

Proposed Administrative Action
CALL TO SACRED CONVERSATIONS ON RACE

Purpose

To encourage sacred conversations on issues of race and racism throughout the Northern California Nevada Conference.

Background

Rev. John Thomas, UCC General Minister and President, has invited the nation to begin sacred conversations on race on Sunday, May 18, 2008. In its Pastoral Letter on Racism of April 29, 2008, the Collegium noted that many of our UCC pastors will be preaching on race on May 18 “in the hope of inaugurating a sacred conversation in the coming months that is urgently needed in our churches, in our homes and work places, and in the halls of power. Racism remains a wound at the heart of our nation, a wound that cannot be washed away or treated carelessly...Our conversations will be sacred if we trust in the Spirit of the living God to do a new thing in our midst...Our conversations will be sacred if we pray for the grace and courage to speak the truth in love and to hear one another all the way through. Sound bites and simple answers cannot be the order of the day...”

The Collegium goes on to note that our conversations are sacred when we:

- invoke God’s presence and wisdom,
- establish safe space with a commitment to mutual respect and Christian love,
- listen deeply to, and honor, the feelings of anger, pain, and joy in those who have been the targets of racism,
- listen deeply to, and honor, the feelings of shame, fear, and grief in those who are waking up to the reality of racism,
- continue the conversation beyond an exploration of individual feelings, attitudes and behaviors, but continue on to examine the realities of cultural and institutional racism, and
- recognize that our deepest common humanity is not grounded in race, religious creed, or national origin but in the extravagantly inclusive love of God.

Acknowledging that, in the words of Herbert Perkins and Margery Otto, “YHWH calls all creation into sacred relationship and promises all peoples to be present to them and to act with steadfast love toward them—generously and graciously liberating them from oppression” and that “YHWH requires people to remove all systems of poverty and oppression, creating the same relationship of generosity, grace, and justice among themselves as a human community...” [Isaiah 58: 1-12] we are moved as people of faith to embark on these sacred conversations.

Administrative Action to be voted

In response to the call to engage in sacred conversations on race “for the health of our nation” and for “the truth-telling and reconciliation [that are] crucial to our spiritual, physical, and emotional wholeness,” the Northern California Nevada Conference of the United Church of Christ commits itself to initiate and participate in sacred conversations on race over the course of the next two years.

Recommendations for Implementation

The Annual Meeting calls upon the Multi-Racial/Multi-Cultural Transformation Team to encourage the sacred conversations on race and racism throughout the Conference; to be in communication with the Local Churches and Associations of the Conference to spark interest and to receive word of the conversations that take place. The Annual Meeting asks that the MMTT report back to the 2009 and 2010 Annual Meetings on the extent and the content of the sacred conversations.

The Annual Meeting calls upon the Local Churches and authorized ministers of the Conference to seek out the resources available at the national UCC website: <http://www.ucc.org/sacred-conversation/>

Financial Impact

None

Contact Persons

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