

HOLY CONVERSATIONS: A Curriculum for Predominantly White Congregations



SESSION READINGS in preparation for SESSION EIGHT

(To be distributed at the end of Session Seven)

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Reading #1 in preparation for Session Eight of “Holy Conversations” “The Biblical Mandate of the Multi-Ethnic Church”

(Excerpt adapted from Chapter 1 of *Ethnic Blends: Mixing Diversity into Your Local Church*,” by Mark DeYmaz)



Mark DeYmaz is the founding pastor of the Mosaic Church of Central Arkansas, a multi-ethnic and economically diverse church where significant percentages of Black and White Americans, together with men and women from more than 30 nations, walk, work and worship God together as one.

God’s heart for the nations is made clear in the Bible, from the book of Genesis through the apostle John’s writing in the book of Revelation. Sadly,

however, while pastors may lead their congregants into foreign missions or to be involved with local outreach or community service, loving diverse others has largely remained something we do, more than a reflection of who we are for the sake of the gospel. Yet make no mistake: the intentional planting and development of local churches that reflect God’s love for all people—the unity and diversity of God’s kingdom on earth as it is in heaven—is not optional in the New Testament; it is mandated. In fact, there are three key theological insights that support this claim.

1. The Multi-ethnic Church is Envisioned by Christ (John 17:20 – 23). On the night before he died, Christ prayed specifically that future generations of believers would be united as one so that the world would know God’s love and believe. In this way and by this means, Christ stated that his mission would be accomplished through others and, ultimately, that his Father would be glorified. What Jesus intends for us (the local church), then, is clear: we have been called to be one for the sake of the gospel. It may not be easy, but it is biblical, and it is right. Therefore we are to “walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which [we] have been called” (Eph. 4:1).

It is significant to realize that Christ prayed we would be one for two very specific reasons, or “so that” two things will occur. Understanding the Greek words used here, we can paraphrase John 17:20 – 23 to read like this:

“I also want to pray for those who, in time, will come to believe in me through the witness of my disciples... Yes, I pray that those who come after them will be completely united as one. There is no guarantee that they will be one, but if they will, there are two guaranteed results. First, men and women throughout the world will recognize that I am the Messiah. In addition, men and women throughout the world will recognize that you, Father, love them. They will respond to your love and receive eternal life through faith in me.”

When men and women of diverse backgrounds walk together as one in Christ in and through the local church, they reflect the Father’s love for all people. More than that, a oneness of mind, love, spirit, and purpose proclaims the gospel in a most powerful, tangible, and compelling way. For as his own union with the Father uniquely empowered Christ to proclaim God’s love for the world, our union with him and, he says, with fellow believers uniquely empowers us to do the same. Yes, in pursuing the “perfection of unity,” we will see the world come to know him as we do!

2. The Multi-ethnic Church is Described by Luke (Acts 11:19 – 26; 13:1). Have you ever noticed that it's not until Luke is nearly halfway through the book of Acts (Acts 11:18) that he can state with confidence that the leaders of the church in Jerusalem understand that the gospel, like the church, is not just for the Jews but for everyone—Jews and Gentiles alike? The next verse, though, makes it clear that the issue had not yet been settled for everyone. For those who were driven from Jerusalem following the stoning of Stephen “made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews” (Acts 11:19). This would be disheartening if not for what Luke reports next: “But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus” (Acts 11:20). In other words, there were some who said, “I’m not going home; I’m going to Antioch, and I’m not just going to speak to my own people. I’m going to speak to anyone who will listen!”

This was a truly significant step and, in my opinion, the most pivotal moment in the entire New Testament concerning the growth and development of the church, for the following reasons. First, the evangelists and church planters mentioned in Acts 11:20 were men of diverse cultural backgrounds. Second, they intentionally went to Antioch to speak not only to the Jews but also to the Greeks (Gentiles). It should come as no surprise to learn that “the hand of the Lord was with them” (Acts 11:21 NASB). So Jews loved Gentiles, Gentiles loved Jews, and they were all worshiping God together as one in the local church at Antioch. In addition, the church was the first to take up a collection for fellow believers living in a foreign land (Acts 11:28 – 30). Its pastoral leadership team included two men from Africa, one from the Mediterranean, one from Asia Minor, and one from the Middle East (Acts 4:36; 9:11; 13:1), providing the church a visible witness and a model of unity at the highest level. And it was the church at Antioch, and not the church in Jerusalem, that first sent missionaries to the world. With these things in mind, it's not coincidental that the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch (Acts 11:26). Yes, it is the multicultural church at Antioch, and not the monocultural church in Jerusalem, that is the most influential church of the entire New Testament.

3. The Multi-ethnic Church is Prescribed by Paul (Ephesians). The local church at Ephesus was made up of both Jewish and Gentile converts and thus was multi-ethnic (Acts 19:8 – 17; 20:21). No wonder, then, that the theme of Paul's letter to the Ephesians is the unity of the church for the sake of the gospel. In this letter Paul defines his calling and declares that “by revelation there was made known to me the mystery...of Christ” (Eph. 3:3 – 4). And that “this mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus” (v 6).

This verse represents the very apex of the book, from which all else written derives its context and meaning. In fact, it represents the very substance of Paul's life and ministry. As Paul writes this letter from prison, then, he is in chains not simply for proclaiming the gospel but specifically for proclaiming the mystery of Christ (Col. 4:2 – 4), the mystery of the gospel, namely, “that the Gentiles are fellow heirs [together with the Jews]...and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel” (Eph. 3:6).

**Holy Conversations about Race:
A Curriculum for Predominantly White Congregations**

**Reading #2 in preparation for Session Eight of “Holy Conversations”
Action Steps to Increase your Cultural Intelligence Quotient**



David A. Livermore (PhD, Michigan State University) is executive director of the Global Learning Center at Grand Rapids Theological Seminary. In addition, he is research fellow at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore and a senior consultant with the Cultural Intelligence Center.

Last week, David Livermore discussed how **“loving others” is the key motivation** needed to become a more culturally sensitive person. This week he suggests tangible action steps for increasing our cultural sensitivity—in other words, for improving our cultural intelligence (CQ).

The accompanying chart shows us that **there are four arenas we need to work on to increase our CQ**. The arrows show that improvement builds sequentially from Drive to Knowledge to Strategy to Action, and then continues.

The place to begin, then, is with your “Drive.” What’s your motivation? Do you really want to learn how to improve how you relate to persons of color? What will keep you motivated? Here are some tangible action steps you can take to help improve your CQ Drive.

(NOTE: for all of these quadrants, the point is not for you to do all of the suggested action steps at once, or even do all of them. There are many more paths to a higher CQ than listed here. These are well-tested, so you can trust them. Just begin with a couple that interest you the most).



- **Know that everyone—including you—has some cultural, racial and ethnic biases.** You need to uncover them and face them. Read “White Awake” by Daniel Hill and “Witnessing Whiteness” by Shelly Tochluk to help with this, and to learn of the concept of “privilege.”
- **Explore your current interests within a new cross-cultural experience** (Example: “I am a musician, and I will learn some ethnic music from Russia. I will start by spending Friday nights at a Russian night club in our city.”) Maybe even stretch myself a little through a challenging cross-cultural experience (“Next week, I will play something I’ve learned to a Russian audience at one of their ‘open mike’ nights.”)
- **Reward yourself when you succeed in taking a step forward.** Learn from your mistakes.
- **Travel to places and cultures which seem to be very different from you** (Example: if you are White, travel to Indonesia rather than Germany).
- **Your ability to become more culturally sensitive will depend on your physical, psychological, and spiritual energy.** How will you keep your batteries charged up?

Then, spend some time improving your “CQ Knowledge.” This is like the first of our three phases in Holy Conversation, namely, learning. Here are some possible action steps to help:

- ***Attend local cultural celebrations put on by ethnic communities.*** Think of Greek festivals, Cinco de Mayo parties, your neighbor’s daughter’s cincoanera, etc.
- ***Visit ethnic food grocery stores and see what’s on the shelves.*** Look, smell, taste (if allowed), feel, listen.
- ***Eat at authentic ethnic food restaurants.*** Ask the waitperson or chef to order for you and try something new. It’s OK if you don’t like it. If you can, share the meal with someone from that culture and have them explain the cuisine, its history and preparation.
- ***Expand your TV, radio and reading material to include a global perspective.*** In the English language, BBC TV or radio is a great place to start. Also, see your library for *The Economist*, one of the best written journals in any language—it surveys the world, with great analysis. Even just spending 2 or 3 minutes a day doing something like this will help.
- ***Go to the movies or read a novel about life in another culture.*** Take advantage of the many offerings in film and theater for Black History Month in February (as one example).
- ***Do some formal learning about the difference in “cultural values.”*** (Livermore’s books on Cultural Intelligence include information about this)
- ***Explore your own cultural/racial/ethnic identity.*** DNA and genealogy services abound.
- ***Study a new language.*** Learning someone else’s language is the most kind and loving act you can do for them. And, it helps you think differently about everything. (Learning a new language later in life can also delay dementia!)
- ***Recruit a CQ coach.*** If you have a friend from the culture you’re trying to explore, ask them if they will be your “go to” person with questions, etc. They will promise not to take offense at anything you ask if you’re really trying to learn.

Next, take some to time to construct a better “CQ Strategy.” This is where you apply your Drive and your Knowledge to real-life situations, and is similar to “Reflection” in Holy Conversation. Here are some helpful actions:

- ***Suspend judgment and expand your tolerance level.*** Notice something; take it in; but reserve judgement until you have more insight. (Example: “People on the streets in Russia don’t seem to smile. I’m tempted to think that they are depressive or intolerant of strangers. I will have to ask my CQ coach to give me some more perspective.”)
- ***Practice “mindfulness.”*** This is a spiritual practice that focuses you in the “now,” in the present moment, instead of thinking constantly about the past and future. This helps you to be more observant and less analytical in any unusual situation. (For a Christian practice of mindfulness, start with the 17th century work “The Practice of the Presence of God”, as compiled by Father Joseph de Beaufort).
- ***Journal your cross-cultural experiences.***
- ***Plan for your cross-cultural experiences, and especially your social interactions.*** Knowing what you’re learning of their culture, what things will you do differently when spending time with your new friends and acquaintances in a new place?
- ***Lower your expectations*** of the results of cross-cultural encounters. If you’re learning, then there are no failures. Evaluate and “reframe” the outcomes. Then try again.

The fourth CQ quadrant is “Action.” Ultimately, our CQ is measured on how we behave. This builds on the strength of other three quadrants. It’s your level of adaptability in another culture.

- ***Develop new social skills that are appropriate to that culture.*** This is kind of like being an actor. Put yourself in the shoes of the people you’re with, take their lead, do what they do, and go with the flow. But be careful not to mimic them, which feels like mockery. And not all actions should be duplicated by someone outside of the culture. This is where having a CQ coach is essential.
- ***Make taboos taboo.*** Eliminate the behaviors that are most taboo in the culture you’re visiting. The book “Kiss, Bow or Shake Hands” by Terri Morrison and Wayne Conaway is a great one to keep on your shelf. There will be ones specific to the culture you’re exploring.
- ***Slow down.*** Effectively adjusting our behavior to match another culture’s expectation happens best when we slow down. It also helps us to enjoy the experience more.
- ***Ask for help when you need it,*** especially from your CQ coach.
- ***At “home,” form a multicultural/multiracial/multiethnic team*** that regularly meets to discuss race relations and to improve each other’s CQ.

SUGGESTION: In this study we have been focusing on race relations between Whites and Blacks. This week take some time and review the action steps suggested in the CQ Drive and CQ Knowledge arenas above. Choose one or two ideas from each arena and apply them to your growing experience of Black history and culture. In the space below, write down your plan for putting these ideas into action. Be specific! Set this year’s Easter as a date of completion for your accomplishing these 2-4 action steps—setting a time-horizon will help you do what you intend to do.

My Action Plan for Improving My CQ Drive and CQ Knowledge, To Be Completed by April 21, 2019

My CQ Drive action steps and plan:

My CQ Knowledge action steps and plan:

Reading #3 in preparation for Session Eight of “Holy Conversations” “The Seven Core Commitments of a Multi-Ethnic Church”

(Excerpt adapted from Chapter 1 of *Ethnic Blends: Mixing Diversity into Your Local Church*,” by Mark DeYmaz)



Mark DeYmaz is the founding pastor of the Mosaic Church of Central Arkansas, a multi-ethnic and economically diverse church where significant percentages of Black and White Americans, together with men and women from more than 30 nations, walk, work and worship God together as one.

The Scriptures emphasize the importance and necessity of the multi-ethnic church as a witness to the credibility of the gospel message. To build a healthy multi-ethnic church today, there are seven core commitments that church pastors and ministry leaders will need to adopt and apply.

1. Embrace Dependence. The multi-ethnic church is a different kind of church. In other words, there are no simple solutions, no shortcuts or strategies of humankind that can accomplish what only God can do in this regard. In other words, it is a work of the Holy Spirit and of faith that cannot otherwise be attained through human means or efforts. Such a church can be established only when we commit ourselves to prayer, patience, and persistence in seeking to “walk [together as one with diverse others] in a manner worthy of the calling with which you [all] have been called” (Eph. 4:1).

2. Take Intentional Steps. While it is true that the multi-ethnic church is a work of God, it does not just happen. You must take intentional steps to turn the vision into reality. With this in mind, you should view a commitment to dependence and a commitment to intentionality as two sides of the same coin. For while it is true that the Vine (Christ) alone produces the fruit, it is the task of the branches (us) to bear it (John 15:4–8), and this you will do when you abide in him.

I have no doubt that people mean well when they say they would gladly welcome people of various ethnic or economic backgrounds to come be a part of “their” church. However, in practice, what they really mean is, “as long as they like things the way we do them.” Therefore, you should recognize that a healthy multi-ethnic church will be established not by *assimilation* but rather by *accommodation*. The word *assimilate* means “to integrate somebody into a larger group so that differences are minimized or eliminated.” Yet the word *accommodate* means “to adjust actions in response to somebody’s needs.” In other words, you must not ask or expect diverse others to check their culture at the door to become part of “your” church. Rather, it is the responsibility of those in the majority to adjust themselves intentionally, their own attitudes and actions, in order to enfold diverse others into the life of the growing, developing body.

3. Empower Diverse Leaders. To build a healthy multi-ethnic church, you must also empower diverse leaders, from the pulpit to the nursery and at every stop in between, vocational and volunteer leaders alike. Credibility and modeling begin here, as Luke recognizes in Acts 13:1, where he lists the prophets and teachers at Antioch not only by name but also by country of origin (see also Acts 4:36; 9:11). However, it’s important to recognize that when it comes to staffing for diversity, intentionality is the middle ground between quota and wishful thinking. In other words, you should not force the issue by predetermining just who or how many different kinds of people you will

involve as leaders at a given time. On the other hand, you cannot simply sit in your office all day and pray that somehow a well-qualified candidate of diverse ethnic origin will simply appear at your door!

4. Develop Cross-cultural Relationships. Multi-ethnic relationships form the very foundation and fabric of a multi-ethnic church because trust is not a commodity so easily assumed in an environment where people must interact with others different from themselves. Cross-cultural relationships take time to form and cannot be agenda driven. We should recognize that all of us from time to time have prejudicial thoughts and feelings because of past conditioning from family, social setting, peer interactions, community mores, and the media. To build a healthy multi-ethnic church, we should provide opportunities for open dialogue and commend those with both the courage to discuss such things and the determination to deal with them. When misunderstandings arise, we must determine (as in a marriage) to keep the ring on.

5. Pursue Cross-cultural Competence. To build a healthy multi-ethnic church, we must commit ourselves to the pursuit of cross-cultural competence, whether that means becoming proficient in the idiosyncrasies of language or learning the ins and outs of traditions different from our own. Once acquired, cross-cultural competence allows us to interact in a more informed and effective way with others of various ethnic or economic backgrounds.

In pursuit of cross-cultural competence, those seeking to establish a multi-ethnic church should surround themselves with cross-culturally competent people who can be trusted to provide insight and training across the board, from the nursery to the pulpit and at every station in between.

6. Promote a Spirit of Inclusion. In Philippians 3-4, Paul expects individuals in a congregation not to look inward but to get beyond themselves for the benefit of others. His words should inspire our present-day attitude toward and approach to creating an environment in which diverse people not only feel welcome but also, in time, feel they are a significant part of the whole. Believers who embrace this imperative will find that they are able to worship God joyfully even at times, for example, when the music played on a Sunday morning is not compatible with their own personal tastes, when someone prays a prayer in a language they do not understand, or when in some other way things are not done in accordance with their preferences. To promote a spirit of inclusion, you must also pay attention to those little things that add up to create the look and feel of the whole. At Mosaic, for example, all of our signage is produced both in English and Spanish, as are the bulletins and PowerPoint slides. And we fly flags in our church to represent the diversity of nations within our body. Ultimately, the goal is to create an environment where all people feel welcome, where truth is proclaimed, where grace and mercy abound.

7. Mobilize for Impact. The intended outcome of establishing a multi-ethnic church is not unity for unity's sake. Rather, it is to turn the power and pleasure of God—uniquely expressed in a church where diverse people “are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit” (Eph. 2:22)—outward in order to bless the city, lead people to Christ, encourage the greater body, and fulfill the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19 – 20). Yes, in the future we must speak with one voice, one heart, and one message to win the world for Jesus. And through multi-ethnic churches, we can do just that as we diligently proclaim and “preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. [For] there is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all” (Eph. 4:3 – 6).

Reading #4 in preparation for Session Eight of “Holy Conversations” Story of Action: NewStory Church in Chicago



Rich and Dori Gorman co-pastor NewStory Church in the Edgewater neighborhood of Chicago. The diverse congregation has made a big impact on the neighborhood through their intentional work in racial reconciliation, mental health justice, creation care, and Friends of Swift, a non-profit organization they started to invest in the elementary school the church meets in.

The following is edited and adapted from an interview found at <https://www.smallgroups.com/articles/2016/radical-racial-reconciliation-through-small-groups.html?paging=off>)

The Edgewater community informs the ministry of NewStory, especially around the topic of racial reconciliation. Over 60 nations are represented in the local elementary school, and according to City-Data.com, nearly 25 percent of Edgewater residents were born outside the U.S. With this kind of diversity present in their neighborhood, the Gormans knew that racial reconciliation had to be central to the church's mission. This mission led to starting small groups dedicated to the topic of racial reconciliation. Offering one racial reconciliation group per semester, NewStory has now offered five different groups and seen amazing results.

Q: Why is racial reconciliation so important to NewStory Church?

There are two primary reasons. The first is it's a biblical mandate, and the gospel demands it. We are called, as we're reconciled to God, to be reconciled to one another across all the things that divide us. So we see a number of different glaring divisions that are facing us today—race being a primary one, but also gender, age, socioeconomic, and geographic. We feel like one of the compelling parts of the gospel is that Christ eradicates those divisions, or at least calls us to step into a process of eradicating them.

The second reason is that our neighborhood is radically diverse. We've got people from countries all over the place. For us, racial reconciliation is not a theory, and it's not something that's distant; it's something that stares us right in the face every single day. So just from a standpoint of practicality, we are forced to engage in it in a tangible, real life kind of way.

Q: How does NewStory engage racial reconciliation?

When you look at being a multiethnic and reconciling church, you have to look at all the different layers of who you are as a church. It can't be pocketed in one area or another—it really needs to be threaded throughout everything you are. So we do a number of different things. On Sundays we talk about it a lot. We talk about race, we talk about culture, and we work to develop a robust theology of culture to understand how God uses cultures for his glory. Our worship service reflects this through song choices and the diverse voices of people singing and speaking. All of this is very intentional.

Our leadership is also very diverse, and that's really where the rubber meets the road. You can have a diverse congregation and even have a diverse worship service, but unless your leadership is diverse it's not fully what it can be. The hard issues that have to be dealt with need to be dealt with at the leadership table so everything else can flow out more naturally. As a staff, we strive to be diverse. We feel like it's part of our identity as a church, so it's really important.

Q: Tell me about how this works out in small groups.

First of all, we knew the best way to start was to start small and start slow with just one group, one small conversation. We didn't want it to be a program because that hurts people. Second, we wanted to let the people who aren't white lead. This is a kingdom thing—you flip the world of privilege on its head. They get to set the ground rules. And you gain immediate credibility if the non-white people are leading it.

The deepest work that needs to happen really happens within the small group, and flows from there out into the rest of the church. We regularly offer racial reconciliation small groups where people come together to intentionally engage in the hot topic issues around race. It's meant to be a safe space for people who either have a lot of exposure to these topics and people who have none. It's always interesting conversations.

As part of a multiethnic, reconciling church there is a 100 percent chance they will be offended and a 100 percent chance that they will offend somebody. We have to accept that and assume that will happen—not because anybody is intending to, just because we don't know. One of the biggest issues around racial reconciliation is that there's so much ignorance. We make a lot of assumptions. Until we get together in the same room and start working those things out, we will always have ignorance and assumptions. So we make it okay to say wrong things, and we make it okay to say things that might step on somebody's toes.

What we try to do is teach and train people how to have conversations—how do you actually go to somebody and say, "Hey, when you said that, it really hit me the wrong way" or "That was offensive to me because of this." And not to go to that person accusing, but go to them honestly trying to help them understand. As long as we're seeking to understand, it goes really well. If you're coming in with an agenda to argue or debate, it's not going to go well. If you don't have healthy conflict resolution, you're kind of sunk. If we're called to bear each other's burdens, we need to know what those burdens are, and the burden of race in our society is a heavy one.

For people who are not white, we have to make sure that they're not put into a position where they're now tasked with educating the white people. It's not about that. It's about us coming to common understanding and seeking to understand one another. When you're inviting people into discussions about this, you have to make sure you're creating a safe environment where people aren't being reinjured and re-wounded in the places where they're already carrying a lot of baggage and a lot of wounds.

Q: What has happened as a result of these racial reconciliation groups?

The primary story that always comes out from white people is, "I never really understood what this burden was like." White people who are coming from a place of privilege gain a better understanding of what it's like to be black in America.

For example, there's an African American lady in our church who lived with us for a little while. She came home from picking up some of her friend's kids from preschool, and was stopped by a police officer. She was questioned and her bag was searched for no real reason. She was really rocked by that. It was the first time that my wife realized that this stuff really happens and it really affects people—it wasn't theory anymore. When you start to hear people's stories and their burdens, that's where compassion is birthed. That's always a good thing.

For white people, guilt is a big issue. So what we say is, if you were born into privilege, if you were born white, it's not your fault that you were born into a society that favors white people. We try to make it very clear that this isn't a guilt thing. You haven't done anything wrong. You're not guilty, but you are responsible. You're responsible to carry others' burdens and to fight to reflect God's kingdom.

People who aren't white are exposed to the fact that a lot of times white people really don't understand—not because it's willful neglect, but we're not exposed to it. White people typically grow up in very segregated areas where we're not forced to deal with it. And so understanding that is a big takeaway from the group.

We've also seen changes flowing out into relationships. We can see differences in how we're resolving conflict and seeking to understand one another. When people have parties and invite people over for dinner, we're starting to see those tables become much more diverse. People are living with a lot more intentionality because they're realizing they don't want to be part of the problem—they want to be part of the solution. And we continually encourage people to be very intentional about that.

Q: With all the struggles involved, what keeps you going?

People want to know if there is any hope that a collection of people who carry a lot of racial animosity and a history of racial hatred can really live together in a peaceful society. The church has an opportunity to say, "Come and see! Jesus heals all this!" But right now, we're as infected by the racism of the world as anybody else—in fact, more so in a lot of cases. At the end of John's gospel, Jesus' last prayer for his people—for us—was unity. And he said the way the world will know that the Father and I are one is if you are one. I think if we steer into this and begin to work on this, over the next 20 years we will see a turnaround in that decline. As we strive and struggle and do the hard work of racial reconciliation, as we learn how to become a united people under the lordship of Jesus, I think a lot of other things—as far as the church—will begin to turn around as well.

Reading #5 in preparation for Session Eight of “Holy Conversations” “Becoming an Anti-Racist Church”

(Excerpt adapted from Part III of *Becoming an Anti-Racist Church: Journeying into Wholeness*,” by Joseph Barndt)

In last week’s readings, you were introduced to three possible responses to what you are learning about race relations between Whites and Blacks—reconciliation, reparation, and repentance-action. These are not mutually exclusive, but represent different perspectives that are important to the Black community and must be taken seriously.

This week we add a fourth possible response, namely, becoming an anti-racist church.

What is the anti-racist church? It is a calling from God for Christians to take up the unfinished task of overcoming racism. For those of us who have hoped and prayed for an end to complacency and who long for new commitment to racial justice in our churches and society, today is a new beginning. We have seen that for centuries people have responded to God’s call to stand against the evil forces of racism and to work for a racially just world. It is that history that brings us to this moment when the baton is passed to us. Now it is our responsibility and our task to respond to God’s call to join the “great cloud of witnesses” before us in running the race, persevering in resisting racism, and organizing to change church and society.

Many programs of anti-racism are very limited and severely flawed. Good words and intentions have not translated into effective action. Too often programs are disguises for change that allows things to remain the same. Our churches, like virtually all institutions, are stuck in the bargaining stage, refusing to acknowledge that real change is needed. Until we are prepared to accept the end of racism, even the strongest programs of anti-racism will be no more effective than the programs of multicultural diversity on which churches have focused their efforts in the post–civil rights era. This focus will not lead to transformation of institutional racism, which is all about power, access, and accountability. It is not possible to achieve our goal of racial equality while holding on to white power and privilege. The two are mutually exclusive. Nothing short of an anti-racist identity and new structures of power and accountability will bring us to the ultimate goal of the ending racism. God has called us to this task and promises to lead us and guide us along the way. We can shape anti-racist churches that are dedicated to dismantling racism in the church and in society.

Two charts follow. The first offers three stages of where the predominantly White church is likely to find itself. The second chart describes three additional and sequential stages toward the church becoming a truly anti-racist, multi-cultural church for all people.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

After looking at these two charts, ask yourself or discuss within your group the following:

1. In what stage do you think your church is in right now? Why do you think this? Do you see any elements of earlier or later stages as well? In what stage do you think most persons in your church would choose? Your pastor?
2. Look at the stage immediately following the one you think you’re in as a church. What would it take to start to move your church into that next stage? What are the strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities ahead of you as you do this?
3. Look at Stages 5 and 6. Are these descriptions of the kind of church you and your congregation really want to become? Why or why not?

WHERE THE PREDOMINANTLY WHITE CHURCH IS NOW

Monocultural Multicultural

1. An Intentionally-segregated Church	2. A “Club” Church	3. A Multicultural Church
Pre-1960’s: legally & intentionally-structured segregation	Publicly obeys the laws of desegregation; removes signs of intentional exclusion	Develops official policies and practices regarding multicultural diversity and inclusiveness
Intentional & public exclusion of African Americans, Native Americans, Latino/Hispanics, Asian Americans and Arab Americans	Tolerant of a limited number of people of color with “proper perspective and credentials --BUT--	Sees itself as a “non-racist” church with open doors to people of color
White privilege and power and dominance of people of color is inscribed throughout the church	White constituency is still exclusive & paternalistic in its attitudes and actions, and often declares, “We don’t have a problem.”	Carries out intentional inclusiveness efforts, recruiting “someone of color” for committees or staff --BUT--
Intentional & public enforcement of racist status quo throughout the church	Continues its organizational structure, mission, & self-understanding as a white church serving a predominantly white constituency	Not those who “make waves”
Institutionalization of racism includes formal policies and practices, teachings, & decision making on all levels	Continues to maintain white power and privilege through its de facto policies & practices, teachings and decision making on all levels of church life	Little or no contextual change in power structure, culture, policies and decision making
The church usually has similar intentional policies and practices toward other socially oppressed groups, such as women, gays and lesbians, Third World citizens, etc.	May still secretly limit or exclude people of color in contradiction to public policies	Is still relatively unaware of continuing patterns of white privilege, paternalism & control
		Increasing discord about diversity, and signs of failure of programs of multicultural diversity
		People of color increasingly express dissatisfaction or leave the church

WHERE THE PREDOMINANTLY WHITE CHURCH NEEDS TO GO

Anti-Racist
Anti-Racist Multicultural

4. An Anti-Racist Church (Identity Change)	5. A Transforming Church (Structural Change)	6. A Changing Church in a Changing Society
Programs of anti-racism training are instituted throughout the church, resulting in a common analysis of systemic racism & a growing understanding of racism as a barrier to effective discovery	The church commits to the new stage of redesigning, restructuring, and institutionalizing an anti-racist identity	The church commits to participation in the struggle to eliminate racism throughout society & rebuilds and redefines all relationships and activities between the church and the wider community on the basis of anti-racist commitments
A consciousness of internalized racial oppression and white power and privilege emerges within the church, along with an increasing commitment to eliminate white advantage	Restructuring ensures full participation of people of color in decision making and other forms of power sharing on all levels of the church's life and work	Clear lines of mutual accountability are built between the church & the racially oppressed people in the larger society
Cross-racial relationships are deepened and white people begin to develop accountability to communities of color	Inclusion of worldviews, lifestyles, and cultures of people of color is ensured in all aspects of church life	The church builds anti-racist relationships with other churches, particularly with churches of color, with emphasis on mutual accountability, reconciliation and reparations
Through auditing and evaluation, the analysis is applied to all levels of the church	Authentic and mutually accountable anti-racist relationships are structured between people of color and white people within the church	Alliances with allies in church and society ensure links to all aspects of social justice, particularly to issues of global interdependence and international structures of justice and equality
A critical mass of old and new church leadership and membership claims an anti-racist identity and a vision of an anti-racist institution	There are similar instructional changes toward other socially oppressed groups, including women, gays and lesbians, Third World citizens, etc.	
A transition to Stage 5 (following) is instituted by a formal decision to institutionalize an anti-racist identity throughout the structures and cultures of the church	There is within the church a sense of restored community and mutual caring	