

Summary of the Pilgrim Racial Justice Task Force 9/21-9/22 2018 Vestry retreat

Members:

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Working Task Force Framework:

1. Articulate goals and a Vision Statement that consist of both learning and action, both within and beyond Pilgrim
2. Identify Racial Justice opportunities (Shared Ministry) within Pilgrim Life E.g. worship, music, education of all ages, other groups, enlisting their input
3. Identify Racial Justice opportunities in the community, beyond Pilgrim
4. Identify resources, partnerships and relationships that will support Racial Justice efforts
5. Plan one learning event to share Task Force work and gain additional Pilgrim involvement

Working Statement on Racial Justice

“Addressing white privilege in our congregation will require a sustained commitment to transformative change, from the individual to the leadership (and vice versa). However, the catalyst of our effort to sustain scripturally modeled change, must begin with active involvement in intentional anti-racist action—*that is, embracing a particularist ethic where church members directly bear the weight of responsibility, charged by the living Word of God and modeled by the actions of Jesus*—to address racism in its myriad forms and contexts in particular (that is, individual-to-individual). Passive acceptance and tolerance of racism’s dehumanizing effects, are not the values of our congregation, nor our faith practice.”

“We believe that naming racism and confronting it are embodied in our church’s mission: *‘Pilgrim Lutheran Church is an inclusive Christian worshipping community that seeks, nurtures, and empowers hungry minds and souls to live generously in response to God’s love.’*”

We are called to do racial justice work as part of several of Pilgrim’s core values: Growing in faith; Living sustainably and doing justice; Robust care and celebration; Outreach and welcome. And living more fully into our Reconciling in Christ mission.

Pilgrim Anti-racism Group Goals 2018

1. Invite all facets and ages of Pilgrim life and ministry into education and engagement with non-white cultures and anti-racism work (worship, music, education, groups, shared ministry)
2. Continue efforts to help Pilgrim members recognize white privilege and its impact in our society as well as the disparities across the races.

3. Explore the specific aspects of Pilgrim worship and community that might be contrary to a welcoming climate as it relates to non-white worshipers and community partners.
4. Organize a task force that will develop a Pilgrim anti-racism vision statement.
5. Regularly publicize local anti-racism events in various ways (Pilgrim website, bulletins, email bursts, Pilgrim newsletters)
6. Develop and deepen relationships with non-white congregations (through worship together and outside of worship together.)
7. Explore alternative worship ideas that invite non-white perspectives and worship styles.

Timeline:

March 2018: Six Pilgrims attended a weekend training called “Undoing Racism” led by Rev. Okogyeamon, along with 11 other congregations and faith communities in the Twin Cities. The Pilgrims who attended were: Pilgrims Peter Spuit, Coralie Hunter, Penny Bartz, MaryBeth Lake, Joan Haan, Pastor Lynn Peterson. The goal of this workshop was to “build a growing network of faith communities committed and equipped to undo racism within their institutions and, in collaboration with others, in our wider, shared community”.

Approximately once monthly since April, 2018: Three of the task force members started meeting to discuss goals and ideas. Since that time, the task force keeps growing! We are finding that many Pilgrims are passionate and/or have a wealth of experience around racial justice work, and we have now grown to a group of 8.

July 16, 2018: Pastor Babette Chatman (one of Pilgrim’s Renewers in Residence this summer) preached and led a forum on racial justice work. “The power that Jesus was revealing was countercultural. What is needed/what we can do - struggles are personal therefore, SHOW UP (e.g. rallies, allies, confronting police, advocating for economic & housing justice)”.

September 16, 2018: RJTF leads forum during Sunday learning hour. *Racial Justice: Where do we go from here?*

- Summary of committee surveys/conversations:
 1. *What does racial justice look like?*
 - *Equality (money, power, resources)*
 - *Meaningful engagement (listen & learn, words & deeds)*
 - *Hopes (younger generation, grace to make mistakes, self-reflection, engage!)*
 - *Fears (limited energy, more “self talk”, guilt of privilege)*
 2. *What are some opportunities?*
 - *Partnerships (African-American congregations; organizations--MCC, SPAS, IA, SPIN)*

- *Forums/Education (what do we have to lose/gain?; historical disparities)*
 - *Specific acts (tutoring, financial --% racial justice)*
 - *Conversations (one-on-one, stories)*
 - *Promoting/attend community RJ events*
 - *Developing resource list*
 - *“Pilgrim book” (group reading and discussion of RJ book)*
 - *Sunday School (opening, curriculum, Bible stories, activism and processing those activities with children, teacher training)*
 - *Vestry (benefit from recommendations, budget opportunities)*
 - *Worship (preachers of color--African-American and Native American), liturgy--confession, shared humanity, repentance, reconciliation, and healing; Nordic/Celtic/Compline--themes, liturgy, incorporating Cultures/POC)*
- Ideas/outcomes from forum audience:
 1. Encourage/increase intentionality when making choices of where to shop, consume, live, and thinking about racism
 2. Act and advocate in the moment (ie. speak out!)
 3. Purchase/subsidized housing for POC in our community
 4. Advocate for fresh fruit and vegetable programs for low-income families
 5. Connect with other congregations (we need to make ourselves vulnerable and make connections with groups that don't look like us)
 6. Listen to our children and their thoughts on race
 7. Make partnerships with immigrant communities
 8. Join the Isaiah movement
 9. Schedule temple talks in worship--people can share their personal experiences with race
 10. Host elder-youth conversations in which older people share their reflections on race with younger people
 11. Create racially integrated council to share in guidance and ideas for growing in community together
 12. Pilgrim can get involved in Rondo Days
 13. Sunday school--connect to children to RJ issues through art (ask them to reflect on art work)
 14. Vestry can consider seeking out vendors of color when making purchases
 15. Continue to incorporate diverse music selections for worship; sing in different languages
 16. Help to equip Pilgrims on how to have courageous conversations with family members during family celebrations/gatherings

17. Be advocates and support justice makers (reminder that we're not "fixing" others)
18. Resource list: "The Watsons go to Birmingham"--youth book discussion; Podcast: Seeing White
19. In making connections with congregations of color; approach the situation with humility and ask them to help us determine what next steps together should be.

Task Force work thus far:

1. Developed a task force framework and goals
2. Developed a list of resources (website links, books, organizations)
3. Developed a list of racial justice definitions/concepts
4. Several RJTF members have gone to different trainings or workshops around white privilege and race and have shared what they gained from those experiences
5. Conducted conversations with all Pilgrim committees and groups to ask the following questions as they relate to each committee/group:
 - a. What does racial justice look like?
 - b. What are some opportunities to promote or engage in racial justice?
 - c. What are your hopes and concerns?
6. Compiled the above conversations for reflection and planning
7. Hosted forum on racial justice--next steps and gathering ideas from other Pilgrims
8. Discussed ideas for fostering Pilgrim engagement with racial justice activities within Pilgrim and in the community.

Next Steps for RJTF: Develop list of recommendations, consider ending this phase of the task force, consider starting a new phase of the task force (reassess goals/timeline/intended outcomes)

Beginning Draft of RJTF Recommendations:

1. Pilgrim committees to consider racial justice in their work and planning (perhaps including a statement in every committee meeting agenda which invites members to reflect on how they could incorporate racial justice into their work)
2. Pastors could consider incorporating racial justice into all sermons as well as explore alternative worship ideas that invite non-white perspectives and worship styles
3. Regular RJ column in Pilgrim Newsletter and perhaps Wednesday email blast which includes local RJ activities

4. Encourage Pilgrims to make personal invitations to others when participating in RJ activities, when reading a RJ book, or watching a movie about racial topics
5. Consider connecting with non-white congregations/choirs (Justice Choir?)/groups
6. Incorporate more racial justice topics in Sunday School and provide information for parents on how to continue these discussions at home
7. Engage children in activities such as CES, food pantry collection and deliveries, prepping kits for the homeless (face to face care) and then process with kids about what people become in a position of needing more support
8. Incorporate more RJ in Sunday School openings, curriculum
9. Vestry should consider dedicating funding for racial justice initiatives
10. Isaiah--join or collaborate?