

Disrupting White Supremacy in Authoritative Traditional Institutions

Okogyeamon PhD; Maria McNamara; Joy Sorensen-Navarre; Rev. Matthias Peterson-Brandt — these and others of Cherokee Park United Church's Seeds of Resistance and of ASDIC Metamorphosis.

	OPRESSION	DISRUPTION	LIBERATION
<p><u>STRUCTURE</u> Policies and Norms of Decision-making</p> <p>and</p> <p>How the Work of the Congregation Is to Be Done:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Polity • Governance • Bylaws • Staffing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our polity/governance were informed by a white institutional identity. • A congregational paradigm of “whiteness” operated subconsciously, and was largely unexamined. • Denominational leadership was not yet equipped to offer alternative models based on equity and inclusion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pastoral leadership was committed to antiracism. • We incorporated global music into our worship service. • ASDIC began offering antiracism programming at the church. • We created a congregational survey around this question: What might a person of color wish to find in a church they would consider joining? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We drew on the survey to implement strategic education, conversation, and resistance actions. • Our hiring policies were amended to proactively seek out applicants of color/LGBTQ+ applicants • We established Seeds of Resistance as a standing committee.

	OPPRESSION	DISRUPTION	LIBERATION
<p><u>POWER</u> Ability to navigate structures</p> <p>Ability to exert will</p> <p>Ability to reward/punish</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership roles wound up going to those most able to work within Roberts Rules and navigate complex denominational polity. • High profile donors wielded disproportionate influence. • Members of marginalized groups experienced isolation and lack of peer support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We rewrote our mission statement and bylaws to affirm an explicitly antiracist identity. • Council members were strongly encouraged to participate in an ASDIC Circle. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A part of each annual leadership retreat is now dedicated to anti-racism themes, learning, and development.

	OPPRESSION	DISRUPTION	LIBERATION
<p><u>CULTURE</u> Culture is the knowledge and standards that we acquire in our society that inform our interpretations, judgments, and decision-makings.</p> <p>Beliefs</p> <p>Attitudes</p> <p>Values</p> <p>Traditions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our focus was inward and we were buffered from the wider multicultural community. • Our internal culture was informed by the way things “have always been done” in a white, middle class, mainline Christian setting. • We embraced the idea of LGBTQ+ inclusion, yet white heteronormativity was built into the church in many unnoticed ways. • A “white sovereign” stained glass Jesus dominated the front of the church. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We began a joint MLK Day worship service with an African American congregation which challenged us to look at worship (and privilege) a bit differently. • We decided to open our building to the wider community for their own cultural programming. • We endeavored to build an ongoing relationship with the local Mendota Dakota Tribal Community and to coordinate the closing feast for their annual pow wow. • Queer folk joined our community but didn’t always stay. We followed up and asked why. • The congregation grappled with how to support trans members through their gender affirmation process. • The Council assembled a task force to explore the impact of the White Jesus imagery and propose a more inclusive alternative. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigenous Truth Telling forums, Hmong New Year celebrations, Mardi Gras celebrations, food justice and neighborhood youth development initiatives came to use our space. • We are slowly adapting to the lack of an exact starting time, or “head count”, in our planning for the closing feast. • MN Transgender Alliance now holds their meetings in our building. • Black and brown stripes were added to our rainbow flags in honor of the trans women of color who began the movement. • The White Jesus remains as a looming reminder of the work we still have before us.

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white supremacy culture

by Tema Okun . **DR**works . www.dismantlingracism.org

■ I dedicate this piece to the late Kenneth Jones, a long-time colleague, mentor, and friend who helped me become wise about many things and kept me honest about everything else. I love you and miss you beyond words.

■ This piece on white supremacy culture builds on the work of many people, including (but not limited to) Andrea Ayvazian, Bree Carlson, Beverly Daniel Tatum, M.E. Dueker, Nancy Emond, Kenneth Jones, Jonn Lunsford, Sharon Martinas, Joan Olsson, David Rogers, James Williams, Sally Yee, as well as the work of Grassroots Leadership, Equity Institute Inc, the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond, the Challenging White Supremacy workshop, the Lillie Allen Institute, the Western States Center, and the contributions of hundreds of participants in the DR process.

* These sections are based on the work of Daniel Buford, a lead trainer with the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond who has done extensive research on white supremacy culture.

This is a list of characteristics of white supremacy culture that show up in our organizations. Culture is powerful precisely because it is so present and at the same time so very difficult to name or identify. The characteristics listed below are damaging because they are used as norms and standards without being pro- actively named or chosen by the group. They are damaging because they promote white supremacy thinking. Because we all live in a white supremacy culture, these characteristics show up in the attitudes and behaviors of all of us – people of color and white people. Therefore, these attitudes and behaviors can show up in any group or organization, whether it is white-led or predominantly white or people of color-led or predominantly people of color.

perfectionism*

- little appreciation expressed among people for the work that others are doing; appreciation that is expressed usually directed to those who get most of the credit anyway; more common is to point out either how the person or work is inadequate
- or even more common, to talk to others about the inadequacies of a person or their work without ever talking directly to them
- mistakes are seen as personal, i.e. they reflect badly on the person making them as opposed to being seen for what they are – mistakes
- making a mistake is confused with being a mistake, doing wrong with being wrong
- little time, energy, or money put into reflection or identifying lessons learned that can improve practice, in other words little or no learning from mistakes
- tendency to identify what's wrong; little ability to identify, name, and appreciate what's right
- often internally felt, in other words the perfectionist fails to appreciate her own good work, more often pointing out his faults or 'failures,' focusing on inadequacies and mistakes rather than learning from them; the person works with a harsh and constant inner critic

antidotes: develop a culture of appreciation, where the organization takes time to make sure that people's work and efforts are appreciated; develop a learning organization, where it is expected that everyone will make mistakes and those mistakes offer opportunities for learning; create an environment where people can recognize that mistakes sometimes lead to positive results; separate the person from the mistake; when offering feedback, always speak to the things that went well before offering criticism; ask people to offer specific suggestions for how to do things differently when offering criticism; realize

that being your own worst critic does not actually improve the work, often contributes to low morale among the group, and does not help you or the group to realize the benefit of learning from mistakes

sense of urgency

- continued sense of urgency that makes it difficult to take time to be inclusive, encourage democratic and/or thoughtful decision-making, to think long-term, to consider consequences
- frequently results in sacrificing potential allies for quick or highly visible results, for example sacrificing interests of communities of color in order to win victories for white people (seen as default or norm community)
- reinforced by funding proposals which promise too much work for too little money and by funders who expect too much for too little

antidotes: realistic workplans; leadership which understands that things take longer than anyone expects; discuss and plan for what it means to set goals of inclusivity and diversity, particularly in terms of time; learn from past experience how long things take; write realistic funding proposals with realistic time frames; be clear about how you will make good decisions in an atmosphere of urgency; realize that rushing decisions takes more time in the long run because inevitably people who didn't get a chance to voice their thoughts and feelings will at best resent and at worst undermine the decision because they were left unheard

defensiveness

- the organizational structure is set up and much energy spent trying to prevent abuse and protect power as it exists rather than to facilitate the best out of each person or to clarify who has power and how they are expected to use it
 - because of either/or thinking (see below), criticism of those with power is viewed as threatening and inappropriate (or rude)
 - people respond to new or challenging ideas with defensiveness, making it very difficult to raise these ideas
 - a lot of energy in the organization is spent trying to make sure that people's feelings aren't getting hurt or working around defensive people
- white people spend energy defending against charges of racism instead of examining how racism might actually be happening
 - the defensiveness of people in power creates an oppressive culture

antidotes: understand that structure cannot in and of itself facilitate or prevent abuse; understand the link between defensiveness and fear (of losing power, losing face, losing comfort, losing privilege); work on your own defensiveness; name defensiveness as a problem when it is one; give people credit for being able to handle more than you think; discuss the ways in which defensiveness or resistance to new ideas gets in the way of the mission

quantity over quality*

- all resources of organization are directed toward producing measurable goals

- things that can be measured are more highly valued than things that cannot, for example numbers of people attending a meeting, newsletter circulation, money spent are valued more than quality of relationships, democratic decision-making, ability to constructively deal with conflict
- little or no value attached to process; if it can't be measured, it has no value
- discomfort with emotion and feelings
- no understanding that when there is a conflict between content (the agenda of the meeting) and process (people's need to be heard or engaged), process will prevail (for example, you may get through the agenda, but if you haven't paid attention to people's need to be heard, the decisions made at the meeting are undermined and/or disregarded)

antidotes: include process or quality goals in your planning; make sure your organization has a values statement which expresses the ways in which you want to do your work; make sure this is a living document and that people are using it in their day to day work; look for ways to measure process goals (for example if you have a goal of inclusivity, think about ways you can measure whether or not you have achieved that goal); learn to recognize those times when you need to get off the agenda in order to address people's underlying concerns

worship of the written word

- if it's not in a memo, it doesn't exist
- the organization does not take into account or value other ways in which information gets shared
- those with strong documentation and writing skills are more highly valued, even in organizations where ability to relate to others is key to the mission

antidotes: take the time to analyze how people inside and outside the organization get and share information; figure out which things need to be written down and come up with alternative ways to document what is happening; work to recognize the contributions and skills that every person brings to the organization (for example, the ability to build relationships with

those who are important to the organization's mission); make sure anything written can be clearly understood (avoid academic language, 'buzz' words, etc.)

only one right way

- the belief there is one right way to do things and once people are introduced to the right way, they will see the light and adopt it
- when they do not adapt or change, then something is wrong with them (the other, those not changing), not with us (those who 'know' the right way)
- similar to the missionary who does not see value in the culture of other communities, sees only value in their beliefs about what is good

antidotes: accept that there are many ways to get to the same goal; once the group has made a decision about which way will be taken, honor that decision and see what you and the organization will learn from taking that way, even and especially if it is not the way you would have chosen; work on

developing the ability to notice when people do things differently and how those different ways might improve your approach; look for the tendency for a group or a person to keep pushing the same point over and over out of a belief that there is only one right way and then name it; when working with communities from a different culture than yours or your organization's, be clear that you have some learning to do about the communities' ways of doing; never assume that you or your organization know what's best for the community in isolation from meaningful relationships with that community

paternalism

- decision-making is clear to those with power and unclear to those without it
- those with power think they are capable of making decisions for and in the interests of those without power
- those with power often don't think it is important or necessary to understand the viewpoint or experience of those for whom they are making decisions
- those without power understand they do not have it and understand who does
- those without power do not really know how decisions get made and who makes what decisions, and yet they are completely familiar with the impact of those decisions on them

antidotes: make sure that everyone knows and understands who makes what decisions in the organization; make sure everyone knows and understands their level of responsibility and authority in the organization; include people who are affected by decisions in the decision-making

either/or thinking*

- things are either/or — good/bad, right/wrong, with us/against us
 - closely linked to perfectionism in making it difficult to learn from mistakes or accommodate conflict
 - no sense that things can be both/and
 - results in trying to simplify complex things, for example believing that poverty is simply a result of lack of education
- creates conflict and increases sense of urgency, as people feel they have to make decisions to do either this or that, with no time or encouragement to consider alternatives, particularly those which may require more time or resources
 - often used by those with a clear agenda or goal to push those who are still thinking or reflecting to make a choice between 'a' or 'b' without acknowledging a need for time and creativity to come up with more options

antidotes: notice when people use 'either/or' language and push to come up with more than two alternatives; notice when people are simplifying complex issues, particularly when the stakes seem high or an urgent decision needs to be made; slow it down and encourage people to do a deeper analysis; when people are faced with an urgent decision, take a break and give people some breathing room to think creatively; avoid making decisions under extreme pressure

power hoarding

- little, if any, value around sharing power
- power seen as limited, only so much to go around
- those with power feel threatened when anyone suggests changes in how things should be done in the organization, feel suggestions for change are a reflection on their leadership
- those with power don't see themselves as hoarding power or as feeling threatened
- those with power assume they have the best interests of the organization at heart and assume those wanting change are ill-informed (stupid), emotional, inexperienced

antidotes: include power sharing in your organization's values statement; discuss what good leadership looks like and make sure people understand that a good leader develops the power and skills of others; understand that change is inevitable and challenges to your leadership can be healthy and productive; make sure the organization is focused on the mission

fear of open conflict

- people in power are scared of expressed conflict and try to ignore it or run from it
- when someone raises an issue that causes discomfort, the response is to blame the person for raising the issue rather than to look at the issue which is actually causing the problem
- emphasis on being polite
- equating the raising of difficult issues with being impolite, rude, or out of line

antidotes: role play ways to handle conflict before conflict happens; distinguish between being polite and raising hard issues; don't require those who raise hard issues to raise them in 'acceptable' ways, especially if you are using the ways in which issues are raised as an excuse not to address those issues; once a conflict is resolved, take the opportunity to revisit it and see how it might have been handled differently

individualism*

- little experience or comfort working as part of a team
- people in organization believe they are responsible for solving problems alone
- accountability, if any, goes up and down, not sideways to peers or to those the organization is set up to serve
- desire for individual recognition and credit
- leads to isolation
- competition more highly valued than cooperation and where cooperation is valued, little time or resources devoted to developing skills in how to cooperate
- creates a lack of accountability, as the organization values those who can get things done on their own without needing supervision or guidance

antidotes: include teamwork as an important value in your values statement; make sure the organization is working towards shared goals and people understand how working together will improve

performance; evaluate people's ability to work in a team as well as their ability to get the job done; make sure that credit is given to all those who participate in an effort, not just the leaders or most public person; make people accountable as a group rather than as individuals; create a culture where people bring problems to the group; use staff meetings as a place to solve problems, not just a place to report activities

i'm the only one

- connected to individualism, the belief that if something is going to get done right, 'I' have to do it
- little or no ability to delegate work to others

antidotes: evaluate people based on their ability to delegate to others; evaluate people based on their ability to work as part of a team to accomplish shared goals

progress is bigger, more*

- observed in how we define success (success is always bigger, more)
- progress is an organization which expands (adds staff, adds projects) or develops the ability to serve more people (regardless of how well they are serving them)
- gives no value, not even negative value, to its cost, for example, increased accountability to funders as the budget grows, ways in which those we serve may be exploited, excluded, or underserved as we focus on how many we are serving instead of quality of service or values created by the ways in which we serve

antidotes: create Seventh Generation thinking by asking how the actions of the group now will affect people seven generations from now; make sure that any cost/benefit analysis includes all the costs, not just the financial ones, for example the cost in morale, the cost in credibility, the cost in the use of resources; include process goals in your planning, for example make sure that your goals speak to how you want to do your work, not just what you want to do; ask those you work with and for to evaluate your performance

objectivity*

- the belief that there is such a thing as being objective or 'neutral'
- the belief that emotions are inherently destructive, irrational, and should not play a role in decision-making or group process
- invalidating people who show emotion
- requiring people to think in a linear (logical) fashion and ignoring or invalidating those who think in other ways
- impatience with any thinking that does not appear 'logical'

antidotes: realize that everybody has a world view and that everybody's world view affects the way they understand things; realize this means you too; push yourself to sit with discomfort when people are expressing themselves in ways which are not familiar to you; assume that everybody has a valid point and your job is to understand what that point is

right to comfort

- the belief that those with power have a right to emotional and psychological comfort (another aspect of valuing 'logic' over emotion)
- scapegoating those who cause discomfort
- equating individual acts of unfairness against white people with systemic racism which daily targets people of color

antidotes: understand that discomfort is at the root of all growth and learning; welcome it as much as you can; deepen your political analysis of racism and oppression so you have a strong understanding of how your personal experience and feelings fit into a larger picture; don't take everything personally

One of the purposes of listing characteristics of white supremacy culture is to point out how organizations which unconsciously use these characteristics as their norms and standards make it difficult, if not impossible, to open the door to other cultural norms and standards. As a result, many of our organizations, while saying we want to be multi-cultural, really only allow other people and cultures to come in if they adapt or conform to already existing cultural norms. Being able to identify and name the cultural norms and standards you want is a first step to making room for a truly multi-cultural organization.

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dRworks is a group of trainers, educators and organizers working to build strong progressive anti-racist organizations and institutions. dRworks can be reached at www.dismantlingracism.org.

Perspectives on an Ideal Church Community

Cherokee Park United Church

PICC Survey was administered to members of the CPUC Church Council, Church leaders, and members of the CPUC Antiracism Team in May and June 2010 and at a congregational annual meeting in January 2011 . In April and May 2011

the responses were edited for duplication and then compiled under the headings given in this document.

**What might a person of color wish to find in a church of which he/she would wish to be a part?
Responses: In that church community, he/she would wish to find or appreciate . . .**

Religious Context:

- Receiving and being moved by the teachings of Jesus and experiencing the love of Jesus in the congregation.
- Finding connections between the Bible and lived experience (sermon, hymns, nature of interactions).
- Hearing the Bible being represented, taught, and preached in historically correct ways in reference to Hebrew/Afro-Asiatic culture and ethnicity.
- Seeing historically accurate (phenotype) representations of Jesus and the people of the Bible.
- Hearing a telling of the Gospel where historical context and cultural meanings are taken seriously.
- Hearing Scriptural interpretations that arise from oppression, that express the feelings and lived effects of oppression, and that imagine and empower the over-throwing of oppression, internally and externally.
- Experiencing an openness to diverse theological perspectives (diversity of religious beliefs)

Multicultural and Inclusive:

- Hearing and participating in a musical tradition or traditions that are culturally appealing.
- Finding one's own cultural and worship traditions honored and valued within a context of wide multicultural appreciation.
- Finding an environment wherein a diversity of cultures are represented, affirmed, celebrated, and enacted.
- Expecting (at times) some accommodation to culturally diverse ways of singing, praying, worshipping, and responding to what is appreciated.
- Seeing images that People of Color can relate to – not just images that appeal to Euro-Americans.
- Seeing multicultural inclusivity where all colors of people are represented, all body types, where “difference” is reflected in 30% of the congregation being People of Color.
- Seeing multicultural, multiethnic inclusivity within congregational leadership – worship service and ministries.
- Seeing context (historical location) appropriately represented in respect to Native American, Latino, East African, and Hmong experiences, and this somehow being reflected in congregational life.
- Finding resources (books, art display, adult forums, community forums) reflective of multicultural perspectives, and visual and audible cues suggesting inclusivity.
- Finding a congregation that is faithfully living into its mission statement to be antiracist, multicultural and inclusive.

Hospitality and Community:

- Seeing a willingness from the congregation to imagine new ways of relating, of being in relationship, demonstrating a capacity to empathize.
- Receiving a warm welcome and hand of friendship where truly being welcome is not taken for granted.

- Experiencing a sincere, visible, and real extravagant welcome.
- Seeing symbols of acceptance (icons, stain glass windows, signs of greetings, attentive greeters) in clear and evident places.
- Experiencing spontaneity, genuineness, and authenticity – people being themselves, displaying comfort, not play-acting.
- Finding some areas of comfort and interest (not necessarily in all areas).
- Finding area of connection across class and educational levels – where humanity and relationship is placed before class difference.
- Finding meaningful support for the family – something available for the children – meaningful activities for a range of ages – a welcoming, relaxed environment for children, not regimentation – support for parenting.
- Engaging in relevant discussions about how the congregants are affected by what happens outside of church – how they may better cope with the outside world – political issues affecting the quality of life.
- Finding others within the congregation with whom one can relate in valued and meaningful ways and being able to share experiences with them.

Characteristics of a Desired Church Community:

- Mindfulness.
- Self-awareness.
- Fearless trust.
- Aware of and conversant with the significance of its cultural and racial identity as a white majority congregation.
- Outreaching to the cultural diversity of the surrounding community.
- Acknowledging the cultural barriers being bridged and overcome through mutuality.
- Increasingly aware of its ignorance (not knowing) and various limitations.
- Willingness to do the cultural homework needed to be multicultural and inclusive.
- People of color who choose membership and are received as full members with leadership capacity.
- Creating community and fellowship understood to be the responsibility of all members of the congregation.
- Letting go of liberal assumptions that being liberal equals cultural awareness and that one is untainted by the legacy of racism.
- Committed to growth in cultural awareness and active in dismantling racism within and outside the church.
- Active and known in the community for all of the right reasons (justice loving, compassionate, involved).
- Awareness of the need for training in cultural competency and antiracism awareness.
- Dedication to ever-ongoing work of becoming a “beloved community.”
- Attention given to all aspects of being welcoming – signage (attractiveness and language), location of nursery and “facilities,” exterior of the building, grounds, greeters at doors, bulletins, accessibility (physical, visual, readability), projection, audio, and other technology.
- Environment and ambiance communicating and providing warmth, ease, comfort, and unstudied kindness.
- Congregation envisions itself as being happy and connected in a multiracial and multicultural community.
- Invitational, informal, and relaxed in self-presentation.
- Membership that knows and lives its “story” and is eager and able to tell it.
- Place of joy and belonging.

Questions for Further Study and Action:

The following questions arise out of the survey summary. The team identified statements that were either representative of others raised or particularly important and developed question from those key statements. The intention of the questions is to facilitate planning for congregational wide study, discussion and action on living into our mission of being an antiracist, multicultural community of faith.

Religious:

1. In what ways can people of color, see hear and be moved by the love and teachings of Jesus in a meaningful way?
2. Who is Jesus for people of color? What can we do to learn this? (Research and interviews)
3. What might be the barriers to people of color receiving and being moved by the teachings of Jesus and experiencing the love of Jesus in the congregation?
4. What “Jesus” are we presenting through our sermons, sacred music, icons, shared readings in the Adult Forum, worldview of our conversations (a spiritualized Jesus – absent religio-political, historical context, a colonial Jesus, or a Jesus of Luke 4: 16-19 with all that is implied in respect to commitment to marginalized and outcastes – a justice seeking, compassionate Jesus)?
5. How do we go about creating congregational awareness and knowledge of historically correct biblical references especially in reference to Hebrew/Afro-Asiatic culture and ethnicity?
6. How do we widen the congregation’s perspectives, openness, and comfort in appreciating the diverse ways Jesus is represented, understood, and invoked?

Multicultural and Inclusive:

1. Our mission statement to be antiracist, multicultural and inclusive will be attractive to some in our community. What are the indicators that we are now living into it? What is yet to be done for us to be antiracist, multicultural and inclusive?
2. What aspects of our worship style and fellowship are most tied to and grounded in the dominant white culture? How could we open those up to be more inclusive? What does being inclusive really mean for us?
3. What resources could we use to broaden our own perspectives toward becoming a more multicultural community? (Books, art displays, adult forums, community forums...)

Hospitality and Community:

1. How can we become practiced and confident welcomers of newcomers in our church building?
2. How can we make our church grounds and interior feel welcoming to people, regardless of race and class?
3. How do we invite authentic self-expression from congregants, including new visitors, before, during, and after worship?

Characteristics of a Desired Church Community:

1. How might our congregation become aware of and conversant with the significance of our cultural and racial identity as a white majority congregation?
2. What steps can we take to make all aspects of our church welcoming—taking into consideration art, visuals and signage, location of nursery and restrooms, exterior of the building and grounds, greeters, bulletins, accessibility (physical, visual, readability) and technology?

3. In what ways can we as a congregation bring awareness to the need for training in cultural competency and antiracism, including letting go of assumptions that being liberal and white equals cultural awareness and that one is untainted by the legacy of racism.
4. What would make it possible for us to become dedicated to the ever-on-going work of becoming a “beloved community,” a congregation that envisions itself as happy, a place of joy and belonging, connected to a multiracial and multicultural community?

Becoming A Beloved Community

Forging Image, Identity and Mission at Cherokee Park United Church
9/19/11 (Rev 1/13/12)

Purpose: Engage in a congregational wide learning and conversation about how our mission as inclusive, multicultural, antiracist is represented in our common life and the wider community. The study will conclude with a Task Force appointed by the Council addressing the questions “are there insights that point to particular needs for continued growth and learning? Do insights and learning lead to actions that will strengthen CPUC’s calling and commitment to being an inclusive, multicultural, antiracist community of faith.

History: While all other mainline (predominately white) Protestant congregations on the St. Paul’s West Side have either closed or moved, Cherokee Park United Church has maintained its commitment to this community. The West Side is a community of historic diversity. The Dakota people were the areas first inhabitants. The Dakota were followed by wave after wave of immigrants encompassing a wide diversity of ethnic and racial groups.

The commitment of Cherokee Park United Church to the West Side includes ministries, program and an intentional welcome that engage the community’s diverse populations.

Cherokee Park United Church is a congregation that continues growing in its understanding of what it means to be faithful to its calling as a community of faith. We are no longer the same congregation we were in 2000. The congregation of 2000 was not the same as the congregation of 1990, nor the congregation of 1980. The congregation has developed a transformational identity rooted in its mission and sense of calling.

Need

The congregation’s present mission statement names antiracism, cultural diversity and justice seeking as central to its identity and calling. In recent years growth at Cherokee Park United Church includes a deepening awareness of the ways whiteness as a marker of racial identity has been used to justify exploitation, domination and racism. It is time to ask, are the ways we presently represent ourselves in this diverse community consistent with whom we hear Christ calling us to be?

Proposed Steps

1. Council appoints a Taskforce to develop a plan for a congregational wide study and conversation framed by questions and issues raised in the congregational survey. The plan can model the Open and Affirming Process used in the late 1990’s. This process utilized a variety of venues for learning, which included Sunday morning, after church, and evenings.
2. Taskforce develops a study and conversation plan that is subsequently approved by Council
3. Congregational Study and Conversation takes place
4. Council convenes Taskforce to address issues or actions identified through the study process and develop for the Council’s approval an action plan of key issues.

Proposal for Becoming A Beloved Community

2012 Year of Study and Engagement

December 19, 2011

Purpose: Engage in a congregational wide learning and conversation about how our mission as inclusive, multicultural, antiracist is represented in our common life and the wider community. The study will conclude with a Task Force appointed by the Council addressing the question “do insights and learning lead to actions that will strengthen CPUC’s calling and commitment to being an inclusive, multicultural, antiracist community of faith?”

Spiritual Foundation – A framework for all events and gatherings

Romans 12:1a-2

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, ...² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Mission Statement for Cherokee Park United Church

Cherokee Park United Church is called to a life of compassionate justice and to embody the boundless love of Jesus.

We confess that communities of faith have not always celebrated the dignity and joyful diversity of all God’s creation.

Therefore, we declare Cherokee Park United Church to be an inclusive, multicultural, antiracist, justice-seeking, environmentally responsible community of faith.

We seek a new humanity where sexual orientation, age, gender, culture or differing abilities are no longer a barrier to our living in just relationship.

To fulfill our mission we will turn to the Holy Spirit and to each other with our questions and for our answers.

Approach

1. The year of study will be guided by these two questions 1. What does it mean to conform to this world? 2. What does it mean to be transformed so that we may discern the will of God - what is good and acceptable and perfect?
2. “Becoming an Anti-Racist Church” by Joseph Barndt – will be the primary resource used to deepen the congregation’s analysis of racism, white supremacy and what it means to truly become a Beloved Community. We will encourage every member and participant at CPUC to read the book. The cost of the books will be partially underwritten by the Antiracism Team to make them accessible.
3. We will read one chapter a month – including the introduction, which will result in a twelve month study. The total time allotted could be longer to allow for fewer gatherings in the summer months.
4. Each chapter will be paired with an event designed to engage participants in a more personal encounter and experience with systemic racism and white privilege as well as visions of the Beloved Community. Leaders will look to make links with the readings for the month and the events.
5. Each event will begin with devotion and prayer that invites a spirit of discernment and listening, modeled on “Discernment”, in *Practicing our Faith* by Dorothy Bass.
6. Norms will be established and regularly reviewed as a guide for conversation.
7. Each event will close with a time of sharing and reflection addressing the questions

- A. What have we learned about what it means to conform to this world? What does conforming look like?
 - B. What are some possible ways the spirit might be calling us to be transformed? What would change? What would be different? *No idea is a bad idea needing to be debated. Each thought should be acknowledged and recorded for later discernment and consideration.
8. All events will close with prayer.
 9. The Barndt material will be made accessible to readers and non-readers by providing visually appealing one page summaries for each chapter that once a month will be included in the Sunday bulletin with a short excerpt and reflection from that chapter in the weekly bulletin, providing curriculum that addresses the needs of children, utilizing a variety of approaches with the learning events.
 10. Once a month there will be a Sunday morning Adult Forum discussion of the material presented in Barndt. We will also explore monthly gatherings at local coffee shops. We will address questions such as what did you find challenging in the material? What would you want to work on?
 11. We will create journal/notebooks for all members and participants. The journals will include the chapter summaries with key questions that invite connecting the material to lived experience as an individual, as part of our faith community and the wider community. Example of questions are as follows: 1. How does the chapter help you better understand what it means to conform as an individual (congregation or community)? Are there concrete examples you notice about conforming to the demands of racism and white supremacy? 2. In light of this chapter where do you see or experience possibilities for personal (congregational, wider community) transformation?
 12. Members and friends will be invited to participate in a cell group that will meet three times during the year as one of the monthly events. The cell groups will be led by members of the antiracism team. Conversations will be focused on reflections from the journals and key learning from Barndt and the events. People will stay with the same cell group throughout the study.
 13. The Antiracism Team will create and lead regular BBC moments for use during worship. BBC moments will offer a personal reflection on the white racial frame and or personal example connected to readings in the book. The BBC moments will be an opportunity to show how situations from our everyday lives connect to conforming to white cultural norms or how it is an example of resistance.
 14. The BBC Taskforce will keep track of participation in order to assess the depth of participation and whether adjustments are needed for fuller participation.
 15. The BBC Taskforce will offer online closed Facebook participation with a moderator.
 16. Offer a “reflection-wall” to record conforming/transforming observations, where people can write comments, paste articles or draw about what they are seeing and observing in our culture.
 17. Explore the possibility of a mural that reflects the goals of transformation.
 18. Offer a “study buddy” option for 1:1 reflection and growth.
 19. The antiracism team will capture in written form insights for continued transformation. Where appropriate ministry teams will be encouraged to begin implementation. Where transformation requires longer term thought, planning and broader involvement; those insights will be recorded for later consideration.

Events:

1. We will inaugurate the Year of Study in worship with prayer and commissioning.
2. The movie “Sing Your Song” about Harry Belafonte will be used for the kick off event. The original version of the video will be modified for BBC use, excerpts will be lifted up that enable participants to begin exploring concrete ways in which racism and white privilege is present and functioning on a systemic level today. There will be two showings of the revised video.
3. The second event will build upon the presence of FFF art, which will be up during the months of Jan – March. An invitation will be made to PPP, former JJJ, with a specialty in religious art, to address the questions of Art and the way it reinforces (conforms to cultural norms) or challenges (transforms cultural norms).
4. The third event will be a multigenerational puppet-making event, addressing some aspect of current reading from Barndt with the goals of incorporating the message in Sunday worship.
5. Other possible learning events may include the following and will be identified as the year unfolds:
 - A. A mural tour of the West Side with questions evoked by FFF art and PPP presentation.
 - B. An event planned with VVV commemorating “2012 The Year of the Dakota People of Minnesota: Remembering and Truth Telling.”
 - C. An event planned with All Nations focused on Indigenous story telling, cosmology and worldview.
 - D. Worship immersion at VVV and RRR with an invitation to ask what can we learn about being the People’s Church that also feels authentic to CPUC.
 - E. Presentation by ZZZ addressing issues of conforming and transforming from white supremacy to the Beloved Community and what we learn from world partners.
 - F. Presentation by XXX on Liberation Theology as a theology born out of resistance to white supremacy and colonialism.
 - G. Presentation by CCC from RRR on her understanding and experience of the people’s church and the ruler’s church.
 - H. A Panel conversation with ZZZ, XXX and CCC.
 - I. Other ideas

Implementation Issues

1. We will begin in January of 2012 the week following MLK with two options for the same event: Wed., Jan. 18 & Fri. Jan. 21.
2. DDD will create summaries for Barndt chapters.
3. GGG will create curriculum for use by Sunday School children (Five sessions?).
4. QQQ with support from DDD will organize a puppet theatre event, making puppets and preparing a skit for Sunday morning that addresses a theme from Barndt’s book.
5. ART will provide a \$200 stipend each for DDD, LLL and QQQ.
6. ART will purchase 50 Barndt books and underwrite the cost so they can be sold for \$5.00 each
7. Identification of additional events and begin planning.

BBC (Becoming a Beloved Community) Moment Fall 2011 to Winter 2013

Proposal for Becoming a Beloved Community: #13. The Antiracism Team will create and lead regular BBC moments for use during worship. BBC moments will offer a personal reflection on the white racial frame and or personal example connected to readings in the book. The BBC moments will be an opportunity to show how situations from our everyday lives connect to conforming to white cultural norms or how it is an example of resistance. Three-five Minute Presentations at start of Worship Service

TWO SAMPLES

BBC Moment, March 25, 2012: Herb (Okogyeamon)

I come to you as a multiculturalist, one in search of community – multicultural, antiracist, multi-ethnic community. Community reflective of my worldview of all us being interdependent, requiring each other, abrading each other, rubbing off each other's rough spots, realizing our potential for being full humans through the rough and tumble of community. But what kind of community allows for our humanization? We are people of many ethnicities in this community on the West Side – Mexican, El Salvadorian, Hmong, Scandinavian, Somali, Liberian, German, African American, Lebanese, Arab, Ethiopian, Italian, East Indian, Dakota, Lakota, Anishinaabe, and another fifty or more peoples of differing languages, customs, arts and music, food, worldview, values, ways of living and ways of understanding and responding to the sacred.

Our differences are very evident. How can we **honor** those different ways of being human and yet find **unity** of spirit and **joy** in expressing and sharing our differences?

Here, in this place, multiculturalism asks us to live and worship together as a *beloved community*. That is easier said than done. We are all inclined toward wanting the familiar and comfortable to have predictability and the sure realizations of our cultural expectations. Multiculturalism doesn't give us that.

I expect we are of one mind in seeing how problematic it would be for a would-be **multicultural** congregation to accept others into their company under the condition of cultural assimilation to only one of the cultures represented in the congregation – accommodating to the cultural norms favored by a segment of the congregation, expecting the cultural minority to sit in silent observation, never challenging or questioning the cultural status quo or power equation, never asking the majority to examine its own basic assumptions about who they are and how they came to be who they are.

Most congregations welcome diversity. But what does **that** mean? Does it go **beyond** the sampling of exotic foods, wearing colorful clothing, body-swaying to syncopated rhythms, responding enthusiastically to a well-preached sermon, or tearing-up from songs that deeply touch us? Would we want our multiculturalism to stop there? Here at Cherokee Park United Church we are striving for a deeper sense of multiculturalism.

Our quest for diversity intends to value difference, to advance equality of opportunity within the congregation and community, to celebrate each other's voice and presence. For us, indifference, mere tolerance of each other is not enough.

If becoming a multicultural, antiracist, beloved community **shall** be possible for us, we need to begin with an honest soul-searching of who we actually are, given the context of our common, historical legacy of racism and de facto apartheid, a legacy that continues to divide us even today. We are not yet the community we desire to be. Clearly, we are not **yet** a "beloved community."

Openness. Full hearted openness. Here, at a place of **openness**, is where a congregation, even **our** beloved congregation, needs to start. We need to open up to a critical, self-examination of who we are – not assume that we truly know. Not think who we aspire to be, who we imagine ourselves to be, we have **already** become. We are **in** the "**becoming**". Because of our humanity, we shall always be **in** the **becoming**. A beloved community is a **vision** of relationship, a **vision** of community – where all are *beloved*, *valued*, and *experience* being at home. Let us listen, for in multiculturalism, God is still speaking!

Hats, Personas, History: June 17, 2012 Herb (Okogyeamon)

Hats are like the masque used in a classical Greek drama. In Greek the masque is called a *persona*. I've lost count of the various **hat** personas I have on my closet shelf. I wear them seasonally or in support of other clothing. The hats and the clothing are personas. A masque.

Each of us dresses our selves in a masque. No one masque, no one persona, can do our multiple identities justice.

Here are a few of my **hat** personas. [*Gesture*]

There is a particular personal history behind each hat. No one hat can tell my entire history. The history is much too complex.

There are three hats that have mattered most to me. The three share a common element.

- The black beaver Western hat has a Thunderbird, black-white, beaded band.
- The Native Buffalo cap I bought at a Pow -Wow.
- The black leather Buffalo Soldier cap I recently gave to my son.

The Buffalo emblem has special significance. My father was a Buffalo Soldier, awarded various medals. One of the medals is that of a Sharp Shooter. He saw service in the South West along the US - Mexican Border and in the Philippines, chasing border bandits and pacifying insurrectionists.

The buffalo is a **sacred** emblem. I am connected to it through my father. I have always been very proud of my father's service as a Buffalo Soldier. But now, what do I do with that history of the Buffalo Soldiers being deployed as kind of Shock Troops on behalf of Manifest Destiny?

What do I do with the knowledge of these African American troopers waging war against Native American warriors?

What do I do with the history of African American soldiers being used by the US to deny the Cuban and Filipino people their right of self-determination for a generation?

In the service of the United States, did my father kill a Buffalo or lift his rifle against a freedom fighter... What do I **do** with this history? What do I do with a heritage that includes benefits that have come to me because of my Father's participation in the oppression, colonization, occupation, exploitation of land and resources of peoples who wanted nothing more than what **any** people want: freedom for self-determination, freedom to live their own lives according to their own traditions and values.

It hurts to acknowledge that the Veteran benefits that my father received that helped finance my college education had their origins in service given to the United States, a service contributing to US imperial conquests.

It hurts to acknowledge the **full** truth of how the U.S became a rich, powerful nation. – A nation that could give privileges to **certain** of its citizens at the expense of others. I benefited from that history. I am implicated in this history, but I do not have to be **complicit** in it. I bear witness that empire building and colonialism entail evil acts that must not be condoned.

Beyond that what is my responsibility? Self-education. Learning the truth about Indigenous people's history and culture so that I may speak the truth about it and have personal empathy for their concerns. Listening to them and responding to their call when my support is needed. Consulting with Indigenous peoples on issues that may matter to them, ensuring their voice is heard and they are seated at decision making tables, keeping their interests in mind when they are not present. These are mine. What are yours? What is your story? How is that story implicated in the US colonial project and disposition of Indigenous peoples? What is your responsibility in respect to that legacy?