

No. 0113**REPORT FROM THE ANTI-RACISM/PRO-RECONCILIATION
INITIATIVE OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)**

RECEIVED by the General Assembly

Background Information

The Anti-racism/Pro-reconciliation Initiative is a process of long-range transformation for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) put forth by the Steering Committee for the Process of Discernment on Racism. The Administrative Committee and General Board approved the initiative in July of 1998.

How will your office contribute to the transformation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) called for by the Vision?

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) has evolved as a new possibility for Christian community. Under the practice of open membership our only test for fellowship is confession in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. While inclusive membership is our tradition and practice, we have not yet lived into the full embodiment of that inclusivity which God intends. In fact, many of our practices, polices, and traditions exclude people of color – intentionally and unintentionally. Oppressive theologies and ideologies developed at a time of U.S. colonial expansion and paternalism have made our mission of witness suspect. The sin of racism continues to limit the ministry of the church, impairs and damages its witness, fragments and divides its community and burdens its soul which is the very core of the spiritual life.

The Anti-racism/Pro-reconciliation Initiative is founded upon the need to make visible God's beloved community. It invites the church to listen to the once silenced voices of its racial ethnic communities, to learn from their wisdom and to gain insight from their leadership. It calls the church to discernment and prayer, to study of the Scriptures and reflection, to dialogue and table fellowship. Through these disciplines our *SPIRITUALITY* will be transformed, strengthened, and deepened, resulting in a community that understands its mission to be about bringing justice and salvation to the world.

TRUE COMMUNITY, however, is attained only when mutual accountability, respect, honesty, compassion, justice, welcome and hospitality are extended to all and experienced by all members of the community. *TRUE COMMUNITY* will not be realized in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) until it is liberated from the deep historical racist roots that were inherited from American culture and which limit its possibilities.

The Anti-racism/Pro-reconciliation Initiative calls the church to be a place *where brothers and sisters of all races, languages, and cultures will grow towards God's glorious realm, where all have*

a place at the table and none shall be turned away. It seeks to build *TRUE COMMUNITY* by working to dismantle the pervasive evil of racism that keeps the community broken and fragmented. It seeks to re-constitute the table into a place where healing, remembering and reconciliation take place.

By challenging our communion to *practice faithfulness with regard to the elimination of racism, which exists in all manifestations of the church, to discern appropriate responses to address the sin of racism, to develop strategies to eradicate it, and to work toward racial reconciliation* the Anti-racism/Pro-reconciliation Initiative is fostering a *PASSION FOR JUSTICE* within the community. The eradication of the systemic, institutional, cultural and individual manifestations of racism from the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) will result in new understandings and possibilities for *JUSTICE* to be experienced by all.

What is your office currently doing that is related to the Vision?

Outcomes of the Anti-racism/Pro-reconciliation Initiative

DEVELOPING LEADERS with new understandings of racial justice who are equipped as change agents:

- ❖ 110 fully trained Anti-racism/Pro-reconciliation Organizers
- ❖ 250 leaders Introduced to an analysis of racism
- ❖ Hundreds with basic 90-minute introductions
- ❖ 19 regional, associate regional and area ministers are full participants of Anti-racism teams
- ❖ All new members of boards, committees and commissions staffed by the Office of the General Minister and President will receive the basic 90-minute introduction.
- ❖ 15 fully functioning and trained Anti-racism/Pro-reconciliation teams at the regional and general levels.
 - Capital Area Region
 - Georgia Region
 - Illinois and Wisconsin Region
 - Indiana Region
 - Michigan Region
 - Northeastern Region
 - Northwest Region
 - Pacific Southwest Region
 - Pennsylvania Region
 - Upper Midwest Region
 - Tres Rios Area of the Southwest Region
 - Christian Board of Publication
 - Division of Homeland Ministries

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- Office of the General Minister and President, Office of Communication and Church Finance Council
International Christian Women's Fellowship
- ❖ 6 new teams will finish their training in 2001
 - Arizona Region
 - Tennessee Region
 - Virginia Region
 - Ohio Region
 - Mid-America Region
 - Alabama-Northwest Florida Region
 - ❖ Working in the development stage with 7 regions and general units
 - Kentucky Region
 - West Virginia Region
 - South Carolina Region
 - National Benevolent Association
 - Division of Homeland Ministries
 - Board of Church Extension
 - Montana Region

Examination and transformation of the SEARCH PROCESSES at work in the church.

- ❖ All General Unit Teams have engaged their full staffs in 1 and 2-½ day analysis events and have provided their boards with 2-½ day analysis training. Because it is the staff and Board's responsibility to make and change policy, educating these persons is imperative for transformation to occur.
- ❖ General Board approved an "Open Executive Search Policy" which it has commended to regions and general units for incorporation into their by-laws, policies and practices.
- ❖ The Office of the General Minister and President, the Council on Christian Unity, the Church Finance Council and the Mid-America region have adopted and used the policy.
- ❖ The Kentucky region, the Pension Fund and the Christian Church Foundation have adapted the policy.
- ❖ Teams are working to transform the nominating and election processes used by Regions for hiring professional staff.

Creating awareness about the SYSTEMIC TRANSFORMATION required to dismantle racism through EDUCATIONAL events.

- ❖ Heightened awareness created by the Initiative has contributed significantly to the fact that we now have three African American regional ministers, one Hispanic regional minister and one African American interim general unit president.
- ❖ Regional Board or Assembly endorsement for Twenty-one Anti-Racism teams
- ❖ Growing awareness within the system of the profound challenge that lies ahead.
- ❖ Six teams are beginning congregational work.
 - Pacific Southwest Team
 - Illinois and Wisconsin Team

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- Georgia Team
 - Capital Area Team
 - Michigan Team
 - Pennsylvania Team
 - ❖ Regional teams at work to focus annual regional gatherings on issues of race, racism and racial relations.
 - Northwest Team

Exploring the SPIRITUAL AND THEOLOGICAL CHALLENGES emerging from the Anti-racist transformation task.

- ❖ Teams have developed worship resources.
- ❖ Many teams engaged in an expansion of the theological and faith pieces of the analysis.
- Christian Board of Publication Team
- Division of Homeland Ministries Team
- Capital Area Team
- Illinois and Wisconsin Team
- Michigan Team

What is God calling your office to do differently?

Develop a communication strategy to share with the wider church the vision, call, objectives and task of the Initiative.

- ❖ Ensuring systematic reporting of the work being done by teams in the wider church.
- ❖ Differentiate between individual transformation and systemic transformation.
- ❖ Develop

Develop expand and refine the processes that give shape to the initiative.

- ❖ Focus on making the initiative more effective and far reaching
- ❖ Put steps in place to allow for immediate entry into the transformation task.

Develop resources that are applicable and accessible to Disciple congregations.

- ❖ Christian education resources intended to engage congregations in dialogues about race, race relations and racism.
- ❖ Along with the leadership of the racial ethnic communities develop resources that focus on the needs of the communities.

Develop a formal evaluation process to assess the effectiveness of the initiative and to identify the areas where improvement is needed.

Strengthen the lines of accountability between the office, the teams and the wider church.
Expand the analysis to address the particular needs of our racial ethnic communities.

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- ❖ Include issues of internalized racist oppression that are important to the African American community
 - ❖ Include issues of classism and colonialism that are important to the Hispanic/Latino community
 - ❖ Include issues of assimilation that are important to the Pacific/Asian community.

Finally, for purposes of information we include the following action in this report. The General Board meeting in Indianapolis, April 21-24, 2001 adopted a resolution entitled: **An Apology from the General Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to Americans of African descent.**

WHEREAS, we fervently believe in the essential dignity and worth of every human being; and

WHEREAS, we believe God loves every person as a dear and precious child; and

WHEREAS, any act or attitude or institution which diminishes any person's divinely-intended right to a full, free, productive and peaceful life is clearly contrary to the will of God; and

WHEREAS, the institution of slavery is unquestionably evil and abhorrent to God; and

WHEREAS, many religious communities in the United States including the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) failed to work or speak against the institution of slavery in the United States, a wicked apathy which permitted and resulted in untold suffering among the African people kidnapped by evil people and "sold" to Americans to labor without compensation and often subjected to inhuman persecutions by their white owners; and

WHEREAS, the effects of these injustices have continued to subject the descendants of those Africans to an endlessly continuing mind set which perpetuates the unfair, unjust and sinful system of prejudice and racism; and

WHEREAS, Christ has called the church to be an instrument of his reconciliation;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the General Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) meeting in Indianapolis April 21-24, 2001, confesses the corporate guilt we all share for these evils, and heartily begs the forgiveness of God and of all God's children whose lives have been damaged or limited by these sins.

We further pledge and promise that we will earnestly seek through words and deeds, as individual Christians and corporately as a manifestation of the church, to demonstrate our sorrow by committing ourselves to lives of continuing humility, healing and love toward all those who still bear the wounds of the continuous and grievous effects of this historic evil.