
- Assistance with organization and ideas to be used in the district
- Assistance with securing grants or monetary resources for training, workshops and materials
- Conference-wide gathering of 8 DDRTs to share ideas, experiences, resources, etc.; communication among DDRT chairs; help to coordinate & communicate what the different DDRTs are doing; communication among DDRT chairs
- Information about “best practices” from other organizations or conferences