

Notes for Educating for Liberation and Innovations and Risk Taking, March 2, 2022

Attendance: Lisa Dutton, Andrea Barsevick, Treva Burger, Kent Matthies, Linda Bernstein, Andrea Parry, Carla Campbell, Eric Foster, Lee Meinicke, Margaret Thompson, Dev Howerton, Latifah Griffin-Rogers

Check In: How are you thinking about Widening the Circle since we last met?

It's good we're doing this now when we may be considering candidates for our open positions who don't come on traditional paths or have identities well represented in the UUA.

Not all congregations are doing this, glad that we are.

Important to consolidate and continue this work, we don't want to lose what we have started through staff shifts and among other programs. We need to concretize our commitments.

Rev. Kent: I will be gone after my last day, but I will work hard for this for as long as I can to make sure it continues.

Nice to have the reinforcement of Widening the Circle being the spiritual theme of the month. Nice that it was aligned.

We only have one more meeting on the report and then we'll focus on actions and goals and moving those forward.

It's really important to be doing this and hoping to find a interim minister candidate who can support us in this work with love and heart and not fracture us.

Board President Andrea Barsevick: I have asked the search committee to seek an interim who can support us in this work.

Discussion People were asked to respond to any of the questions. In planning this session, it felt like there weren't a lot of new ideas, it's more support for and different angles on ideas already presented, so it was decided to use this session to try to elicit feedback on how to incorporate the ideas at USG.

Frustration expressed in the lack of participation in ERC. People have not been attending ERC Presents. There are a lot more anti racist engagement options than there were when ERC started.

Opinion that the congregation will be open and receptive to a minister with a non traditional identity and that people will attend Beyond Categorical Thinking. Seems to be support for having something different than we have had.

Disheartened by comment at the Town Hall that stated they hoped we would get the best person for the job, and comparing it to Joe Biden committing to nominate a Black woman to the Supreme Court. Felt that "best person for the job" was code for those with identities not well represented in the UUA being less likely to be the best fit.

Heard nervousness at the Town Hall that white cis male candidates would not be considered. People might say, Who didn't you look at? Any minister needs to look beyond their circle to make sure they are aware of the issues and needs of those unlike themselves. It could be ok if it was a white cis man who looked beyond their circle.

Extremely pleased that two people on the Interim Search committee are part of this WtC meeting. Also uncomfortable with the statement during the Town Hall about finding the best person for the job. We are all coming from lots of different places, these conversations will help us have a common language. Those of us in this group are a small sub set of the congregation. Hopefully the interim has anti racist experience. This work is required for us to live our faith. This is hard work though. It's natural to want to be all things to all people. Like to see us commit to this work as a congregation.

Glad people think we're opening and welcoming, but don't think it's going to work to have people wait for the Beyond Categorical Thinking (BCT) workshop and then think that one 4 hour workshop is going to prepare them for everything they may need to adjust to if our next minister is of an identity not well represented in the UUA. It would be really helpful for people to start learning and developing skills, to help them to process and be resilient when/if there are issues.

February 13 worship service was fabulous. All the speakers were so different and so enlightening. Thought hard about the term non-white and why it was offensive and then found it was used in this report. Interesting to hear a trans man's perspective on the fact that lacking a boyhood and also how giving birth, breastfeeding and having breast cancer make his life experience so different than that of other men. And about a family's history of denial of a member with a disability. Would love more services like this.

Agree the service was wonderful. Wondering about the future of WtC. Ongoing/watch dog will be needed to follow up.

The plan, which is not well formed, is that some version of this group will continue to facilitate an accountability process. Maybe the Board assumes this responsibility. Maybe it's a separate committee that reports to the Board. A committee would be good because it would be ongoing and not subject to the turnover the Board has.

Answering the question, Where do you get stuck in anti oppression work: Stumble when things aren't consistent. Hard to get it right. Get uncomfortable all the time.

Rev. Kent: It's almost impossible not to get uncomfortable. Good sign when you are uncomfortable.

There are a lot of things you have to wrestle with. In the past, after coming to preach at USG, five ministers of color said, I didn't hear music from my people during the service and another five said I felt you tokenized my people. We have to keep making the case. A great resource is the book Blind Spot, it talks about hidden bias and how many people in the US favor white over brown skin.

Work has to include positivity. Praise, thanks, guard and tend. Just deconstruction won't work for the long haul.

Unconscious bias training. The congregation in large numbers, is not going to do everything we want, but people will be open to BCT even as a way to start the work.

Recommends an article by Loretta Russ, What If Instead of Calling People Out, We Called Them In? Might help us develop a broader base.

Educating for Liberation (from the COIC)

Use resources and tools that ensure a variety of entry points into the spiritual work of embracing one's own identity and the identity of others should be curated and, where not available, developed.

Resources on healing religious wounds and productive conflict engagement are also needed as a core part of faith development. A comprehensive path to understanding the work of equity, inclusion, and diversity should be developed and maintained as part of faith development.

USG Proposed Actions related to these chapters

* means it has been chosen as a priority, purple means it was added since the last meeting.

*T3.1 Action: Each lay leader commits to attend a [structured, facilitated](#) workshop/course/program focused on anti-oppression per year [or at least every two years](#).

*T3.2 Action: Encourage all congregants to attend a [structured, facilitated](#) workshop/course/program focused on anti-oppression of their choosing per year [or at least every two years](#).

T3.4 Action: [Create a line item in the annual budget for anti-oppression trainings and allocate sufficient funds each year.](#)

L 1.1 Action: Encourage everyone at USG to engage with at least one of the many USG groups doing anti oppression work including but not limited to: Widening the Circle, White Anti Racist Discussion, Ending Racism Committee, Racism Book Study, [Racial Healing SGM](#), Standing in Solidarity Vigil, New SJ Book Discussion, Beloved Conversations (from Meadville Lombard), Trans Inclusion, [one of the POWER teams](#).

R1.2 action: [Apply for and schedule the Beyond Categorical Thinking workshop with enough advance notice that it can be promoted, protected \(from conflicts\) and attended by as many people as](#)

possible. (Scheduling should happen during the summer after June 1, 2023. The actual BCT should happen anytime from late August to December 2023.)

New proposed:

1. Next DSD will be asked to provide a list of resources/recommendations for people to engage anti-oppression/multi-culturalism including a workshop/training/course at least once a year.
2. Consider adding to our covenant that a comprehensive path to understanding the work of equity, inclusion, and diversity should be developed and maintained as part of faith development. Can make updating the covenant part of the work with the interim.
3. Continue the White Anti Racist Discussion Group
4. Consider having another group that is open to people to share all their concerns around the changes at church, not limit it to racism, have it feel safe for people to express themselves but facilitated so that it can help them resolve their concerns. Maybe this is a group the interim minister leads? Could also be Committee on Ministry. Rather than waiting for problems to occur, plan to offer a meeting quarterly.

In the book, In the Interim, the message is that an interim will “afflict the comfortable.” Surface issues, concerns, habits. They’ll work with a team who will support them in this work.

Repeated material helps people learn. Show the work of the WtC in another service, maybe over the summer.

Innovation and Risk Taking (from the COIC)

Learn from other congregations working for many decades now to become more inclusive, equitable, and diverse. Support circles or caucuses involving Black people, Indigenous people, or people of color as well as young adult groups. Funding is needed to ensure that Black leaders, Indigenous leaders, leaders of color, and leaders from other marginalized groups with lower financial resources can be engaged and provide leadership into a more inclusive future.

For USG:

*T2.1 Action: Look to a range of communities for wisdom while being sure to credit and acknowledge those sources

T2.2 Action: Examine UUA guidelines about cultural misappropriation:

<https://www.uua.org/multiculturalism/introduction/misappropriation> to ensure that USG events/worship services are mindful of sources and attribution.

H3 Goal: Provide support for convenings at the regional and cluster level for marginalized groups, including people of color, young adults and youth.

*H3.1 Action: Make funding available for people who want to go to regional and cluster events who would be unable to attend without financial support.

A small group took time to revise the R1 Goal and Actions after the meeting and suggested this:

R1 Goal: Recruit and hire religious professionals at USG with a wide range of educational, professional, and life experiences, inclusive of those who are not well represented in UU communities, and ensure that everyone is fairly compensated.

R1.1. Action: Review and revise desired qualifications and job descriptions for religious professionals on an ongoing basis.

R1.1.2 Action: Ask the Board to create policy that states USG compensates staff according to the UUA fair compensation guidelines.

Note: The current Job Description for the Personnel Committee states the following: "10. Reviewing staff salaries with respect to fair compensation guidelines and making adjustment recommendations when indicated." Not certain if this suffices for the action above, think the Board needs to discuss.

Check Out:

Found there to be too much reading/too many concepts for one meeting
Liked the amount. Good to have a lot to chew on.
Appreciate group and leadership team for the work.
Would find it meaningful to have another worship service.