

Annual Report for the 2015-2016 Church Year

from the

Anti-Racism Leadership Team

to the Board of Trustees and the Executive Team

of Unity Church-Unitarian

ARLT Members

Drew Danielson (staff), Rob Eller-Isaacs (staff),
Danny Givens (staff), Shay MacKay (staff),
Peter Heege, Gabrielle Mead, Russ Peterson,
Vicki Stewart, Mary-Margaret Zindren

Unity Church-Unitarian
732 Holly Avenue
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55104
651-228-1456 • www.unityunitarian.org

Congregational Activities

Rev. Danny Givens Ministerial Residency

2016 marked the second year of Danny's two-year ministerial residency. This was a time of spiritual discernment and remarkable growth in Danny's public presence. He preached twice from Unity's pulpit, in July and for the Black Friday at Church service in November with guest speaker Nekima Levy-Pounds. His public involvement in Black Lives Matter and other social justice efforts has been a moral and spiritual compass for the Twin Cities.

Making common cause with Black Lives Matter

Unity served as fiscal sponsor for Black Lives UU; our clergy and congregants consistently showed up for BLM events; we proudly displayed a Black Lives Matter on the Holly Avenue face of the building; the Church of the Larger Fellowship BLM Ministry has office space at Unity.

Other congregational activities

Wellspring Wednesday

There were ten WSW programs during the church year that dealt directly or primarily with racial justice topics: *Voting Rights Act* (September 23); *How Open Are Our Borders?* (October 7); *Black Lives Matter: An Invitation to Conversation* (October 21); *Indians in Public Art: Myths and Misconceptions* (October 28); *After Freedom: The Challenge of Attaining Equality and Dignity in the Struggle for Civil Rights* (November 4); Screening of the documentary film *Hands up Don't Shoot: Our Youth Movement* (January 6); *Why Black Lives Matter* (January 20); Book discussion groups on *Between the World and Me* (February 17; also held Sunday February 21); *Why Black Lives Matter: Stories from the Fourth Precinct and Beyond* (February 24); and *Islamophobia in America Today* (March 16).

Book Reads

This year's congregational book read, held in February and co-sponsored by the Racial and Restorative Justice Team, Anti-Racism Leadership Team and Library Team, was *Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates. The Library Team also presented an author talk by Karen Branan on her book, *The Family Tree: A Lynching in Georgia, a Legacy of Secrets, and My Search for the Truth*.

From the Pulpit

Dane Smith preached a Labor Day sermon on *How Radical Should We Be for Racial Equity?* Janne, Rob, Shay, and Lisa regularly incorporated the spiritual dimensions of racial justice and equity into their Sunday talks.

Freedom School

Unity once again this year had the largest contingent of volunteers for the Freedom School summer program for local youth in July and August.

New Orleans Pilgrimage and Morgan Forum

For the tenth year following the destruction of Hurricane Katrina, a dozen Unity volunteers traveled to New Orleans for a week in October to continue working on the recovery and

reconstruction of the Ninth Ward. In November, James Carter and Dr. Michael Cowen from New Orleans visited Unity and keynoted the Morgan Forum *Racial Healing and Reconstruction: Lessons Learned* with their presentation, *New Orleans Under Reconstruction: Looking Ahead*.

Saint Paul Almanac

In April 2016, Unity made a grant of \$20,000 to the Saint Paul Almanac to help fund its project to publish the memoirs of elders from the Saint Paul African-American community, beginning with the writings of Kofi Bobby Hickman. An unsuccessful Faithify drive to replace this unbudgeted expense was run in Spring 2016.

Board and Volunteer Intercultural Competence Training

The full Board of Trustees and several members of the Anti-Racism Leadership Team and the Religious Education Ministry Team attended a day-long seminar on Intercultural Competence in April.

Public Events

Public events attended by Unity congregants included the Rondo Healing Ceremony last July, the Selby Jazz Fest for the Summit University Planning Council Board of Directors election (Unity has held a seat for several years), *Overcoming Racism* Conference at Metro State in November, the annual MLK Holiday Breakfast at Mount Zion Temple in January, and a Mass Incarceration Seminar at Metro State in April.

Community Outreach Teams

Several of Unity's community outreach teams and their community partners were strongly involved in anti-racism and racial justice work and programming.

The Racial and Restorative Justice Team partnered with Amicus, Rondo Circle of Peace and Children's Defense Fund Freedom School for activities including presence at the Rondo Healing Ceremony, weekly Circle of Peace meetings on Monday evenings, Winter Warm Up clothing drive for people recently released from prison, Second Chance Day on the Hill at the state capitol, and Freedom School for over 350 children.

The Affordable Housing Ministry Team partnered with Beacon Interfaith Housing, Saint Paul Interfaith Action Project Home, and Faith Builders Habitat for Humanity in a legislative advocacy campaign, "Building Support to End Homelessness." Under their aegis, Unity also hosted Project Home this spring, using the talents and love of over 150 volunteers.

The New Orleans Pilgrimage celebrated its tenth anniversary. Many Unity members were involved and invested in the Obama Elementary School Partnership. The Generosity Ministry Team coordinated plate offering gifts to numerous non-profits engaged in Justice work.

Outreach Ministry Teams engaged the volunteer efforts of around 200 congregants.

Unity Anti-Racism Coordinating Council (UARCC)

Initiated this year with the aim of facilitating conversations between, and exchanging information among, various groups in the Church working on aspects of racial justice and racial equity, UARCC met three times this year with participation from numerous groups and outreach teams.

Additionally, the Executive Team created a staff anti-racism team to help monitor, evaluate and coordinate the anti-racism activities and policies of the church.

REMT Work on Curriculum Review

A Task Force led by members of the Religious Education Ministry Team (REMT) met regularly during the past year to review the RE curriculum and make recommendations toward multicultural education with an emphasis on racial justice. As part of the work, meetings included self-reflection by team members, consideration of personal and institutional culture, and grounding in UU principles. Task Force members are focusing first on review of the junior high UU History and Identity unit.

Tower Club

Youth from the Tower Club participated in a conference focusing on racial justice and in the protests at the 4th Precinct with Black Lives Matter.

Clumsy Conversations: Talking to children about race

Unity's UU Families Group led an intensive workshop to explore how to talk to kids about racial justice. Eight Unity parents met for several hours over the course of a few months to share resources, experiences, reflections, and support for talking to our children about racial justice. Group members are considering how to continue conversations among families about this important topic.

Summary of ARLT Work During 2015-2016

Team Transitions

This year saw the departure of team members Brooke Darst Rice, Jill Henricksen, Amy Kujawski, and Avi Viswanathan. We would like to thank them for their dedication and hard work toward the mission and vision of the ARLT.

As a result of Executive Team and Board Chair conversations, the ARLT recruiting committee was asked to suspend the recruiting process while the nature of the ARLT's continuing role was explored. After several conversations with the Board, the ARLT, and the Executive Team, it was agreed by all parties that the ARLT would continue in its current form and role (or "as chartered"). As such, the team has restarted the recruitment process to replace departing members.

ARLT Sub-Teams

Board Liaison

The ARLT Board Liaison sub-team had a productive relationship with the Board Policy Team this year. We met three times with Board representatives and discussed how we might impact congregational life by imbedding anti-racist language into new or existing Board policies. At our initial meetings, ARLT presented some draft policy statements to the Board members and to Laura Park, who was in attendance at these meetings, and the Board members took these suggestions under advisement and returned to our next meeting with fairly fully-developed general language appended into existing policy statements. The two groups agreed that these draft statements would be presented to the full Board at some point this year, and that the Policy Committee would tailor any needed language changes. We think these proposed changes will have a marked effect on the next iteration of the Ends Statements in the 2017-2018 church year, as well as fulfilling our role of ensuring that the work of anti-racism and racial justice is embedded in the life of the congregation as long as that work is necessary.

Religious Education

The RE sub-team has not had regular communications with RE leadership, but is aware of significant work being done by Director of Religious Education KP Hong and the Religious Education Ministry Team (REMT) in support of anti-racism. They continue to consider short and long term curriculum review, accountability and measurement of the effects of curriculum work, teacher orientation and training, and social justice/racial justice community engagement. Members of the REMT participated in the April 2016 intercultural competence training with church staff, Board of Trustees, and other volunteer leaders.

Adult Congregants & Outreach Teams; Front Line Staff & Volunteers

These two sub-teams were limited in their work this past year given the ARLT's focus on building relationships with the Board of Trustees and given the limited membership of the ARLT.

Report on 2015-2016 Recommendations

One year ago, the ARLT made three recommendations. This section summarizes progress made on these recommendations.

1. Determine more effective ways of developing and pursuing ARLT recommendations.

Given inaction on previous years' recommendations, the ARLT sought to develop more direct and stronger connections with members of the Board of Trustees. The Board welcomed these efforts. This relationship has allowed the ARLT and Board to better understand each other's roles and responsibilities, and the Board has taken ownership of anti-racism work as part of its responsibilities.

2. Allocate the resources needed to support anti-racism training for Unity board members, adult education programming related to anti-racism, and continuation of the Beloved Conversations.

The Board dedicated significant resources demonstrating commitment to anti-racism work, including supporting intercultural competence training for board members, staff, and other

volunteer leaders; a new Beloved Conversations series in Fall 2016; and other congregational activities. Importantly, it is ARLT's understanding that the ET will include a line item for racial justice work in the 2016-2017 budget.

3. Develop an ongoing relationship between the ARLT and the policy sub-team of the Unity board.

The ARLT and the policy sub-team of the Board of Trustees have met several times to discuss how to incorporate anti-racism values in church policies. The Board's policy sub-team has taken the lead on incorporating anti-racism into their policy review responsibilities.

Report on 2014-2015 Recommendations

Additional progress also has been made during 2015-2016 related to recommendations ARLT made the previous year. Specifically, the Board has shown commitment to continuing the Church's efforts in support of Beloved Conversations and anti-racism training for the Board.

Recommendations for 2016-2017

1. Incorporate anti-racism in every aspect of succession planning, including recruitment and selection of new leadership, in consultation and relationship with ARLT.
2. Continue to develop policy revisions in support of and allocate budget for anti-racism (including, for example, anti-racism training), in consultation and in relationship with ARLT.
3. Confirm the role and function of the ARLT as it was chartered: as an autonomous evaluative and advisory entity. As such, no modifications to or restrictions on its functions and operations may be made without consultation with the ARLT and due Board process.