

## **Voting on the Reparations Proposal**

We urge all USG members to cast your vote FOR OR AGAINST the Reparations Proposal.

### **Questions that have been raised about this proposal:**

#### **How does voting work at USG?**

Voting will be done by secret ballot just as it is at all congregational meetings. Every USG member is eligible to vote on this proposal. You may vote in person or by absentee ballot. Absentee ballots for this proposal may be obtained from the church office and must be returned by April 7<sup>th</sup> at 12 noon (the time of the meeting). In-person votes will be cast at the congregation meeting.

#### **How is my vote kept secret?**

Secrecy is preserved by using two envelopes. You complete the ballot. You do not put your name on your ballot. You seal the completed ballot in the first envelope which has no identifying marks on the outside. The first envelope is sealed into a second outer envelope. You sign your name on the outer envelope so you can be identified. Several trustworthy people work together to count the votes. First, they will use the signed outer envelope to check eligibility to vote. Then they will remove and dispose of the outer signed envelopes. This leaves a stack of unidentifiable sealed envelopes with votes that will be counted. Because the inner envelopes have no identifying marks, the individuals who cast votes cannot be identified. This preserves the secrecy of your vote.

#### **What if I need more information before I can vote on this proposal?**

The Reparations Committee has scheduled two meetings to discuss and answer questions about the proposal. On Sunday February 25, an in-person meeting is scheduled after the church service. Lunch will be served. On Wednesday, March 6 at 7 pm, a Zoom meeting will be held. You can obtain the Zoom link by sending an email to [reparations@usquu.org](mailto:reparations@usquu.org). The link will be sent to you.

#### **Am I a racist if I oppose the Reparations Proposal?**

Please vote your conscience whether you are in favor of this proposal or opposed to it. There are many reasons why people might oppose it. Being opposed does not make you a racist. However, we need an accurate vote to know if the congregation is truly willing to support this effort. We urge you to step up and vote your conscience.

#### **What if I oppose this proposal because I think the Sullivan Fund should be used to benefit USG (the first proposed action)?**

The USG Sullivan Assistance Fund was created with the stipulation that it be used “for the assistance of the poor.” Over the years, the fund has grown to over \$250,000 because the income has exceeded the money spent. The money cannot be used for

other purposes such as building maintenance or salaries for church staff; it is reserved for people in need. If the money is not spent on the needs of the community, the fund will continue to grow and not have the impact it should. That is why the Reparations Committee is proposing to use a portion of the fund for reparations targeting people of color whose current needs are the result of enslavement and its aftermath. The other portion of the Sullivan Assistance Fund will continue as it was, for needy individuals within USG and the local community.

**What if I oppose this proposal because I don't believe we should acknowledge the "sins of the past" (the second proposed action)?**

Acknowledgement of past harm inflicted on people of color at USG is a sensitive topic, even for the members of the Reparations Committee. An earlier version of this proposal stated that we would "apologize" for this harm, but members of the committee objected to the idea of "apologizing" for something we did not do, so the wording was changed to "acknowledgement" of harm done to people of color at USG. It is easy to remember the history we are proud of; it is less comfortable, although necessary, to remember with humility the history we are not proud of. It is a way of being honest about who we are and what is our history.

**If the Reparations Proposal is accepted, how will it be implemented?**

If the proposal is accepted, the Board will appoint a new committee to make decisions about the structure of the fund and the process by which decisions are made about the organizations and/or programs that may benefit from the fund. It is our hope that the Board will appoint a racially diverse committee to implement this proposal. The appointment of a new committee will provide opportunities for more USG members to be involved in reparations efforts.

**How does Reparations differ from Charity?**

Charity is a generous action or donation by a person or group with greater resources to people who are poor or needy. Reparations is an act of repair for harm inflicted by one person or group on another person or group. Reparations may involve cessation of harmful practices, acknowledgement of harm done, assurance that injustice will not be repeated, restitution, compensation, satisfaction for moral or emotional injury (apology), and rehabilitation.