**Meeting #6 | Friday, September 2, 2022 | 10:30 AM-12:30 PM ET**

Present: Paul Higgins, Perry Hopper, Karen Podsiadly (Convener), James McJunkin, Marie Onwubuariri, Kathryn Ray,

Unable to join: Lisa Harris-Lee, Gina Jacobs-Strain, Rodney Ragwan, Lisa Rothenberger, LaRose Karr, Robin Stoops

All Convening Table Documents can be found at: <https://www.abc-usa.org/abc-anti-racism-convening-table/> and the password is: **arct2022beloved** (case sensitive).

1. **Opening Matters**
   1. Welcome by Karen
   2. Agenda additions or quick updates - None
   3. Wednesday, October 26, 11AM-4PM – ***After discussion at the start and end of the meeting, it was decided that since several people cannot be in person that we will do all virtual for this meeting.***
   4. Devotion by Karen – DEUT 10:17-35 (NIV) – What word, phrase, or image stands out for you? What does this scripture say about the work before us? Sharing was done by group. ***Kathryn will lead devotion in October meeting.***
2. **Follow up on Meeting #5**
   1. Meeting Notes, Reflections, Follow-up Actions
   2. Ideas about dedicated staff person for DEI
      * Marie had an initial discussion with a fellow Baptist minister who had served briefly as Diversity Officer at a University. In the discussion his immediate feedback was that he was not really given a chance to do the DEI work because of all the other responsibilities that were put into his portfolio. Even though he did work on an DEI strategy, which they took but then asked him to do other work. Via email Marie asked if he had thoughts about what could make an effective model, and any responses received will be shared with the Convening Table in the future.
      * Karen’s experience in higher ed and non-profit world: She hasn’t seen successful or even moderately successful examples. She believes organizational leadership has responsibility for understanding and holding those they lead responsible for inclusion, equity, and diversity. Very hesitant about the model of a singular staff member being responsible as she’s seen scapegoated and absolving other people of the collective responsibility; there is a lot of burnout
      * James reflections: a major concern is who is responsible to keep the work across the denomination coordinated and accountable to what is discussed/agreed. Who among us has the expertise among us?
   3. Initial reflections from colleagues from other denominations
      * **Kathryn –Assoc. General Minister with Disciples of Christ – see below for full notes.**
        1. Smaller but congregational, similar structurally; general ministry office equivalent to our OGS
        2. Office of Reconciliation (supported by automatic offerings) – trainings 1-2 day anti-racism training for nominal fee, led by volunteer from Board; they also do grants; they have a grievance process
        3. Said funded position is essential to keep work coordinated.
        4. Facing diminishing income; they are its own entity – not subordinate. Has own ED plus one part-time support person.
      * **Group discussion (this does not capture all points):**
        1. Seems intense work for 1 ED and 1 half-time support person – harkens back to Karen’s warning about burn out.
        2. Grievance path is tricky. Karen related it to bias-incidence reporting in education – it gets to be complicated.
        3. Rev. Gilmore noted that funded staff is a necessity to keep the work going.
        4. Both/and –someone designated to convene, not necessarily need an expert to give answers but can help facilitate good thinking; not someone who is left with the ball to implement. Hope that OGS owns the work and even next GS has some experience/knowledge/basic ability in this; will OGS take mantle of encouraging this priority throughout the denomination and help work smarter (share models, etc.) step up our responses and efforts
        5. Karen brings clarity to the work of the Convening Table: The establishment phase was added because we needing to connect to other entities and then clarify the framework. This Convening Table is to help answer the question of how to approach the work (much of what was outlined in the Task Force proposal) with consideration to importance of partnerships and the complexity of structure within the ABC.
        6. Paul brings clarity to the work of the Convening Table: He had concerns about how the proposal can be successful in our denominational reality: budget, linkages, etc. He also recognized a need to finesse the work before implementation so that people across the denomination can look back and see that we have been able to accomplish some things we haven’t been able to do before.
        7. On the point of organizational development: Do not see the ownership and financial support that can propel us into a bright future. Conversations around what does it mean to develop the level of ownership across our churches/partners (racial, ethnic, generational) are not disconnected to this topic. There is no one who has the job in ABC to build multicultural ownership (donors etc.,)…that people of color are not asked to sign in on what comes out of a Euro-centric foundation? Not just about diversity or to correct people – we want to grow stakeholders. Can we tie our work to our major challenge – and that is building a multicultural denomination?
        8. Through ABHMS Intercultural Ministries, the vision is that we are contributing to that building of a multicultural denomination from missional perspectives through continued leadership development among and making space for contribution from our ethnic-specific communities and also building capacity for intercultural leadership across our whole denomination.
        9. Star That’s: we are changing the paradigm of not just an invitation to come to the table but incorporating skill set that needs to be embodied; leadership; finessing the proposal; not losing the urgency of the hour which is to build a multicultural/intergenerational witness (certainly there are anti-racist issues, but there are other issues as well)
   4. Organizational input into future work (IM and Regions):
      * Organizational capacity and interest in engaging in a shared anti-racism effort
      * What questions remain that might be shape response to previous question?
      * What might complement your internal anti-racism efforts that an American Baptist Anti-Racism "Commission" [placeholder language] might help address/provide?
      * What might your organization contribute to this "Commission" for the benefit of other ABC partners/entities?

* IM still hasn’t had a change to respond to this. James just reiterated his sharing that PBA’s interest is building multicultural/intergenerational American Baptist witness and he hopes this work helps address that larger urgency.
  1. Follow-up on learnings from previous trainings mentioned in Meeting 4
* Perhaps this can be an activity for a future group – pulling forward learnings from previous efforts; naming this to avoid the pattern of adding content to the general body of knowledge, without capitalizing on it. This needs to be an emphasis for future efforts – not just brining in an expert to share knowledge but taking ample time to process, implement, reflect, share.

1. **Aligning Anti-Racism Task Force Proposal and our Conversations Continued…**

The chart shown on Meeting Notes 5 shows our efforts to compare this group’s sharing alongside the proposal. Our next task was to review this and finesse.:

* What could this look like? Who, what, where, what are the skills, what do partners need to see in the proposal, what would be needed from partners?

1. **Next Steps**

Discussion spurred by the question, is the commission a viable form to at least start with?

* Notes for OGS:
  + We need something more than a commission. Church needs to redefine itself. Mainline denomination has no voice.
  + Question for ABCUSA – where is the General Secretary’s voice on issues that have great impact on people of color?
  + ABC reality: Half liberal/half conservative (not moderate) – statements are difficult
  + Aside from the continual liberal-conservative topics, what about matters of evil right here in the US?
  + Hear the need to extend these conversations to the BGM to get to the harder conversations.
* To this work:
  + What is the language we are using? Is the language bringing diverse people to the table?
  + What is our voice and what is the “body” that can help us consider these harder issues?
  + Deep and hard work, yet in public space, faith people get generalized. Both work and public voice is important.
  + Want to see the work of the task force come to fruition in some form. Language of reconciliation/multicultural is initially inviting to perhaps a wider group of people that is willing to invest in it. Having “anti” in the name can have opposite effect.
    - Additional perspectives:
      * Would not want to see “Anti-racism” completely go away because there is a population within ABC that are more than ready to go into these deep waters and wanting/needed to see institutional change specific to race
      * We need to include language/framework that acknowledges and allow multiple entry points
      * We need to deal with the question of what do we do with those within our body who do not value wanting to better understand and move toward a true multicultural denomination.
      * Reconciliation connotes there we were once together. Conciliation is an alternate.
      * Language: There is a difference between a “conservative” and a “White Nationalist”
      * Language: Multiculturalism 🡪 Table with access, privileges, and responsibilities
  + Whatever the form of a “body/group/commission”
    - What is the conversation that we want our Board and partners to have?
    - How can this group bring a structure and facilitation support system for having these conversations – race, Christian nationalism, and issues that affect major stakeholders but have been historically neglected by the denomination
  + Themes:
    - What do we need to face and own? [antiracism, separation, suspicion…]
    - What is our voice, what is our witness going to be? How do we want to be seen, heard as a group?
    - What are the conversations we need to be holding?
    - What is the training we need?
    - What are skills, dispositions needed of the people that will shepherd the work?
* Marie will share notes from today and create a shared working document that people can input their ideas in preparation for October meeting:

1. Objectives – key content of what the group will lead in

2. Skills needed within this group to meet the objectives. [Supplemental expertise can be identified for potential contracted persons.]

3. What does this reveal of form – what form is needed for the objectives to be met [Keep in mind how partnerships, as well as our Baptist autonomy/interdependence inform and engage this]

- ***Karen will send out link to recording; Marie will send out notes; Karen will begin to form Oct. agenda with clear notes about where we want end by the end of the meeting and adequate breaks.***

***-*** Perry closed in prayer.

**Notes From Kathryn Ray, Meeting with Rev. Yvonne Gilmore:**

Office of Reconciliation established in 1970

Reach out April Johnson

Established in response to Black Manifesto

Racism= “urban emergency problem”

Raise money and give it to NAACP, distribute funds to community organizations fighting racism

Mission fund was the idea to combat racism (lot of what we would understand as charity), raise $$,

Six general offerings- reconciliation is one of the offerings

Core organizers and trainers trained by grassroots anti-racism workers, go out and do trainings for any of their general units

Some regions require regular anti-racism and boundaries training for clergy, Office of Reconciliation facilitates these trainings (in-person and now via Zoom)- one and two day trainings. Some regions would then put together their own anti-racism teams, which network with Office of Reconciliation.

Green Chalice -> environmental justice commitments

Looking at creating comparable designation for anti-racist churches

Mission fund- half goes to Office and half to the region that they came from, region awards grants to initiatives that combat racism, Office awards grants

National Convocation of Black Churches deeply connected to Office of Reconciliation

Mission of Office of Reconciliation also called “Racial/Ethnic Ministries”

Has its own Board structure that facilitates accountability to racial and ethnic groups (Convocations)

Office of Reconciliation

Has reserves and regular offering (5-$600,000)

$335,000 raised in a year

Board (“Commission”), ED (FT), and assistant (PT, coordinates trainings)

Independence sign of importance, not just a member of Office of General President/Minister

“If there isn’t staff support for it, it may not happen. This is important, we signal that with a dedicated staff person.”

Questions raised about connecting Reconciliation with Week of Compassion (disaster relief funds, which garners a lot more support)

National Convocation, Christian Church/Doc

Black Disciples were slaves of white Disciples in the beginning

Has a longer history with significant assets

Believed in call to unity

Office of Hispanic Ministries, with Executive Pastors

North American Pacific Asian Disciples

“Fundraising isn’t about numbers, it’s about the strength of our relationships.”

Trust is a huge issue- why would I give to your mission if you don’t honor mission how I understand it? There are a lot of silos within DoC because there isn’t trust.

1. Training and Programming
   1. Nominal fee for service
2. Mission Fund
3. Grievance process
   1. You can file a grievance with the Office of Reconciliation.

A general unit or Disciples institution has a practice deemed to be racist

Registering receipt of grievance, do investigation (Commission members- Board volunteers), make recommendations