



UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST

**RACIAL EQUITY**  
**STRATEGIC**  
**ACTION PLAN**

**2023**

building a just world

# PREFACE

In 2020, the United Church of Christ Board (UCCB), acting in compliance with a General Synod 33 resolution of public witness to declare and respond to racism as a public health crisis and develop strategies for the Church to address these findings, commissioned the national setting of the United Church of Christ to establish a Racial Justice Task Force for the purpose of acknowledging the history of racism within the Church and its impact on our prophetic witness and discipleship today.

Some members of the task force were appointed by the United Church of Christ Board, others were appointed by the Council of Conference Ministers, and others were selected through a denomination-wide selection process. The Task Force chose to issue a [Request for Information](#) in hopes of finding a suitable accompanying organization for such a task. After a robust search the Task Force selected [Culture Brokers](#) as our consulting partner for this effort. Over the course of a year data was collected and compiled from more than 900 partners in varied stakeholder ministry groups representing a wide variety of religious interest. Survey participants self-identified as local church pastors, ministry partners, denomination leadership, national staff, laity, and historically underrepresented groups (HUGS), to name a few. Survey questions were crafted to solicit response in eight categories: Cultural Capital, Financial Investments, Human Development, Natural Environment, Political Capital, Social Capital, Spiritual Capital & Built Environment. The tabulated results served as a guide for the Racial Justice Task Force as it identified areas of strength and needed growth for both immediate and long-term attention. Understanding the work of dismantling systems and embedded patterns of racism is life-long work, the Task Force, along with national setting senior leadership, identified three dimensions for immediate redress. The immediate actions are designed to be accomplished in 12 months or less and provide encouragement for the long work ahead.

Our Equity Strategic Action Plan (ESAP) is a strategic and tactical plan to help get the most important measurable results within the first 12 months. Our prioritized improvements were identified by the task force based on the surveys. Strengths represent areas either the people or the church is perceived to handle well. Cultural Capital was selected to represent our area of strength or things respondents perceived the church to do well. Likewise, there are things we do less well and our perceived Dimension of Weakness is Financial Investment. Our Dimension of Opportunity is Political Capital, which leverages core competencies and supports existing strategic initiatives. The ESAP provides structural support for effective behavior, with a focus on improving our policies, practices, and situations. It is a first step on our journey to systematically and rigorously deliver on our racial equity promise. This work is a long-term commitment because becoming more equitable is a developmental process that never ends. As we develop this first ESAP—the first of many—we engage in active learning—conducting an iterative process of harnessing the inherent power of the organization’s structural, social, and individual influences.

*Yvette Wynn*  
*Racial Justice Task Force, Chair*

*Rev. Traci D. Blackmon*  
*Associate General Minister*  
*Justice & Local Church Ministries*

**“It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences.”**

*—Audre Lorde, poet.*

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# UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST STATEMENT OF FAITH IN THE FORM OF A DOXOLOGY

*authorized by the Executive Council 1981*

We believe in you, O God, Eternal Spirit, God of our Savior Jesus Christ and our God, and to your deeds we testify:

You call the worlds into being, create persons in your own image, and set before each one the ways of life and death.

You seek in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin.

You judge people and nations by your righteous will declared through prophets and apostles.

In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Savior, you have come to us and shared our common lot, conquering sin and death and reconciling the world to yourself.

You bestow upon us your Holy Spirit, creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ, binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races.

You call us into your church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship, to be your servants in the service of others, to proclaim the gospel to all the world and resist the powers of evil, to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table, to join him in his passion and victory.

You promise to all who trust you forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace, courage in the struggle for justice and peace, your presence in trial and rejoicing, and eternal life in your realm which has no end.

Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto you.

*Amen.*





# PREAMBLE

The United Church of Christ believes wholeheartedly in the establishment of racial equity reflected in our practices, behaviors, and governing documents. With vigilance we are committed to pursuing deep understandings of the ongoing persistence of racial inequity and animus in our existing structures. We are committed fully to rooting them out in order to establish and maintain a culture of racial equity.

For many years, there has been concern in the UCC about the lack of ethnic and racial diversity in UCC pulpits and congregational life. Currently the National Setting of the UCC focuses on complementing and supplementing the work of our Conferences and congregations, creating greater welcome and inclusion in the UCC, strengthening people's experiences of UCC praxis and faith and thereby strengthening congregations, and enhancing growth, diversity and inclusion within the entire denomination.

As the church continues to align our operations, culture, and ministries with our values around racial diversity, equity, and inclusion, we recognize denominational leadership must lead by example. **We dream that our ESAP process is informative, transformational, and inspirational. Although the focus of the Assessment is on the UCC National Setting, we hope that it will provide a model and specific ideas for change in our congregations.**

# THEOLOGICAL GROUNDING

The history of the United Church of Christ provides a guide as we continue to reflect on our Christian responsibility to strive for *a just world for all*. Bringing together as we do the history and wisdom of our predecessor traditions, we have learned the importance of allowing our diversity in opinion, embodiment, and expression to be a manifestation of our unity as a church. We have also learned the importance of grounding our theological reflection within the texts and traditions that have been passed down to us. These texts and traditions are crucial resources for our own reflection, guiding us, but not dictating to us, in our ongoing search to create a church that reflects Christ's teaching and embodies what it means for us to live as the "body of Christ."

The faith which has animated the United Church of Christ and our predecessor traditions has given primacy to what God is *doing* in creation and who we are called to be in that work. This has been called in the broad Christian tradition the *Missio Dei* and encapsulated in our life as *God is Still Speaking*. This inclination to shape our life as a Church as response to God's very active presence in the world is deeply eschatological. Meaning deeply entwined with our understanding of the anticipated consummation of God's plan for creation. The promise of the Resurrection—the content of our eschatology, has been for us not just a distant hope but, rather a significant guide for who and how we ought to be in the world. It is part of the now but not yet character of our faith. This theological commitment has reflected itself in the habit of our predecessor traditions—Reformed, Evangelical, Congregationalist, Afro-Christian and others to build institutions that reflect our understanding of how the world *ought to be* in light of the world promised to us in scripture.

The institutions we have built that reflect this theological inclination have drawn on other parts of wisdom from of our predecessor traditions. Namely, that the experience of participation in God's work in the world—the experience of redemption, takes shape in local contexts. This has meant that as a church we have been as concerned about the internal relationships which comprise us as we have been about our external relationships with the world. A key insight motivating our life as a church is that *we belong to one another*. This impels us to listen to one another, particularly those whose voices are muted in our culture and society. In this, we are noticing of who Jesus was most attentive toward thus creating a model for his earliest followers.

Our history as a church demonstrates an outsized concern for not only the condition of "marginalized outsiders" in our midst but also hearing their wisdom for living into our calling. A calling to reflect in our current world and circumstance what we believe to be the world God promises us in Christ Jesus, a world filled with justice and peace.

Much of our theological framing of the ESAP work in the National Setting is rooted in our understanding of the UCC Statement of Faith. It expresses the unique expression of the historic Christian faith that is the United Church of Christ. We see throughout the Statement an emphasis on the common humanity that we share as beings created in the




image of God. That common humanity implies a fundamental equality which conditions of injustice and inequity obscure. We see also that injustice, inequity, and oppression emerge from the human tendency to turn away from God and to pursue our own needs, wants, and desires.

This is what is meant by sin. We “miss the mark” when we do not focus on how God intends us to live together. It is only by seeking to overcome sinful social conditions that we can create a more equitable world. The Statement bears witness that it is the grace manifested in Jesus Christ which gives us guidance and strength in this work.

Finally, we are reminded that the primary way in which we as Christians strive to make a more equitable world is in and through the ministries and witness of the Church.

While our churches are no less flawed and human than any other institution, and while the church’s history provides ample evidence that sin, oppression, and inequality can find a home even in the body of Christ, we nevertheless believe that, in the power of the Holy Spirit, the church is always striving to become a community that truly and fully reflects the community of love, equality, and mutual care that God calls us to be.

In light of this theological reflection, we make explicit particular theological assumptions about the UCC National Setting that we hope may be of guidance and source of hope for the work of our broader Church.

### We are connected...

We believe in God, the Eternal Spirit. Our belief in God is made known to us in Jesus our brother. Intentionally seeing Jesus in the light of “our brother” helps us to then see our relational connection intentionally to our human brothers (and sisters) in our world today. God calls the worlds into being, creates humankind in the divine image, and sets before us the ways of life and death. We unashamedly proclaim that the divine image is revealed in everyone regardless of race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, age, social economic status, etc. Thus, we are not only connected to one another in the life of humanity, but we are connected to God in divine relationship. In a world that seeks to proclaim that some of us are not loved by God, our connection on earth with one another is a radical act of justice which reaffirms God’s connection with each of us, individually and collectively.

Our connection fosters the sacred act of love. As James Baldwin asserted, in *The Fire Next Time*, “Love takes off the masks that we fear we cannot live without and know we cannot live within. I use the word “love” here not merely in the personal sense but as a state of being, or a state of grace—not in the infantile American sense of being made happy but in the tough and universal sense of quest and daring and growth.” God seeks in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin. God judges all humanity and all nations by that will of righteousness declared through prophets and apostles. In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Lord, God has come to us and shared our common lot, conquering sin and death and reconciling the whole creation to its Creator.

### We are called...

Because of various oppressions that exists in our world today, many persons enter our faith communities searching and longing for divine inspiration in their lives. Many arrive on the

steps of our faith communities seeking to grapple with the proverbial question, “What is God doing in my life and the lives of those whom I love?” As the Church, we answer the clarion call to justice. God bestows upon us the Holy Spirit, creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ, binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races. God calls us into the church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship, to be servants in the service of the whole human family, to proclaim the gospel to all the world and resist the powers of evil, to share in Christ’s baptism and eat at his table, to join him in his passion and victory.

God promises to all who trust in the gospel forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace, courage in the struggle for justice and peace, the presence of the Holy Spirit in trial and rejoicing, and eternal life in that kingdom which has no end. Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto God. Amen.





# UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

## **PURPOSE STATEMENT (FROM THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW):**

*To love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength and our neighbor as ourselves.*

## **VISION STATEMENT:**

*United in Christ's love, a just world for all.*

## **MISSION STATEMENT:**

*United in Spirit and inspired by God's grace, we welcome all, love all, and seek justice for all.*

### **Our History**

The United Church of Christ (UCC), a united and uniting church, was born on June 25, 1957 out of the union of five religious streams that shared common theology: the Congregational Churches, the Christian Church, the Evangelical Synod of North America, the Reformed Church, and the Afro-Christian Church. The denomination is served by 36 Conferences divided into 7 regions comprised of approximately 4,700 churches and 745,000 members that span the United States. According to our [2022 Statistical Profile](#) 83% of United Church of Christ churches identify as White. In this context, 17% of congregations identify as Black, Indigenous, or People of Color churches with the second largest group being Black congregations who are less than 5% of the denomination. While most mainline Protestant churches are experiencing membership declines, UCC membership is 1/3 of its size at inception. Larger congregations (more than 50 people on a Sunday) are commonly urban or suburban and consist predominantly of collegeeducated people with few in attendance in their 20s or early 30s. In spite of decreasing size, the UCC remains a respected and robust global witness to progressive faith, justice, and ecumenism. The rich history of the denomination can be further explored [here](#).

## The Role of National Setting

The UCC currently has a staff of 115 (approximately 1/3 of its size when the National Setting relocated from New York City to Cleveland 32 years ago.) The National Setting of the UCC is governed by the United Church of Christ Board (UCCB), which is comprised of representation across the breadth of the denomination. We believe our work has had a significant impact. Both the UCCB and National Setting are purposefully racially diverse. Nevertheless, we still are a denomination of predominantly white ministers and congregations, and non-white enculturation remains challenging. For years, there has been concern in the UCC about the lack of ethnic and racial diversity in UCC pulpits and congregational life. There have also been formal and informal allegations of racism and/or racial bias within the National Setting.

The National Setting works collaboratively with Local Churches but not prescriptively. Currently the National Setting of the UCC:


- Services the needs of our conferences and local congregations
- Stewards the resources of the denomination
- Shepherds our ecumenical and interfaith relationships
- Supports global ministry through partnerships and presence
- Strengthens our collective public witness for justice, supported by scripture and Synod [resolutions](#)

The National Setting takes seriously its call to follow the teachings and ministry of Jesus by centering the humanity of those who may have been relegated to the margins by society. As such, we employ staff who work to center the voices of those burdened by the sin of injustice. Through scripture and Synod Resolutions the concerns of the people are heard. In response the National Setting employs staff to advocate nationally and globally for economic justice, creation justice, immigration justice, gender justice, racial justice, LGBTQIA justice, disability justice, mental health, historically underrepresented groups (HUGS), youth and young adults. Because we are multidimensional beings our lives often intersect with multiple broken hearts and systems. The historical reality of human exploitation in this country means racial inequity meets us at many of these intersections. When we fail to honor the full humanity and divinity of one another beyond difference we grieve the heart of God. The National Setting is committed to the eradication of the sin of injustice wherever it is found.

Currently we have a Minister of Racial Justice who has developed [anti-racism trainings](#) that are outward facing for congregations and affiliate ministries. Some Local Churches, partner ministries, and Conferences use these resources. Others do not. Some Local Churches and Conferences have either constructed their own anti-racism trainings or contracted with outside vendors. Some churches have not engaged at all.

In addition to anti-racism training, the Minister of Racial Justice:

- Builds and supports regional racial justice cohorts.
- Supports the Council for Racial and Ethnic Ministries (COREM)
- Creates, disseminates, and facilitates the National Setting's signature platform: Sacred Conversations to End Racism. (SC2ER)
- Advocates and advances the cause of justice wherever injustice is found.



However, the work of dismantling racism is the work of the entire church, and as such there is no ministry and/or minister excused from this cause. In 2016 the General Minister and President led a group to author [The White Privilege Curriculum](#), a study guide for the whole church. United Church of Christ by-laws mandate racial/ethnic balance in General Synod delegations and on the United Church of Christ Board, The Daniel Hand Fund provides annual scholarship aid to UCC related AMA institutions that educate persons of African descent. Modest financial allocations are provided annually to amplify the vital work of racial/ethnic groups that comprise less than 20% of the membership. The Human Resource Department has procedures and policies in place that are designed to prevent racial discrimination in the hiring and operational practices of the National Setting. We have made some significant strides and the United Church of Christ is committed to the ongoing journey toward eradicating the sin of racism and removing barriers to equality that divide the body of Christ against itself. We know that there are other ways in which we are not a fully inclusive denomination. Many young adults continue to report that they feel marginalized. Members with physical and other disabilities often feel unsupported. Approximately 30% of our Local Churches are designated Open & Affirming, a designation adopted by churches that are welcoming of LGBTQIA+ individuals. Both working class and upper-class people who worship in our congregations sometimes report experiencing exclusionary bias.

Our 20/30 clergy group, members of the Next Generation Leadership Initiative, a new pastor mentoring program, and our international interns are overwhelmingly White. Ultimately, we want to understand the barriers to inclusion in all these areas as we work to become a more whole organization—welcoming and fully inclusive to all.

While we acknowledge the need to address all these concerns, there are several reasons why the focus currently needs to be on race. Some of the reasons include:

- The desire to build on the racial equity work that preceded our union and has remained a primary undertaking of the church for 66 years.
- The General Synod has passed 86 [resolutions](#) concerning race and/or ethnic concerns.
- Reports of anti-black racism at several levels of the denomination.
- The recognition that Black, Indigenous, and People of Color who are engaged with the UCC have asked that we undertake an Institutional Assessment focused on race and racism.
- Acknowledgement that several Conferences, affiliate ministries, plus several congregations, have formal communications endorsing becoming anti-racist bodies.
- The realization that a race-focused plan will generate more concrete and meaningful institutional change needed to fully live into the community scripture calls us to be.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Often, race-focused conversations derail because people are using the same terms in different ways. One of the of communicating effectively about race is to move people from the narrow and individualized definition of racism to a more comprehensive and systemic awareness. To illuminate racism, we need to “name it, frame it and explain it.” Establishing a shared language to present data, describe conditions and outcomes and identify root causes of inequities serves an important function. A common language creates a narrative that makes it easier to communicate the commitment to racial equity, both internally and externally, and it creates a platform for coordinated work toward equitable outcomes.

## Our Commitment

The National Setting fully commits to the long-term work of becoming a racially equitable and culturally competent workplace by recruiting, hiring, retaining, and developing a staff whose demographics more closely mirror the full human community.<sup>2</sup> We will seek to build mutually rewarding relationships among people with diverse racial, cultural, economic, ages and religious identities, as well as those with varying physical abilities, gender identities and sexual orientations, by intentionally reaching beyond our traditional allies and constituencies and entering intercultural relationships with humility, prepared to listen, learn, follow their lead, and adapt our methods and practices to achieve mutual benefit.

## Goals for Our Racial Equity Assessment

Building institutional capacity around seeing and overcoming structural racism. The UCC wants to acquire the skills to continue this work without the help of outside consultants. Naming the barriers to full participation in the UCC at all its levels. The UCC wants to be thorough in examining all levels and aspects of the institution.

Revealing steps and pathways that will lead us to be the racially inclusive church that we know God is calling us to be. The UCC seeks to be a more welcoming, racially inclusive organization.

Providing clear sense of next steps—both content and direction. The UCC wants clear goals that we can hold ourselves accountable to in the next 1 to 3 years.

Helping the UCC articulate change goals and develop wide ownership of these goals. The UCC wants to develop a vision for inclusion that is broadly owned by staff, governance, and our member bodies.

We dream that the Assessment and the resulting work undertaken by the national setting is informative, transformational, and inspirational. Although the focus of the Assessment is on the UCC National Setting, we hope that it will provide a model, specific ideas for change, and an entry point to dialogue with our Conferences and local congregations, some of whom have launched similar endeavors. Our long-term vision is UCC congregations throughout the US which by and large mirror the changing demographics of society and the communities they are in—in terms of race, class, gender, educational attainment, age, ability, etc.—and that congregations will exist in a wide variety of places.

**The main purpose of this Equity Strategic Action Plan (ESAP) is to facilitate a disciplined, measurable approach that will guide the UCC National Setting's goal of achieving racial equity.<sup>3</sup>**

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<sup>2</sup>We acknowledge the United Church of Christ has many congregations located in regions bereft of significant racial/ethnic diversity and we also acknowledge that the eradication of racism is more than diverse representation and involves an unlearning of race as a social construct as opposed to God's design. Anti-racism is about honoring God's image in the other.

<sup>3</sup>Equity vs. Equality

*Equity involves trying to understand and give people what they need to enjoy full, healthy lives. Equality, in contrast, aims to ensure that everyone gets the same things in order to enjoy full, healthy lives. Like equity, equality aims to promote fairness and justice, but it can only work if everyone starts from the same place and needs the same things.*

The plan will guide the development and implementation of policies, practices and behaviors that facilitate opportunities and confront barriers to full inclusion.

The plan will address diversity, equity and inclusion issues within the National Setting. It will also address racial equity issues in relationship to programmatic initiatives under the direction of the National Setting.

In addition to the benefits to the National Setting and the overarching scope of programming directed by the National Setting, it is our intention to use our goals, learning, and results to encourage Conferences, Associations and local churches in the advancement of their own work to address racial and ethnic inequities.

**The following principles must be front and center when executing this Equity Plan:**

### Use Disaggregated Data and Information

One of the drivers of disparity is the inability or unwillingness to examine results of policies and activities for segmented racial, ethnic or cultural groups. To achieve equity, therefore, we must collect and analyze quantitative and qualitative information in this way. Collect data segmented (at minimum) by census-based racial and ethnic categories to the degree that it is available and use that data to create options and make decisions.

### Make Data-Driven Decisions

Another driver of disparity is the unwillingness to use segmented data, both qualitative and quantitative, to make decisions that ensure parity. Consider racial and ethnic information as we work, both within the National Setting and within the governance structure of the National Setting. Compare results for each group against their presence across programmatic, governance, and ministerial areas and against results of the other groups. Provide these analyses when making recommendations.

### Leverage Existing Assets

We have valuable assets at our fingertips: the experiences of those directly impacted by this work, knowledgeable staff, board members as well as local churches, conferences, other/wider settings of the church, partners, community members, professional services, to the extent this information is shared with the National Setting. Tap into these institutional resources at all phases of our work.

### Use Existing Authority

The Officers of the United Church of Christ, the Board of Directors of the United Church of Christ (UCCB), the Senior Leadership Team, staff members within the National Setting, committee members for all standing and ad hoc committees and task forces empaneled by the UCCB have individual powers within their jobs and roles. Explore and utilize these authorities as necessary to deliver on this Equity Plan.

### Make Policy Changes

We have numerous policies across the life of the National Setting and UCCB. While delivering on this Equity Plan, uphold or strengthen policies that will deliver strong equity results. Be ready to create new policies as appropriate to support this Equity Plan and change policies that create barriers.

### Use Equity to Balance Decisions

When making decisions, give equity sufficient weight. Use segmented data, historical information, and quality comparisons. Develop a method for considering equity results balanced against financial impacts and other programmatic or ministerial goals, such as a decision matrix<sup>1</sup> or balanced scorecard<sup>2</sup>. This will center the interests of People of Color.

## Other Diversity and Inclusion Activities

Diversity and inclusion work are happening in many ways throughout the organization. This plan is not intended to restrict that work, but rather identify our required efforts necessary to achieve key racial equity goals over the next year. Leaders and managers are welcome to support additional opportunities to deliver equity results as their resources allow, if the enclosed strategic improvements are accomplished within the timelines we establish.<sup>4</sup>

## Main Audience

This plan is written specifically to guide the Officers of the United Church of Christ, the United Church of Christ Board of Directors, National Setting staff, and all committees engaged in work on behalf of the National Setting in:

- Deciding how to allocate organizational resources, both financial and human resources.
- Supervising others to ensure strategic plans are implemented; and/or
- Supporting planned equity work.

The target audience for this plan is the National Setting of the United Church of Christ as represented by the Officers, Board, and staff, as well as anyone engaged in work on behalf of the National Setting. We will refer to the Equity Plan as decisions about, where and how to assign people, money, materials, time, energy, and attention. We will also help hold our direct reports accountable to achieving these equity goals.

## Other Audiences

This plan will be easily accessible to all settings of the United Church of Christ, all ecumenical and lay partners to the National Setting, and anyone seeking to be in relationship with the United Church of Christ so they are knowledgeable about our path forward and our progress.

## Plan Oversight

The Racial Equity Advisory Task Force, as appointed by the United Church of Christ Board and including members of the Senior Leadership Team will be responsible for ensuring governance and workplace accountability to the Equity Strategic Action Plan.

## Plan Coordination

The Senior Leadership Team of the National Setting and the United Church of Christ Board Chair (or designee) are responsible for managing the Equity Strategic Action Plan to assure consistent application of the plan and its principles and coordinate with the appropriate partners to provide excellent leadership and support to others as they implement the plan.

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<sup>4</sup>Please note that it is our strong belief that, since this strategic plan is being developed in response to and/or as a component of a Race Audit, a significant opportunity and meaningful resource to address the racial elephant in the room is active partnership with the program, Sacred Conversations to End Racism (SC2ER). In addition our intent is that this plan engage the General Synod and UCC Board as appropriate in re-education processes and conversations must be advised to both the General Synod and the workplace environments.

## Responsibilities include:

- Tracking workplace progress regularly.
- Briefing staff, board, and other key stakeholders semiannually on work plan progress.
- Coordinating quarterly meetings with designated individuals and teams who are engaging decided metrics.
- Collectively assess, clarify, and update Equity Plan decisions.
- Identify and address the need for additional and updated resources and identify leadership and staff with access to relevant resources as needed.
- Track and celebrate accomplishments, large and small Essential elements to achieve desired outcomes include:
- Adequate financial investment, in the form of an annual budget allocation, to staff and support the operational and programmatic racial equity work across the life of the UCC.
- Inclusive and transparent decision-making processes, with equity as an essential lens through which outcomes of decisions are viewed.

**One important sign of success of the Assessment will be that members who previously felt marginalized will comment that they see positive changes toward belonging.**

# UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST EQUITY STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN (ESAP)

This Equity Strategic Action Plan (ESAP) is the next logical step toward operationalizing our commitment to diversity, inclusion and equity. It is based on results from the 2021 Diamond Inclusiveness Assessment (DIA) (*Appendix I Results Report and related listening sessions, feedback and lessons learned, as well as efforts and methods used by other organizations seeking to improve racial equity and culture inclusiveness*)

We believe this plan shows careful consideration of high-impact actions, understanding of individual and organizational capacities, a desire to authentically engage people from racial and ethnically diverse backgrounds as key assets, and a commitment to getting measurable results from our chosen activities.

Following analysis of the Diamond Inclusiveness Assessment, Focus Group Transcripts, and Staff Input, the Racial Justice Task Force identified three initial areas of focus that may yield positive measurable impact over the next 12 months. These chosen areas will provide opportunities for innovation and improvement in an effort to create ownership of these processes across the staff. Performance over the next 12 months in these three areas will help gauge the effectiveness of our efforts<sup>5</sup>. As progress is made, additional foci will be added. The three initial foci are as follows:

## 1. Cultural Capital:

The United Church of Christ National Setting fully commits to the long-term work of becoming culturally competent, welcoming and inclusive community. This includes (but is not limited to):

- Supporting, engaging and including people with different racial, cultural, economic, ages and religious backgrounds as well as those with varying physical abilities, gender identities and sexual orientations.
- Reaching beyond our traditional allies and constituencies.
- Entering intercultural relationships with humility, prepared to listen, learn, follow their lead, and adapt our methods and practices to achieve mutual benefit.
- Recruiting, hiring, retaining, and developing a culturally competent staff whose demographics more closely mirror the full human community.

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<sup>5</sup>The Racial Justice Task Force recognizes the national setting already has many racial equity policies and processes in place, and in this way is a unique entity within the denomination. It is our hope that our journey will contribute to this foundation and provide for other expressions of the church the opportunity to use and adapt any portions of the work they might find helpful.





## 2. Financial Investment:

The UCC National Setting will allocate an annual operating and programmatic budget to support racial equity work of the national setting. The national setting will also employ industry standard minority inclusion practices when issuing all request for proposals and vendor contracts. Where appropriate, financial home, reports will include work clear and measurable goals segmented by race, ethnicity, culture and language.

## 3. Political Capital:

The UCC National Setting has a transparent programmatic decision-making process that requires input and feedback from employees, constituencies of the broader church and its ecumenical and community partners, with special emphasis given to those most impacted by the issue at hand.

The UCC Board and National Setting will constantly communicate and entrust our racial justice practices, including antiracist practices) and intercultural statement, expectations, and habits to all groups involved in or affected by the UCC National Statement.

By December 31, 2023, the UCCB or Task Force will assess our progress and determine if we are achieving our stated goals. An annual assessment will determine our next steps re-evaluating and revising goals if necessary as we work toward racial equity and inclusion within the National Setting. An evaluation of resources is also important to ensure they are sufficient, useful and appropriately applied to get results. Finally, we will analyze our new results and revise our plan as needed.

# CULTURAL CAPITAL—ESAP<sup>6</sup>

## Strategic Improvement—Dimension of Strength

The United Church of Christ Board of Directors (UCCB) and the National Setting will constantly communicate, endorse, and entrust its intercultural values, statements, expectations, and habits to all groups involved in or affected by the organization.

### SMART Goal:

By December 31, 2023, UCC National Setting will have secured “official alliances” with at least 20 of its Cleveland-based neighbors and organizations for its racial justice and equity work. Official support” means funding, a letter, partnership agreement or other written document.

### Proposed Actions:

- Undertake an environmental assessment of existing neighborhood demographics and existing and potential community alliances/partnerships.
- Cultivate relationships with 20 community alliances that have shared values with the UCC relative to racial justice, diversity, equity and inclusion.
- Establish a coalition of community alliances that support racial justice, diversity, equity and inclusiveness, neighborhoods surrounding the National Setting’s geographic location.
- Position the new UCC National Setting headquarters as a community commons—a gathering place for regional alliances whose primary mission is to support and flourish racially just, diverse, equitable and inclusive neighborhoods.
- Publicly engage and communicate with Local Church and Conference Settings, UCC Board, General Synod and other settings of the UCC, about the work proposed above and the ongoing programs and ministries of the National Setting.

### Benefits of achieving this goal:

- Meets the values of the National Setting relative to racial justice, diversity, equity and inclusion.
- Ensures that our outreach and justice advocacy in our geographic region will be in alignment with our outreach and justice advocacy in the wider church and world.

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<sup>6</sup>In a collective effort to establish milestones, strategy, and action plan(s) for the Cultural Capital Dimension, it should be noted that the broad and general use of the term “cultural” within the context of this Dimension could imply a deviation from our understanding of the overall purpose and purview of the GAP Report. It is our understanding that we were conducting a Race Audit; this action plan aims to consistently reflect a focus on Race throughout, as the word “culture” itself has historically often been used to rewrite the Race narrative and deter the intended focus.

- Raises public awareness of the UCC National Setting’s presence in the region and its social justice platform, particularly as it pertains to racial justice, equity and inclusion—a hallmark of the denomination.
- Sensitizes the UCC National Setting to the current state of our surroundings as it pertains to race.

## PLAN: Measure and Plan

MILESTONES	RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE	RESOURCES REQUIRED
Creation of Template of Partnership Agreement	Minister for Racial Justice	8/2023	OGC, Senior Leadership Approval
Create criteria to identify high-potential prospects for community alliances, reaching beyond our typical partners	Minister for Racial Justice	8/2023	JTM Committee, CARDD Team,
Cultivate relationships with the identified prospects	Minister for Racial Justice	1/2024	Team Leaders & Directors, Elected Officer approval, \$ for networking/partnership fees/sponsorships;
Invite NEO organizations whose values are centered in racial justice, diversity, equity and inclusion to the National Setting Office for UCC and community partnership events re race and DEI; keep current centralized list of these organizations	GMP with AGM's	within the first 12 months of implementation	Current list of NEO organizations that share these values, and current contact info; database of prospects.

## DO: Execute Work Plan(s) and Measure Results

MILESTONES	RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE	RESOURCES REQUIRED
Conduct activities. Get feedback. Follow up on feedback.	CARDD	4 <sup>th</sup> quarter of 2024	Budgeted resources for data collection
Measure and report results.	CARDD	4 <sup>th</sup> quarter of 2024	Budgeted resources for data collection

## CHECK: Learn and Improve

MILESTONES	RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE	RESOURCES REQUIRED
Confirm that at least 20 community outreach organizations that support racial justice, diversity, equity and inclusiveness are included in the National Setting's endorsed list for coalition and volunteer support	HR Team	12/2023	JLCM staff, Budgeted institutional outreach dollars for financial community grants
Review and document the learning from this effort.	ongoing	ongoing	ongoing

## Make it Habit

MILESTONES	RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE	RESOURCES REQUIRED
Institutionalize the changes that work.	Everyone	ongoing	the will to change

## SMART Goal #2:

By December 31, 2023, UCC National Setting has a sustained plan with measurable goals to engage UCC stakeholders including the UCC Board and General Synod in leveraging intercultural values, cultural assets and culture brokers to the benefit of those in our ecosystem as it pertains to race, racial justice, equity and inclusion. (Gap Cultural Statement #3, #5, #7)

## Proposed Actions:

- Accomplish /mapping of cultural assets available across audiences, educate about Cultural Assets and leverage these as faith-based assets.
- Convene regular summit/symposium, gathering stakeholders to share resources, engaging diverse stakeholder groups (HUGS, Seminaries, Affiliated Ministries, CHHSM, CCM and Conference Staffs, etc.)
- Establish an “Asset Hub”: Determine resource and asset needs per stakeholder group and connect cultural assets to requests/needs
- Leverage Join the Movement to actively engage, educate, and partner with the public and local churches.
- Create no less than annually a gathering of pastors of color who are serving white congregations to create an opportunity for fellowship, support and unique challenges that go into serving

## Benefits of achieving this goal:

- Meets the values of the National Setting relative to race, racial justice, diversity, equity and inclusion.
- Puts a public engagement strategy in place to recognize, raise awareness, steward, educate and share assets towards elevating racial justice, diversity, equity and inclusion.
- Positions the UCC National Setting’s (including the UCCB and General Synod) crucial role as the optimal convener of the diverse settings of the denomination as it pertains to important matters of race, racial justice, diversity, equity and inclusion that are shared across our value stream, even if not lived out loud at the same level across the ecosystem.

## Oversight for the Improvement:

GMP

## PLAN: Measure and Plan

MILESTONES	RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE	RESOURCES REQUIRED
Clarify definitions and educate about Cultural Assets and leverage these as faith-based assets. Determine who will clarify and develop educational packet and process	Minister for Racial Justice	January 2023	Budgeted funds for educational resources, staff support for rolling out educational process
Undertake survey/mapping of cultural assets available across a few key audiences.	Director of CARDD	First Quarter 2023	Minister for Racial Justice, CARDD Team, expertise, Networking Affiliates
Convene initial Stakeholder Symposium gathering stakeholders to share resources, engaging diverse stakeholder groups (HUGS, Seminaries, Affiliated Ministries, CHHSM, CCM and Conference Staffs, etc.)	Minister for Racial Justice	September 2023	Team Leaders & Directors, Elected Officer approval, \$ for networking/partnership fees/ sponsorships;

### SMART Goal #3:

By December 31, 2023, United Church of Christ Board & National Setting will make a commitment to actively engage racial diversity, equity, and inclusion training (5 week-Sacred Conversations) as a mandatory component of new hire or Board orientation, and complete<sup>4</sup> hours of continuing racial equity training annually as a commitment to the awareness and transformation we seek.

### Proposed Actions:

- Present to/engage in racial equity training—utilizing the resources provided through Sacred Conversations to End Racism—as a mandatory component of orientation to each new UCCB class; rolling out a different component of the 5-week training across each UCCB biennium.
- Regularly promote and encourage to UCC stakeholders the resource that is Sacred Conversations to End Racism, and Join the Movement Campaign, as a means of education and training in areas of race, diversity and inclusion.
- Include 5-week Sacred Conversations to End Racism curriculum as regular mandatory staff training.

### Benefits of achieving this goal:

- Acknowledges cultural assets we already have and leverages them to bring the church together in the education and language of Sacred Conversations to End Racism
- Ensures that a unified curriculum is presented leading to unified language and unified aspirations
- UCC Board leadership is trained and able to train others in their local settings
- National Staff are moving through the awareness journey together.

### Oversight for the Improvement:

UCCB Chair w/GMP

### Responsible for the Improvement:

HR Director

## PLAN: Measure and Plan

MILESTONES	RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE	RESOURCES REQUIRED
Plan launch SC2ER as mandatory curriculum for the UCCB, and then regularly for each new class	Board Chair	1/2024	SC2ER Leader and curriculum; Time on each UCCB Agenda
UCCB development and approval of a policy to mandate SC2ER as mandatory curriculum for new UCCB class members	Board Chair	3/2024	Board Staff, SC2ER leadership and resources, Committee assignment
Plan and Confirm 4 hours of ongoing regularly scheduled follow up racial equity training for UCCB members already in service	Board Chair	2/2024	Board Staff, with Minister for Racial Justice
Plan the implementation of a mandatory 5-week SC2ER training for UCC National Setting employees	HR Director	within the first 12 months	SC2ER Leadership and curriculum; HR Coordination across the staff
Develop and approve a sustained policy for mandatory SC2ER Staff training	HR Director	within the first 12 months	Senior Leadership, SC2ER Leadership and curriculum
Plan and Confirm 4 hours of ongoing regularly scheduled follow up racial equity training for staff	HR	within the first 12 months	Senior Leadership
Communicate this unfolding training as it occurs to the wider church.	GMP w/ Board Chair	within the first 12 months	MarCom staff expertise

**AS THE WORK PROGRESSES THE NATIONAL SETTING WILL IMPLEMENT POLICIES AND PROGRAMS THAT ENSURE EXECUTION OF WORK PLANS IN WAYS THAT PRODUCE MEASURED RESULTS TOWARD INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE.**



# FINANCIAL INVESTMENT—ESAP CHALLENGE DIMENSION OF CHALLENGE

## Strategic Improvements

The UCC-National Setting has an annual operating budget for diversity and inclusion work that allows it to meet clear and measurable goals segmented by race, ethnicity, culture, and language.

## SMART Goal:

For Year 1 following the adoption of the ESAP Strategic Initiatives, the UCC National Setting will allocate 20% of its Expense budget with BIPOC vendors and maintain or increase its commitment going forward. The Finance team will report at least annually to the UCCB and wider church on this progress. This change is intended to be ongoing and evergreen.

## Benefits of achieving this goal:

- Meets [organizational values, business goals, moral obligations, etc.]
- Making staff, board, and other stakeholders aware of connections between investment and outcomes, so we become champions for improvement.
- To better identify actions, efficiencies, partnerships, innovations, and resources that can deliver on or improve results.
- Improving trust in the organization.
- Aligning financial resources with the policies, practices and situations to achieve our goals - ensuring we “walk our talk”.

## Oversight for the Improvement:

The CFO will report progress to the GMP, who will update the UCCB semi- annually

## Responsible for the Improvement:

UCC Finance Team

## GOAL I: Expense Budget

MILESTONES	RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE	RESOURCES REQUIRED
Monitor diversity inclusiveness in purchasing to meet the goals outlined in the Equity Strategic Action Plan.	Finance	12/31/2023	Staff time ESAP Staff Input
The Finance team will develop a policy that defines BIPOC vendor I.e. BIPOC owned, board of directors, % of employees.			
<p>Research and add new purchase order system into 2024 budget that allows us to track the above. Upon adoption by management, the Finance team will make process improvements to incorporate a 20% allocation to BIPOC vendors in 2023 and implement the necessary system changes no later than Q1 2024.</p> <p>It may leverage external organization knowledge including Culture Brokers clients who have implemented a similar change.</p>	Finance	3/31/2024	Finance Staff, external consultants and Culture Brokers clients if needed
<p>The UCC National Setting will create and maintain a record of the BIPOC status of all vendors at the inception of the relationship and update if additional contracts are proposed with said vendor. The file shall align with the approved UCC BIPOC definition I.e. ownership, board leadership and/or employee demographic.</p>	Finance	12/31/2023	Finance staff, external consultants (Culture Brokers clients)

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# GOAL 2: Vendor Policy

MILESTONES	RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE	RESOURCES REQUIRED
Develop a baseline database indicating current status.	Finance	Q2 2023	Current excel data bases
GoResearch current certificate vendor policies utilized by city, state and other established companies/agencies.	Finance	Q2 2023	State of Ohio Cleveland and other entities that have issue certificates
Set criteria and poll vendors to determine where they are within the criteria we set—minority owned, woman owned, veteran-owned, disability owned, small business owned, LGBTQIA owned.  Those meeting these criteria and including price, quality and service will be added to Preferred Vendor list in the data base.	ESAP Finance	within the first 12 months	
Develop policy with input from team and staff. (If staff have opportunity to give input you will have better buy-in.)	DI Team chair or staff liaison	within the first 12 months	Diversity Inclusion Team, Other entities that have a Diversity Purchasing Policy Staff input

## DO: Execute Work Plan(s) and Measure Results

MILESTONES	RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE	RESOURCES REQUIRED
Implement policy with incremental growth measurement.	Finance/Staff	2023 & Ongoing	New Vendor Policy and database
Conduct activities. Get feedback. Follow up on feedback.	Finance/Staff	2023 & Ongoing	Industry Best Practices
Measure and report results.	Finance/Staff	Annually—Year End	Industry Best Practices

## CHECK: Learn and Improve

MILESTONES	RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE	RESOURCES REQUIRED
Review and document the learning from this effort.	Finance staff & department heads	Ongoing	Training & Industry Best Practices

## Make it Habit

MILESTONES	RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE	RESOURCES REQUIRED
Institutionalize the changes.	All Staff-Financial Policy Handbook or Training	Ongoing	CFO and Staff to advise all staff of Diversity Finance Policies annually (can be by training)

# POLITICAL CAPITAL—EASP DIMENSION OF OPPORTUNITY

## SMART Goal: 1

To have leadership and staff at the national setting who possess competency in consensus-based decision making, with all leadership in Chair and Director positions trained in facilitating consensus-based decision making.

## Benefits of achieving this goal:

Equip staff and National leadership (including UCCB) with an understanding and appreciation of seeking and finding consensus in how we work together. An example of such training opportunities may be found at <https://www.consensusdecisionmaking.org/>

## Oversight for the Improvement:

HR for Staff, Executive Committee for Board

## SMART Goal: 2

HR to do a Responsible Accountable Consulted and Informed (RACI) type analysis and produce a quarterly newsletter relevant to issues related to

- transparency,
- relationship building,
- building trust among national staff and senior leadership

A new online resource entitled How We Work Together in the National Setting is meant to increase transparency about programmatic decision-making processes.

## Benefits of achieving this goal:

The national setting office and workspace has the potential to support all the various ministries. The office/workspace allows for more collaboration, networking, face-to-face communications, and camaraderie during social events and meetings.

Office collaboration and open communication results in developing processes for transparency in decision making and organizational development given the number of essential staff working remotely, deployed, and regionally. The UCCB members and partners are invited to participate in quarterly scheduled sessions with national staff fulfilling mandates within the new handbook How We Work Together in the National Setting.

The new online resource will include a column available in the UCC HR Newsletter and available on a UCC webpage. This will be a space that invites ministry teams to share their processes, to share who they are and how they function, contributing to and building transparency. This will be invaluable for teams and departments to be internally aware

of how decision-making processes happen strategically and operationally. This type of transparency builds trusts and provides opportunities to observe and record the impact internal decisions are making toward building capacity and intentional collaboration. A RACI quarterly analysis would provide information regarding areas of improvement, collected feedback, and encourage the development of an organizational chart of National Setting staff and leadership. While an organizational chart of the National Setting, even one in process of evolution, would be helpful- such a task might best be built with each ministry team. Updates to the handbook resource How We Work Together provides opportunities for commentaries and stories for publication.

Finally, quarterly assessments and reports benefit the National Setting with impact reports related to inclusiveness and ongoing improvements based on staff input and feedback.

### Oversight for the Improvement:

Elected Officers of the UCC

### Responsible for the Improvement:

Department Leadership for the RACI analysis, HR for the newsletter.

### SMART Goal: 3

**To engage with local members/churches throughout the country on how the National Setting works together through quarterly Town Halls about How We Work Together with each of the 4 ministry teams taking responsibility for one Town Hall each year.**

### Benefits of achieving this goal:

Engagement with people in local congregations across regions and Conferences. The implementation of regional spaces where groups can gather and participate in faith-based discussions about the future of building capacity to maintain spiritual, theological, biblical, political, and social awareness and engagement impacting society and the Christian Church.

The Town Hall gatherings include an overview of the organizational structure of the ministry, its strategic goals, and objectives, and long and short-term sustainability goals available for review and discussion. Gatherings are recorded to maintain and record attendance, and relevant information to sustain ongoing growth and development toward more inclusive engagement.

Purposeful gatherings are also a transparent process allowing participants space for conversations, ask questions, put forth requests, and provide feedback for full inclusion and awareness of what's taking place in their respective communities, congregations, and municipalities.

### Oversight of the scheduling of the Town Halls:

GMP

### Oversight of the Content of the Town Hall:

The ministry area responsible for the Town Hall.

## PLAN: Measure and Plan

MILESTONES	RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE	RESOURCES REQUIRED
Consensus Training/Skill Development for Staff	HR Director	3 year plan, 1/3 <sup>rd</sup> of staff per year	Staff time and cost for consultant
Consensus Training/Skill Development for Board Members	General Counsel	A part of annual/ biannual training	Board member time and cost for consultant/ Trainer. Additional training required for leaders.
Publish a column in the HR Newsletter for National Setting on How We Work Together using a RACI analysis (or approach that provides clarity about who is responsible, accountable, consulted and informed) on the various strategic, tactical and operational decisions made in the National setting and the accomplishments and learnings that come from that process.	HR Director with input from National Setting Departments.	Ongoing regular publication once process of RACI analysis is underway. Should be started by September 2023.  Analysis should be one with 1/3 <sup>rd</sup> of organization each year completing analysis/ publication should be launched and populated with articles, even if it is basic overview by GS 2023.	Consultant to assist in creating analysis structure/ data gathering/ reporting format
Quarterly Town Hall Sessions interfacing with Local Settings/people on Organizational structure, strategic goals and objectives	Elected Officers with Communications Department	First Quarter of 2024 as kick off for these Town Halls	Communication tools/staff time/ stipends to participants beyond national setting

**AS THE WORK PROGRESSES THE NATIONAL SETTING WILL IMPLEMENT POLICIES AND PROGRAMS THAT ENSURE EXECUTION OF WORK PLANS IN WAYS THAT PRODUCE MEASURED RESULTS TOWARD INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE.**

3. UCC—United Church of Christ Board & National Setting will make a commitment to actively engage racial diversity, equity, and inclusion training (5 week-Sacred Conversations) as a mandatory component of new hire or Board orientation, and complete 4 hours of continuing racial equity training annually as a commitment to the awareness and transformation we seek.

*Criteria/Definitions: In getting input and feedback, FringeArts should be able to disaggregate (segment) that by culturally diverse stakeholder group. Data, information, input, and feedback should be used to make decisions.*

### SMART Goal:

### Benefits of achieving this goal:

- Meets organizational values, business goals, moral obligations etc

### Oversight for the Improvement:

### TBD Responsible for the Improvement:

TBD

**AS THE WORK PROGRESSES THE NATIONAL SETTING WILL IMPLEMENT POLICIES AND PROGRAMS THAT ENSURE EXECUTION OF WORK PLANS IN WAYS THAT PRODUCE MEASURED RESULTS TOWARD INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE.**



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## Racial Equity Task Force

Rev. David Gaewski

Ms. Julia Gilmore Gaughan

Rev. Michelle Higgins

Dr. Vivian Jackson

Rev. Linda Jaramillo

Ms. Jane Joseph

Rev. Dr. Stephen Ray

Rev. James Ross II

Rev Tim Tutt

Ms. Beth Walker

Rev. Marsha Williams

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**Rev. Dr. Velda Love - Task Force Consultant**

[Join The Movement](#) Coordinator & Racial Justice Minister

*The Racial Justice Task Force would like to express our gratitude to Rev. Dr. Danielle J. Buhuro, Rev. Dr. Stephen Ray, and Dr. Scott Paeth for providing our theological framework.*

# APPENDIX

## Diamond Inclusiveness Assessment™ (DIA)

To get to our destination, we must first know where we are in relation to it. This requires us to know at the individual, team and enterprise levels just what our current capacity is to engage in the level of intercultural knowledge and experience required to excel with culturally diverse stakeholders. We used the Diamond Inclusiveness Assessment (DIA) to get a baseline understanding of how well our organization policies, practices and situations support cultural inclusiveness, as perceived by a culturally diverse set of respondents. It identified our organizational strengths and opportunities for improvement. While not yet independently validated, the tool has proven useful to more than 24 organizations and helped them make measurable improvements in their results with culturally diverse employees and customers.

A culturally diverse group of internal and external stakeholders participated in 2022 DIA assessment and feedback sessions. A group that included the senior leadership team, and staff and board equity teams, analyzed this information, selected [three] focus areas for improvement, and developed this Equity Strategic Action Plan.

## Definitions of Core Concepts

### **EQUITY:**

“the state, quality or ideal of being just, impartial and fair.” The concept of equity is synonymous with fairness and justice. It is helpful to think of equity as not simply a desired state of affairs or a lofty value. To be achieved and sustained, equity needs to be thought of as a structural and systemic concept.

### **SYSTEMIC EQUITY:**

Systemic equity is a complex combination of interrelated elements consciously designed to create, support and sustain social justice. It is a dynamic process that reinforces and replicates equitable ideas, power, resources, strategies, conditions, habits, and outcomes.

## Definitions<sup>8</sup>

### **BIAS**

A tendency or preference that inhibits impartial judgment, such as a bias toward or against a person or group. A concentration on or interest in one area or subject, such as a bias toward action.

### **BIPOC**

The acronym for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. It is used to undo Native invisibility, and anti-Blackness with the intention of dismantling white supremacy and advancing racial justice.

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<sup>8</sup>These definitions are used by Culture Brokers in the Diamond Inclusiveness System. They are adapted from multiple sources.

“Pronounced “bye-pock,” this is a term specific to the United States, intended to center the experiences of Black and Indigenous groups and demonstrate solidarity between communities of color.” The term BIPOC centers racial justice with the use of evolving language to acknowledge the diverse lived experiences of Black and Indigenous people groups. BIPOC is used to rightfully acknowledge North America as belonging to Native populations before settler color before being enslaved and forcibly brought to South and North America. BIPOC also recognizes the diverse histories and experiences of all groups of color. BIPOC intentionally dismantles what it means to be white, expose whiteness as a false category, and eradicate white supremacy.

The term may be used by Culture Brokers as shorthand to describe people who identify as member(s) of at least one of the following racial and ethnic census categories: Black or African American, Asian, American Indian, and Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander and Hispanic or Latino

We recognize the problems inherent in using such a broad term. However, we use it to increase document readability.

BIPOC may be used interchangeably with “People of Color”.

Many resources are available on the internet for additional insights, including The BIPOC Project<sup>10</sup> and the YWCA<sup>11</sup>.

## **CULTURE**

Culture is a social system. It includes such things as a group’s shared language, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions. It is passed down from generation to generation.

Culture is the sum of our everyday practices and “texts—the ways we live everyday life; our behavior, beliefs, social interactions; and all human production, such as food, clothing, art, ideology, institutions, and most important language.

Culture affects our thoughts and actions, often without us even being aware.

## **CULTURAL COMPETENCE**

Cultural competence refers to an ability to interact on personal and professional levels, including the ability to work with, and worship alongside effectively with people of different cultural/ethnic, regional, and geographical, linguistic, diverse faith orientation, gender identity, sexual orientation, citizenship and immigration status, age, ability, and socio-economic backgrounds.

Developing cultural competence is a dynamic and complex process requiring ongoing self- assessment and continuous expansion of one’s cultural knowledge. It evolves over time, beginning with an understanding of one’s own culture and ethnic identity, including one’s ancestral lineage, and continuing the journey through interactions with individuals from various cultures, and extending through one’s own lifelong learning.

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<sup>9</sup><https://www.census.gov/topics/population/hispanic-origin/about.html>

<sup>10</sup><https://www.thebipocproject.org>

<sup>11</sup><https://www.ywca.org/ywca-and-racial-justice/>

## **CONSTITUENTS/SERVANT LEADERS: CLERGY AND LAY**

The UCC is made up of members/affiliates—congregants, lay leaders, clergy etc.

An actual or potential user of an organization’s products, programs, services, or efforts. Constituents/Servant Leaders must be satisfied by the organization; they are the ultimate judges of performance. The organization depends on the membership, stewardship, and their ongoing engagement throughout the life of the Church.

The goal is to maintain and increase full participation and membership. Their departure or change in membership decreases the abilities of the organization to function at full capacity.

An actual or potential user of an organization’s products, programs, services, or efforts. They are who must be satisfied by the organization; they are the ultimate judges of performance—if they leave or we stop getting new ones, the organization will end.

## **DISPARITY**

A condition of inequality in which services to one segment of the community, relative to other segments, are presumptively allocated, poorly provided or inadequate in addressing underlying needs; it also means that these differences are not justifiable based on identified need, available agency resources or other objective criteria. The effect is that differences may appear unnecessary, avoidable, unfair, or unjust. Disparity puts individuals, families, and their institutions at risk causing intergenerational harm. Disparities are often social, political, economic, and attitudinal in nature. Disparities are often interconnected in a way that produces a ripple effect and may cause individuals and groups to experience disparate treatment at multiple points throughout their relationships with the broader society.

## **DIVERSITY**

The presence of variety in one place. For humans, variety is often measured quantitatively as differences in age, communication style, class, culture, ability, education, ethnicity, familial status, non-binary gender expression and sexual orientation, acquired knowledge, language of origin, learning style, partner and marital status, national origin, occupation, physical & mental health, politics, race, regional origin, religion, socio-economic status, viewpoints, etc. The benefit of diversity is in providing the components for adapting or constructing novel combinations; the value of diversity is that major innovations might be generated.

It is common to find people using the word “diversity” to also describe a set of actions geared to accommodating variety (i.e., acknowledging, understanding, accepting, valuing, and celebrating differences). As the pool of knowledge and experience of diversity work continues to evolve, professionals are increasingly differentiating between activities that increase variety (diversity) and behaviors that leverage variety to create belonging (inclusion).

## **EFFECTIVE**

How well a process or a measure addresses its intended purpose. Determining effectiveness requires (1) evaluating how well the process is aligned with the organization’s needs and how well it is deployed, or (2) evaluating the outcome of the measure as an indicator of process or product performance.<sup>7</sup>

## **EQUITY**

Performance results that do not vary across meaningful socio- economic differences, particularly across racial/ethnic groups. Results are described by data around: Opportunity, Accessibility, Quality, Fairness, Outcomes, Impact, Repair, and Restoration.

Freedom from systemic bias or favoritism. Parity across differences.

*72021-2022 Baldrige Excellence Framework*

## **ESAP**

Acronym for Equity Strategic Action Plan, a Culture Brokers deliverable. It lists the fewest, most impactful improvements and the actions your organization will take to achieve them. It follows a specific format that has been proven effective in helping clients get measurable results.

## **ETHNICITY**

Describes a group of people who share a distinct culture, common ancestry, traditions, language or dialect, and place of origin. It is a category independent of Race. Therefore, in the U.S., people of the same ethnicity may be members of different cultural groups, such as people of African and Latin descents (such as people from the Caribbean, Cuba, Brazil, or Dominican Republic).

## **INCLUSION**

Interactions among diverse people and objects that create opportunities for diversity, mutual learning, benefit, and growth. The benefit of inclusion is reciprocity; the value of inclusion is increased trust, cooperation, and effectiveness. Inclusion has generally been measured through surveys asking subjective questions about an individual's feelings of belonging, respect, support and engagement. But inclusion can also be measured more objectively by observing the patterns of interaction and their results.

## **NETWORK**

Interconnected relationships among people and/or organizations.

**Formal Network:** Interconnected relationships among people and/or organizations that is centralized, managed, and involves a process for engagement.

## **PEOPLE OF COLOR (OR OTHER COLLECTIVE TERM, IF USED. SEE “BIPOC”)**

The term used in this plan as shorthand to describe a person who identifies as a member of at least one of the following racial census categories: Black or African American, Asian, American Indian, and

Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, Some other race, and Hispanic. We recognize the problems inherent in using such a broad term. However, we use it only to increase plan readability

## **RACE**

In the U.S., race is a construct that established various categories of people and a hierarchy of their value to society. In that worldview, people have, according to their physical characteristics, innate qualities that define them as different. Race has the express purpose of establishing and perpetuating caste, i.e., superiority and dominance for the group at the top of the hierarchy. In the U.S. race is an ideology created to

perpetuate the myth and presents people of European descent in positions of power and dominance.

The U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) sets the standards on race which guide the Census Bureau in classifying written responses to the race question. The main race categories are:

**American Indian or Alaska Native**—A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America) and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment. This category includes people who report entries such as Navajo, Blackfeet, Inupiat, Yup'ik, or Central American Indian groups or South American Indian groups.

**Asian**—A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent. It includes people who report other detailed Asian responses.

**Black or African American**—A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa. It includes people who report entries such as African American, Kenyan, Nigerian, or Haitian.

**Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander**—A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands. It includes people who report entries such as Chamorro and other detailed responses.

**White**—A person having origins with peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa. It includes people who report race entries such as Irish, German, Italian, Lebanese, Arab, Moroccan, or Caucasian.

Race is a false classification of people that is not based on any real or accurate biological or scientific truth. Race is a political construct created by people for political purposes. Race is an artificial social construct, and it serves a social function.

## **RESULTS**

Outputs and outcomes achieved. Results should be evaluated based on current performance; performance relative to appropriate comparisons; the rate, breadth, and importance of performance improvements; and the relationship of results measures to key organizational performance requirements.

## **STAKEHOLDER**

A person or group who is (or could be) affected by the organization's actions, goals, and policies.

## **WORKFORCE (OR OTHER TERM FOR THIS GROUP OF PEOPLE)**

All people actively supervised by our organization and involved in accomplishing our work, including paid employees, volunteers, and interns (paid or u

## *Additional Definitions provided by Sacred Conversations to End Racism (SC2ER)*

### **INCLUSION**

Inclusion is the action or state of including or of being included within a group or structure. More than simply diversity and numerical representation, inclusion involves authentic and empowered participation and a true sense of belonging.

## **RACIAL JUSTICE**

Racial justice is the systematic fair treatment of people of all races that results in equitable opportunities and outcomes for everyone. All people are able to achieve their full potential in life, regardless of race, ethnicity or the community in which they live.

A “racial justice” framework can move us from a reactive posture to a more powerful, proactive and even preventive approach.

## **RACE**

Race is a socially constructed system of categorizing humans largely based on observable physical features (phenotypes), such as skin color, and on ancestry. There is no scientific basis for or discernible distinction between racial categories.

The ideology of race has become embedded in our identities, institutions and culture and is used as a basis for discrimination and domination.

## **RACISM**

The concept of racism is widely thought of as simply personal prejudice, but in fact, it is a complex system of racial hierarchies and inequities. At the micro level of racism, or individual level, are internalized and interpersonal racism. At the macro level of racism, we look beyond the individuals to the broader dynamics, including institutional and structural racism.

## **INTERNALIZED RACISM**

Internalized racism describes the private racial beliefs held by and within individuals. The way we absorb social messages about race and adopt them as personal beliefs, biases and prejudices are all within the realm of internalized racism. For people of color, internalized oppression can involve believing in negative messages about oneself or one’s racial group. For white people, internalized privilege can involve feeling a sense of superiority and entitlement or holding negative beliefs about people of color.

## **INTERPERSONAL RACISM**

Interpersonal racism is how our private beliefs about race become public when we interact with others. When we act upon our prejudices or unconscious bias – whether intentionally, visibly, verbally or not – we engage in interpersonal racism.

Interpersonal racism also can be willful and overt, taking the form of bigotry, hate speech or racial violence.

## **INSTITUTIONAL RACISM**

Institutional racism is racial inequity within institutions and systems of power, such as places of employment, government agencies and social services. It can take the form of unfair policies and practices, discriminatory treatment and inequitable opportunities and outcomes.

A school system that concentrates people of color in the most overcrowded and under-resourced schools with the least qualified teachers compared to the educational opportunities of white students is an example of institutional racism.

## **STRUCTURAL RACISM**

Structural racism (or structural racialization) is the racial bias across institutions and society. It describes the cumulative and compounding effects of an array of factors that systematically privilege white people and disadvantage people of color.

Since the word “racism” often is understood as a conscious belief, “racialization” may be a better way to describe a process that does not require intentionality. Race equity expert John A. Powell writes:

“‘Racialization’ connotes a process rather than a static event. It underscores the fluid and dynamic nature of race...‘Structural racialization’ is a set of processes that may generate disparities or depress life outcomes without any racist actors.”

### **Systemic Racialization**

Systemic racialization describes a dynamic system that produces and replicates racial ideologies, identities and inequities. Systemic racialization is the well-institutionalized pattern of discrimination that cuts across major political, economic, and social organizations in a society.

Public attention to racism is generally focused on the symptoms (such as a racist slur by an individual) rather than the system of racial inequity.

## **RACIAL PRIVILEGE AND RACIAL OPPRESSION**

Like two sides of the same coin, racial privilege describes race-based advantages and preferential treatment based on skin color, while racial oppression refers to race-based disadvantages, discrimination and exploitation based on skin color.



**“It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences.”**

—Audre Lorde, poet.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

[What is Ethnicity?—YouTube](#)

[Why Do We Say “African American”?—YouTube](#)

[The myth of race, debunked in 3 minutes—YouTube](#)

[The Origin of Race in the USA—YouTube](#)

[What Does “BIPOC” Mean?—YouTube](#)

[The Evolving Language of DEI: POC vs. BIPOC—YouTube](#)

## CONTINUE LEARNING ABOUT RACIAL EQUITY AND INCLUSION HERE:

The Annie E. Casey Foundation offers a variety of reports and resources to help promote racial equity and inclusion in America. Explore the resources below to learn more and help promote equity and inclusion in your life:

Learn 7 steps to advance and embed racial equity and inclusion within your organization in the [Race Equity and Inclusion Action Guide](#).

Learn about institutional racism and how to develop and support leadership that contributes to racial justice in [Leadership and Race](#).


Learn about children living in high-poverty areas across the nation and the risks of concentrated poverty on children in [Children Living in High-Poverty, Low-Opportunity Neighborhoods](#).

Learn how work requirements have changed over time and the efforts that are underway to help low-income workers build greater economic stability in [Taking Action: Positioning Low-Income Workers to Succeed in a Changing Economy](#).

Learn about adultification bias, the stereotypes commonly applied to Black women and girls, and how Black female students are treated differently than their white peers in [Listening to Black Women and Girls: Lived Experiences of Adultification Bias](#).

Annie E. Casey Foundation

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