

RESOLUTION TITLE

Antiracism and Racial Justice Training for Authorized Ministers and Candidates for Ministry in the Northern California Nevada Conference, UCC

Submitted on September 2, 2020 by the Justice & Witness Team and Section B of Committee on Ministry, Northern California Nevada Conference, UCC

SUMMARY

This resolution asks the Conference to adopt a policy requiring all Authorized Ministers (those with Ordained, Lay Ministerial, Licensed or Commissioned standing) and candidates for ordained ministry to participate in antiracism and racial justice training, in order to facilitate their growth as spiritual leaders and equip them to help dismantle white supremacy in order to create a more just world for all.

BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL, HISTORICAL and ETHICAL GROUNDING

WHEREAS, in order to build communities of hope and justice scripture calls us to the imperative that spiritual leaders in the UCC be prepared to understand and embrace the work of antiracism and racial justice.

The gifts he [Christ] gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith [We must speak] the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knitted together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

Ephesians 4:11-16

WHEREAS Ephesians addresses the reality that not one part of the body of Christ is superior or more important than any other. Put into practice through a racial justice lens, UCC spiritual leaders and their communities must identify, name, and begin working to change the ways in which their church culture is rooted in the culture of normative whiteness, thus beginning the work of dismantling those systems for the purpose of becoming truly whole and inclusive. Antiracism and racial justice training help to provide awareness to begin this work.

Learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.

Isaiah 1:17

WHEREAS Isaiah addresses that which is central to the gospel message. In order to practice doing good – to seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan and the widow (those

without agency) – UCC spiritual leaders and their communities must engage in antiracism and racial justice practices. Antiracism and racial justice training help to provide encouragement for these practices.

Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.

Proverbs 31:8-9

WHEREAS, Proverbs 31:1-9 addresses an oracle taught to the earthly king, Lemuel, by his mother; Verses 8 and 9 show that God intends for people in power to be a voice for the voiceless. Antiracism and racial justice must be more than a theory or a talking point. Antiracism and racial justice practices, especially for those with white privilege, must be intentional practices. Racism is racial prejudice plus institutional power¹. These verses from Proverbs express the need for power to be subverted for the benefit of those without power. In the Gospels, the example Jesus gave was to use his power for the care and liberation of those in need. UCC spiritual leaders and their communities must change their relationship to power and its use with particular attention to the ways in which institutional power has, historically, had a negative impact on BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color). Antiracism and racial justice training help to provide the platform from which to begin this re-examination of power.

With what shall I come before the LORD when I bow before the God on high? Should I come to Him with burnt offerings, with year-old calves? Would the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I present my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has shown you, O mankind, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you but to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?

Micah 6:4-8

WHEREAS Micah addresses the reality that performative worship or ritual is not pleasing to God. From an antiracist lens, it is not enough to simply say, “We are antiracist,” we must develop practices to become antiracist. For white clergy, the action required is to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God, setting aside the power afforded by white privilege and stepping into the humility of being teachable. For clergy of color, this justice-doing and kindness-loving takes the form of speaking their truths in the context of communities and finding support for navigating racist systems and processes. In this day and age of polarized politics, the Church is especially accountable to God to speak to power when there is oppression and injustice. UCC spiritual leaders and their communities must begin the practice of listening and learning about racial injustice. Antiracism and racial justice training will help to create the space for this learning to happen.

WHEREAS, predecessor denominations of the UCC, particularly the Congregationalists, showed

¹ Jha, Sandhya. *Pre-Post Racial America: Spiritual Stories from the Frontlines*. Chalice Press. St. Louis. 2015. p. 41.

awareness and commitment to the lives, rights and ministries of all persons – the ordination of Lemuel Haynes in 1785, the first Black man to be ordained in the United States; the Amistad event in 1839 when kidnapped and enslaved Africans rebelled aboard the slave ship and eventually won their freedom in the US Supreme Court, the battle against the Federal Communications Commission for equal (racial) access to the airwaves in the 1960.

WHEREAS the United Church of Christ has a long, historic commitment to working toward dismantling racism, expressed in 11 General Synod resolutions, statements and pronouncements since 1963. Of particular importance is the resolution of GS24 in 2003: “**Calling on the United Church of Christ to be an Anti-Racist Church**,” well before the current emphasis on the term “anti-racist.” This resolution states:

It is time to honor mandates and expectations of this body [General Synod] and of the church and includes:

THEREFORE LET IT BE RESOLVED, that the United Church of Christ is called to be an anti-racist church and that we encourage all Conferences and Associations and local churches of the United Church of Christ to adopt anti-racism mandates, including policy that encourages anti-racism programs for all United Church of Christ staff and volunteers; and

LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED, that Conferences and Associations and local churches facilitate programs within their churches that would examine both historic and contemporary forms of racism and its effects and that the programs be made available to the churches;...

WHEREAS we recognize that the history of the United Church of Christ also includes a significant role in the colonization of the United States and the stealing of land from indigenous peoples. While we lift up and celebrate watershed moments of racial justice, we acknowledge an equally robust history of racist actions.

MOTION

THEREFORE, we, the members of the Northern California Nevada Conference (NCNC) of the United Church of Christ resolve that all Authorized Ministers and Members in Discernment, as a requirement of maintaining standing, must engage in 6 hours of antiracism/racial justice training every 3 years, consistent with the existing requirements for ethics and boundary training, and mandated reporter training. The Conference Committee on Ministry will determine the acceptable options for this training, and monitor compliance for the purpose of accountability

(i) This requirement includes those holding Privilege of Call and Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing

(ii) This requirement applies to ministers in Retired status, but not to those with Exempt standing

(iii) This requirement applies to those applying for Dual Standing

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the work of dismantling white supremacy and creating a more just world for all is ongoing, daily work; therefore in intervening years, all Authorized Ministers and Members in Discernment are required to participate in 1 additional hour of antiracism/racial justice training, through any body or agency approved by the Conference Committee on Ministry.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we call upon the Conference to make its Racial Justice Training available for Authorized Ministers and Members in Discernment at least twice during each calendar year.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we recognize the unique challenges of antiracist and racial justice work for Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) clergy and strongly urge the Conference to create opportunities to accomplish this training in BIPOC-only spaces.

CONTACT PERSONS

Rev. Lacey Hunter, Justice & Witness Team Leader, NCNC
pastorlacey@uccseb.org

Rev. Carol Barriger, Committee on Ministry, Section E, NCNC,
barrigerc@ncnuc.org

Rev. Sophia Jackson, Moderator Bay Association, NCNC
sjackson@ccncn.org

Jean L. Jeffress, Committee on Ministry Section B, NCNC
jeanj199@gmail.com