

**Unity Church - Unitarian  
Saint Paul, Minnesota**

# **Dismantling Racism – Becoming an Actively Anti-Racist Institution**

**2011 – 2012 Annual Report  
on Institutional Progress**

**Presented to the  
Board of Trustees and the Executive Team  
of Unity Church-Unitarian**

**CHURCH YEAR: September 2011 – October 2012**

**Prepared by the Anti-Racism Leadership Team (ARLT)**

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## **Executive Summary of the 2011-2012 Annual Report of the Anti-Racism Leadership Team\***

The Anti-Racism Leadership Team (ARLT) is pleased to present this summary of its annual report to the Unity Church Congregation. This report is intended to share the efforts and to assess the progress of the ARLT and the Unity Church community over the past year toward becoming an actively anti-racist organization.

In summary, the actions and accomplishments that occurred during the past year lead us to feel a strengthened sense of optimism about Unity's collective commitment to anti-racism. We see the beginnings of a culture change that integrates anti-racism within the life and activities of the church.

During the past year we recognize that there has been considerable effort on the part of Unity's leaders to establish regular, authentic, active connections with the ARLT. ARLT members have attended Board of Trustees meetings and have both proposed new governing policies and weighed in on policy issues under consideration. Co-minister Rob Eller-Isaacs has become the staff liaison to the ARLT. Working relationships with Board Chair Bob Peskin and other Board members have been established. The Board has taken its governance responsibilities related to the ARLT more seriously, in particular having helped to identify and interview potential candidates for appointment to the ARLT.

But while these improvements to Unity's processes are important, we are most energized and encouraged by several key actions taken during the past year that apply our anti-racist values in real and meaningful ways for the benefit of the broader community. The Board of Trustees adopted recommendations related to establishing a minority hiring policy in the context of the major capital construction project currently underway. This policy change has ensured that the contractors on the project are employing people of color and women in numbers that represent the demographic makeup of our region. Broader policy changes were also proposed by the ARLT and adopted by the Board that have the promise of leading to similar concrete actions that would infuse Unity's budget and operations with purposeful attention to anti-racism.

Another recommendation of the ARLT that was implemented this year was a two-day anti-racism training retreat for a wide array of Unity's volunteer leaders and staff. We believe the retreat attendees emerged more sensitized to issues of race and racism, and with a shared sense of commitment to realizing the vision of an anti-racist organization. We expect that the outcomes of the planning at this event will inform Unity's strategic direction and work plan.

To look beyond this progress report and toward the year ahead, in October 2012 the ARLT developed and conducted a survey of Unity's key volunteer leaders and staff. The survey results suggest a variety of potential activities that the ARLT or other Unity groups could take on. We have included recommendations in this report for strategic direction and specific implementation steps related to anti-racism based on what the survey reveals about the opinions and aspirations of dedicated Unity volunteers and staff.

We will also be working to ensure that 1) a strong anti-racism stance remains within Unity's soon-to-be-revised "ends statements," 2) we build upon the recent retreat with regular anti-racism training, and 3) the Unity budget and program planning are designed to include opportunities to expand Unity's anti-racism efforts.

Thank you for making anti-racism a priority in your life and in the life of this faith community.

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\* This is a modified version of the summary included in the packet distributed at the Congregational Meeting held on November 17, 2012

## Progress toward Becoming an Actively Anti-Racist Organization

The Anti-Racism Leadership Team (ARLT) is focused on ensuring that Unity becomes an anti-racist organization through deliberate, sustained, and comprehensive efforts.

In this annual report, we summarize the accomplishments of Unity's volunteers and staff in this regard, and recognize where the work remains unfinished. This report highlights:

- Progress on the ARLT's 2010-2011 recommendations
- Minority hiring and broad institutionalization of anti-racism values
- Congregational, staff, and volunteer perspectives

### I. Progress on the 2010-2011 Recommendations

Last year's report contained the following five recommendations. Progress on each recommendation is noted below:

#### 1. *Ensure the continuity of the ARLT within the church process.*

*Progress to date:* A recruitment and selection process was initiated resulting in five new members being added to the ARLT: Brooke Darst Rice, Rob Fulton, Mary Morris, Avi Viswanathan, and Mary-Margaret Zindren. Continuing members of the ARLT for 2012-2013 are: Drew Danielson, Pauline Eichten, Alana Howey, and Sarah Pradt. The ARLT is very excited to have a larger group with new energy and ideas to put toward this important work.

The responsibility for appointing new members to the ARLT belongs to Unity's Board of Trustees. The ARLT continues to recommend that the process of recruiting and selecting new members be conducted annually to make sure the team includes seven to nine active members, and that the process be directed by the Board of Trustees with involvement from the ARLT (rather than the current approach that is primarily ARLT-driven).

#### 2. *Contract for an external audit of Unity's progress toward becoming an actively anti-racist organization.*

*Progress to date:* No action has been taken.

#### 3. *Develop formal lines of communication between the ARLT and Unity's Board of Trustees and Executive Team.*

*Progress to date:* Stronger and more consistent communications have developed over the past year. Regarding the Board of Trustees, ARLT members have been regularly attending Board meetings to be a resource to Board members, to bring forward ARLT-related questions and comments as appropriate, and to serve as a communications conduit. The Board also asked the ARLT to review and comment on proposed policy changes.

Regarding communications between the Executive Team and the ARLT, co-minister Rob Eller-Isaacs now serves as the Executive Team's liaison to the ARLT with the intent for communications to become more consistent than in previous years. Because of these steps, ARLT members felt much more current on the life of the church and more confident that the Board of Trustees recognizes the level of importance their work has in creating the anti-racist institution we aspire to be.

In the year ahead, the ARLT hopes to see more definition of the liaison role that Rob Eller-Isaacs is currently fulfilling, creating a stronger communication link between the Board of Trustees, the Executive Team, and the ARLT.

**4. *Provide anti-racism training for members of Unity's Board of Trustees.***

*Progress to date:* In August 2012, a special training retreat was organized to focus Unity's leaders on anti-racism efforts. Participants included members of the Board of Trustees, the ARLT, the Racial Justice Outreach Team, and Unity staff. The group met for two days to gain a stronger understanding of what it means to be an anti-racist institution and to develop strategies for moving forward. Also, the Board of Trustees approved a new policy calling for annual anti-racism training of its members.

**5. *Develop coordinated programming addressing racism, racial justice, and community involvement.***

*Progress to date:* During the 2011-12 church year, programming for Wellspring Wednesdays was organized by then Director of Congregational Life, Leon Dunkley. Many of the topics creatively addressed racism. Dunkley also coordinated with the Affordable Housing Community Outreach Ministry Team for a series on homelessness, which included discussion of the intersections of race and class. Rachel Lonberg, Unity Hallman Ministerial Intern, led a series titled, "Skeletons in oUUr Closet: Hidden UU History," which included examination of Unitarian racism in our history. The League of Women Voters presented on the proposed Voter ID Amendment: "Democracy for All? Barriers of Voter ID." The Racial Justice Outreach Team led a discussion of an all-congregation reading of *Devil in a Blue Dress* by Walter Mosley. It did not appear that these efforts were coordinated, but good learning occurred.

While it may not specifically fit within the realm of "coordinated programming," it is important to mention that, during the fall following the August retreat, the ARLT received and enthusiastically accepted a request from the Racial Justice Outreach Team to co-sponsor an initiative to educate the congregation on the Voter ID constitutional amendment. The two teams jointly advocated against the passage of this amendment due to the potential for disparate and discriminatory impact on people of color, new immigrants, low-income individuals, and other demographic groups. Members of the ARLT helped to compile and

distribute information and offered to be a resource to address congregants' questions and concerns.

It is hoped that the August training retreat will begin to spur new collaborative anti-racism efforts.

## **II. Minority hiring and broad institutionalization of Unity's anti-racism values**

With the prospect of spending \$6 million on Unity's construction project, concerned church members raised questions about whether that money would be spent in alignment with the church's anti-racism values. The ARLT, members of the Racial Justice Outreach Team, and members of the Restorative Justice Team sent a letter to the Executive Team, Board of Trustees, and Unity Tomorrow team that included the following statement:

In keeping with Unity's end statement, "a commitment to antiracism and racial healing in covenant with communities of color," development of a policy for hiring of vendors and contractors that incorporates assurances of fair and minority hiring practices is necessary.

The Board of Trustees, the Executive Team, and the project manager worked to address these concerns in crafting the Request for Qualifications document and selection criteria for the companies bidding on the project. Companies were asked to provide information on their past practices and experience related to:

- employing people of color and women in construction jobs for projects of similar size;
- working with Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBE);
- working with Mentor/Protégé Programs for DBEs; and
- on-the-job training programs.

Potential contractors were also asked to:

- outline their plan for meeting Unity's desired 31% minority hiring goal for the project (which parallels the number of people in Ramsey County who are people of color) as well as projected hours for both people of color and women;
- identify current compliance with relevant state and local government certifications; and
- describe their minority hiring program and how they planned to implement it for the Unity project.

After reviewing the qualifications of several companies, McGough Construction was selected as the Construction Manager for the project. Over the course of the project, starting in June, the project superintendent has provided monthly reports on the degree to which McGough and its subcontractors were meeting the 31% guideline for minority and female workers employed on the project.

Each month McGough exceeded the guideline, with the reported percentages listed below:

- 42.5% in June
- 41.7% in July
- 36.4% in August
- 34.9% in September
- 35.3% in October
- 34.1% in November

Building upon the discussions that led this minority hiring requirement for construction projects, a discussion was held in January 2012 among an ad hoc group of concerned church members to explore how Unity's commitment to anti-racism could be more broadly institutionalized, applying anti-racism values more consistently and comprehensively to the church's organizational practices. The following statements emerged from these discussions:

**1. *Recognize that how we spend our money demonstrates our support for anti-racism values on an ongoing basis.***

*Need:* A policy that we will take minority ownership into account when deciding where to purchase goods and services.

*Measure:* The percentage of our expenditures that goes to businesses with minority ownership.

**2. *Recognize that a diverse staff demonstrates our commitment to be an anti-racist institution.***

*Need:* A policy that we will consider diversity when hiring staff.

*Measure:* The percentage of our staff budget that is paid to staff members who are people of color.

**3. *Recognize that how we decide what organizations we donate Sunday offerings to reflects our commitment to anti-racism and racial healing.***

*Need:* A policy that we will use our donations to further our anti-racism values by identifying anti-racist organizations to partner with and providing repeated support from Sunday offerings.

*Measure:* The percentage of our total donation amount that goes to identified anti-racist organizations.

**4. *Recognize that how we use our staff time to support organizations that further our anti-racism values demonstrates our commitment to anti-racism and racial healing.***

*Need:* A policy that we will consider anti-racism when deciding whether Unity staff will provide support for activities of other organizations.

*Measure:* The percentage of staff hours spent working in partnership with other organizations that was spent working with organizations that further our anti-racism values.

5. ***Recognize that organizing and supporting volunteers in support of organizations that further our anti-racism values shows our commitment to anti-racism and racial healing.***  
*Need:* A policy that we will consider organizations that further our anti-racism values when encouraging members of the congregation to volunteer their skills for another organization.  
*Measure:* The percentage of people volunteering who volunteer for organizations that further our anti-racism values.
  
6. ***Recognize that Unity has members with skills that can provide help to organizations that further our anti-racism values.***  
*Need:* Bring the skills of Unity members to bear in supporting organizations that further our anti-racism values.  
*Measure:* The trend in the number of people who have been connected via Unity to organizations that further our anti-racism values.
  
7. ***Recognize that we should lift up and celebrate what is being done.***  
*Need:* A policy that we conduct a celebration of the anti-racist activities of Unity and its members at least annually.  
*Measure:* Documentation of such celebrations when they are held.

The group sought to begin formalizing the concepts outlined in these seven points and crafted a proposal for a policy to be added to the governing policies of Unity Church. The proposed policy primarily addressed the first two items: how Unity Church spends its money and how Unity hires diverse staff members.

The proposal was submitted to the Policy Committee of the Board of Trustees for their consideration. The Board of Trustees subsequently approved Policy J essentially as proposed, with some revisions brought forward by the Executive Team to item 1. Policy J as adopted is as follows:

**Policy J: Anti-Racism and Racial Healing Commitment**

*With respect to Unity's commitment to becoming an actively anti-racist institution, the Executive Team may not fail to:*

1. *Maintain an active conversation with its vendors by engaging them in a process of evaluation and education, applying a matrix of values with all vendors above a threshold of \$2500 annually.*
2. *Report on diversity of staff, including the percentage of positions and staff budget paid to people of color.*
3. *Report on the percentage of Sunday Offerings that go to organizations with an anti-racist agenda and/or that serve communities of color.*

4. *Consider Unity's anti-racism commitment in the interpretation of the organization's Ends Statements, and how that commitment is implemented in covenant with local communities of color.*
5. *Articulate to the congregation various measures that show the work being done to live out our anti-racism values.*

Another recommendation was made to bolster the existing Policy C in the governing policies – Unity's values statement, which includes the values of “authenticity; generosity of spirit; mutual respect; freedom of thought; and open, broad embrace” – to directly speak to the value of becoming an anti-racist institution. This recommendation is expected to be taken up by the Board for consideration as part of the process of developing new Ends Statements for 2014-2019.

### **III. Congregational, Staff & Volunteer Perspectives**

#### **A. Reflections on responses to the 2012 Unity Congregational Survey**

In 2010 the ARLT developed questions for the annual congregational survey that asked about members' awareness of and involvement in becoming an anti-racist institution. 2012 represented the third year of data collection on these questions.

The total number of families participating in this part of the survey was 250, an increase from the number of participants (207) in the previous year. 50 respondents identified themselves or their families as non-white (25%) and 200 identified themselves or their families as white (75%).

The results from these survey questions are shown in Table 1 on page 7. Overall, the responses continue to lean heavily toward agreement with the statements posed in the questions, as they did in 2011, but there is a slight increase in the number of individuals who disagree, that is, who apparently feel less than satisfied with opportunities for racial healing, for relating across racial boundaries, or activities demonstrating Unity Church's commitment to working with people and communities of color.

Looking at the data a different way – on a 6-point agree/disagree scale (where, for example, a mean score of 4 represents “somewhat agree”) – non-white households *somewhat agreed* with the statement that Unity offers “adequate opportunities for racial healing” (a mean score of 3.96). This number is essentially unchanged from the mean score from the 2011 survey (3.97). This is somewhat lower than the 4.16 registered by white households (down from 4.27 in 2011) when asked whether in the last 12 months they “have grown in understanding of racism and awareness that their racial identity conveys privilege.”

**Table 1: Results from the 2012 Congregational Survey on questions developed by the ARLT**

**If you consider yourself or any of your family members to be a person (people) of color...**

2012 data is presented in plain text with the number of respondents in parentheses (n=number of responses); 2011 data in italicized text	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Somewhat Disagree</b>	<b>Somewhat Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
35. There are adequate opportunities offered for racial healing. (n=50)	2% (1) <i>0%</i>	10% (5) <i>9%</i>	18% (9) <i>24%</i>	<b>36% (18)</b> <b>36%</b>	28% (14) <i>27%</i>	6% (3) <i>18%</i>
36. You are able to authentically relate across racial boundaries within Unity Church or through activities the church promotes. (n=50)	4% (2) <i>0%</i>	8% (4) <i>3%</i>	16% (8) <i>21%</i>	30% (15) <b>48%</b>	<b>38% (19)</b> <i>24%</i>	4% (2) <i>3%</i>
37. In the last 12 months you have been involved in activities that you believe demonstrate Unity Church's commitment to working with people and communities of color. (n=47)	10% (5) <i>3%</i>	21% (10) <i>10%</i>	10% (5) <i>15%</i>	23% (11) <i>23%</i>	<b>27% (13)</b> <b>33%</b>	6% (3) <i>15%</i>

**If you identify yourself and your family as white...**

38. In the last 12 months you have grown in your understanding of racism and your awareness that your racial identity conveys privilege. (n=200)	3% (7) <i>0%</i>	7% (14) <i>9%</i>	11% (22) <i>8%</i>	<b>37% (75)</b> <b>35%</b>	31% (62) <b>37%</b>	10% (20) <i>11%</i>
39. You are able to authentically relate across racial boundaries within Unity Church or through activities the church promotes. (n=198)	3% (6) <i>2%</i>	9% (18) <i>6%</i>	14% (28) <i>14%</i>	<b>35% (70)</b> <b>34%</b>	32% (64) <b>37%</b>	6% (12) <i>7%</i>
40. In the last 12 months you have been involved in activities that you believe demonstrate Unity Church's commitment to working with people and communities of color. (n=198)	7% (14) <i>4%</i>	24% (47) <i>13%</i>	20% (40) <i>23%</i>	<b>27% (53)</b> <b>27%</b>	16% (31) <i>20%</i>	7% (13) <i>15%</i>

White and non-white families both “somewhat agree” on the question of “their ability to relate authentically across racial boundaries within Unity Church” this year. Non-white families reported a mean score of 4.02 (up from 3.97 in 2011 and down from 4.26 in 2010), and white families had a mean score of 4.03 (down from 4.21 in 2011 and 4.11 in 2010).

There was a drop in mean scores for both non-white and white families in the questions relating to “being involved in activities that demonstrate Unity Church’s commitment to working with

people and communities of color.” Non-white families’ score was 3.55, somewhat agree, (down from 4.00 in 2011 and 3.65 in 2010). White families’ score was 3.40, somewhat agree, (down from 3.82 in 2011 and 3.56 in 2010). These numbers do not represent a significant change.

The individual comments in the survey indicate that Unity Church membership contains a broad spectrum of opinion about racism that reflects the larger community. These opinions range from respondents who challenged the existence of white privilege, to those who feel that Unity doesn’t do nearly enough to make itself a more diverse community; from those who expressed support for Unity’s current efforts and gratitude for being able to address issues of race and racism deeply and honestly, to those who expressed their belief that issues of economic and social class divides are the greater barrier to the Beloved Community Unity seeks to become.

## **B. Responses to the ARLT Survey of key church leaders**

In October 2012, a survey was conducted of key leaders in the church to gather stories and accomplishments from Unity’s journey toward becoming an intentionally anti-racist institution, as well as ideas on ways to continue moving forward. The survey was sent to the following groups:

- Executive Team
- Board of Trustees
- Program Staff
- Chairs of Community Outreach Groups
- Leaders of the Welcome Teams
- Members of the Racial Justice Outreach Team
- Members of Affordable Housing Outreach Team
- Members of the Anti-Racism Leadership Team

ARLT is excited about the richness of the comments shared and the inspired ideas that survey participants brought forward in response to these questions. ARLT members noted several themes that emerged from the responses, including:

- a yearning for relationship with neighboring congregations and community members,
- the desire for greater understanding and more education on racism and what it means to be anti-racist,
- interest in more coordination among Unity members and teams participating in this work,
- recognition of increased commitment on the part of the Board of Trustees and the Executive Team, and
- the desire to create a safe space where individuals can “unpack” issues related to race, racism, and how to become anti-racist.

A summary of the responses to the ARLT survey is provided at the end of this document.

#### **IV. ARLT Recommendations for 2012-2013**

1. Determine potential providers and financial commitment involved in conducting an external audit in FY 2014.
2. Research models and examples of anti-racist churches, such as the UU church in Washington DC, and identify what might be learned from the “Welcoming Congregation” efforts.
3. Within the church budget process, propose financial and staff resources to be devoted to anti-racism efforts for FY2014 (beginning in July 2013).
4. Ensure that anti-racism curriculum components are included in more than 25% of Wellspring Wednesday programming.
5. Develop a policy for implementing anti-racism efforts in staffing and in recruitment of Board of Trustees positions, including broad public posting of open positions and outreach efforts to create a racially diverse pool of applicants.
6. Establish a regular safe space for discussions related to becoming anti-racist individuals and institutions

**Appendix 1: Summary of responses to the ARLT survey conducted in October 2012**

The questions asked were:

1. *In your job or volunteer work at Unity, what are some initiatives or efforts related to anti-racism this year (Sept. 2011-Aug. 2012) that you are especially proud of?*
2. *What has happened in the life of the church this year that makes you optimistic about Unity's journey toward becoming a deliberately anti-racist institution?*
3. *What hasn't happened that you would like to see?*
4. *What would you recommend be done in the future to help Unity become an intentionally anti-racist institution?*

#1. <i>Especially proud of?</i>	#2. <i>Makes you optimistic?</i>	Response
7	7	Support to defeat Voter ID amendment
5	7	Retreat held with the Board of Trustees, Executive Team, Staff, ARLT, and Racial Justice Outreach Team
3	6	Programming (e.g., Wellspring Wednesdays, Dane Smith, Rachel's talk on UU history, Rob's classes, R.E. programming on inclusiveness, etc.)
6	1	Requirement for and measurement of contractor's employment of minorities and women
3	3	New Board policy (Policy J)
5	1	Circle of Peace
	5	Sermons, consistency of themes
	5	Board commitment and involvement
2	2	U2 work, which has subsequently been folded into RJOT
3		Congregational readings
2	1	Explanation of diverse and African music
	3	Open and continuing conversation

<b>#1.</b> <i>Especially proud of?</i>	<b>#2.</b> <i>Makes you optimistic?</i>	<b>Response</b>
1	1	MLK Breakfast, Black History Month, Shades of Praise
1	1	Haven't worked with this, not knowledgeable enough to comment
1		Having art from people of color displayed at Unity
	1	Trip to India
	1	Association with MCARI
	1	Not optimistic
	1	Just feels more positive, less contentious
	1	Welcome Teams are aware of ARLT's goals
	1	Executive Team involvement
	1	Ripple effect as more people are aware

<b>#3.</b> <i>Hasn't happened</i>	<b>#4.</b> <i>Recommendations</i>	<b>Response</b>
	6	Keep at it
3	3	Increase dialogue, direct contact with people of color in community (Central Corridor issues & impact on people, community events, etc.)
1	3	Continue or increase programming for adults & children including intersection of race & class, forums, workshops on anti-racism & white privilege, attend film/plays with follow-up discussion
1	2	Sell our religious brand, get to know River of Life or other diverse churches nearby
	3	Support defeat of Voter ID and issues like this
1	2	Find ways to grow the diversity of the congregation
	2	Be more visible in anti-racism stance

#3. Hasn't happened	#4. Recommendations	Response
	2	Look at how Unity resources are used through anti-racist filter and invite congregation input
1	1	Calendar of events associated with anti-racism
	1	Measure progress using a defined set of metrics
	1	Regularly read David Zirin
	1	Employ people of color
	1	Support RJOT taking leadership in racial justice activities
1		Investigate Traces of the Trade film with other churches
	1	Heather Hackman presentations & time to process
	1	Outside auditor / consultant on how to become anti-racist & welcoming
1		Training for more than BOT
	1	Communicate work being done
1		Process to examine what it means to be anti-racist
	1	Annual training of BOT & leaders
1		More diverse worship service (but like as is)
	1	Vendor Audit
1		Team of trained trainers on race
1		Celebrate the diversity that exists
1		ARLT attend Welcome Team Training
1		Continue to create ah-ha moments
1		Unity Reading of "The New Jim Crow"
	1	Focus groups of Unity's people & parents of people of color to find out issues from their perspective
	1	Need to talk / process our discomforts, not intellectualize about it
	1	Weekly dinners for homeless / hungry