

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

**Antiracism Leadership Team  
Annual Report 2008-2009**

**Presented to the**

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

**Church year: September 1, 2008 - August 31, 2009**

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## ***Executive Summary***

During the 2008-2009 church year, Unity took steps to further formalize its commitment to becoming an anti-racist institution. The first and most important was to include a commitment to anti-racism and racial healing on the individual, community, and larger society level in the revision of the church's Ends Statements. The ARLT worked with the Board of Trustees to develop the language expressing this commitment. At the May 2008 annual meeting, the updated Ends Statements were presented and approved by the congregation. The Executive Team's work plan includes many specific actions for implementing the Ends Statements that demonstrate incorporation of an anti-racist view into their work.

A second step was the creation by the Board of Trustees of a charter and formal reporting relationship for the ARLT. The ARLT now officially advises the Board, and its members are appointed by the Board. Four new members of the ARLT were appointed by the Board in 2009. The charter also includes other responsibilities for the ARLT in leading the transformation of Unity into an actively anti-racist institution.

Board of Trustee contributions to the *commUNITY* newsletter highlighted the Board's commitment to antiracism. In December the Board discussed the need for repair for inequities done to communities of color. In January the Board's column in *commUNITY* addressed resistance to intolerance. In February the Board highlighted the new antiracism language contained in the Ends Statements.

People of color were frequently presented as spiritual leaders and sources of wisdom, both in worship and in recommended readings and films. We note the significance of having at Unity Church back to back sermons by African American Unitarian ministers Mark Morrison-Reed and Leon Dunkley in October 2008.

Educational efforts related to anti-racism included a 2-1/2 day analysis of racism training in March 2009. This training is offered so that Unity can meet the expectation that Board members, ARLT members, and other lay leaders in the church have an understanding of racism as a systemic issue. In Religious Education, a six-week session on race was offered in the fall of 2008, a segment that is taught every three years. Nearly every month, Wellspring Wednesday offerings included presentations on racial justice. A highlight of the year was a racism awareness-building Fashion Show for Social Change created and presented by the Tower club. After the show the wearable art was displayed for all to see in the Church's fellowship hall.

Unity has begun to "live-in" to the anti-racist institutional identity adopted by the Board of Trustees. Anti-racism and spiritual healing have been incorporated as a part of the path toward wholeness and spiritual discovery. We note the movement of the church over time on the "Continuum on Becoming an Anti-Racist Multicultural Institution."

But questions remain regarding how to make this anti-racist identity our own and become effective partners in combating racism in the community. These questions include:

- How can Unity best provide regular training presenting the definition and analysis of systemic racism?

- How can we incorporate anti-racism into religious education, adult education, membership classes, covenant groups, and Community Outreach Ministry Teams?
- What might the institution do to grow the racial and ethnic diversity of the congregation?
- What’s the best way to have regular opportunities for facilitated conversations about race, racism, and white privilege?
- Can we organize people into a network of anti-racism activists, building networks among and beyond Unity Church members and friends?

Some of these questions will form the agenda for future activities of the ARLT.

## ***Part One: The Anti-Racism Leadership Team’s activities***

### **A. Ends Statements/Identity Documents**

After the Anti-Racism Leadership Team (ARLT) presented the institutional audit of Unity Church’s history of race relations to the Board of Trustees and the Executive Team in August 2005, the Board passed the following resolution:

“The Board of Trustees of Unity Church, recognizing that anti-racism is implicit in the current Ends Statements, directs the Executive Team to integrate an anti-racist perspective into its work and include those efforts in its regular reporting. Further, the Board believes that it is important to explicitly state Unity Church’s commitment to being an anti-racist institution and will work toward that goal.”

In the spring of 2008, the congregation discussed new Ends Statements — statements expressing how we want to be in the world — using the appreciative inquiry process. At the May 2008 annual meeting, the updated Ends Statements were presented and approved by the congregation. These statements included a commitment to antiracism and racial healing on the individual, community, and larger society level.

### **B. Governance/Leadership**

After the adoption of the updated Ends Statements, the ARLT thought it was appropriate for the team to have a more formalized relationship to the governance structure of Unity Church. Team members developed a proposed “charter” that included having new team members nominated in consultation with the ARLT and appointed by the Board. A group of two ARLT members and two trustees discussed the proposed language and made a recommendation to the Board, which approved the charter. In the charter, the ARLT is charged with the following responsibilities:

- Advise the Board of Trustees in creating policies about institutional practices to further the church in living out its commitment to anti-racism and racial healing in covenant with people and communities of color.
- Work with the Executive Team to support the implementation of these practices and related programming.
- Promote/organize opportunities for congregants to understand the systemic nature of racism and to engage in transformational racial healing.

- Shape and maintain shared responsibility for creating an institutional environment that supports anti-racist accountability.
- Assess and report annually to the Board of Trustees, the Executive Team, and the congregation on the progress being made in the journey toward becoming an actively anti-racist institution in covenant with communities of color.
- Regularly scan for best practices with regard to transforming our institution to one that is actively anti-racist.

The ARLT began the 2008-2009 church year with only four members, and chose to wait to add additional members pending the completion of the charter process. A nominating committee was formed, made up of one current ARLT member, one current Board member, and two additional members with experience on the ARLT and the Board of Trustees. The recruiting of new team members was similar to the Board process, with a public call for applications and an interview of all candidates.

Since 2007 the ARLT has had quarterly liaison meetings with the Board of Trustees as a way for the two groups to be in relationship and to be aware of each other's work. With the change in the church fiscal year and the board's meeting schedule, the schedule for these meetings also needed to change. In addition, the change in the relationship between the ARLT and the church leadership necessitates a rethinking of this initiative. Discussions are underway for developing a process for deepening the relationship and facilitating communication between the ARLT and the Board.

### **C. Training/Team Membership/Team Life**

The Board appointed three new team members in January 2009: Alana Howey, Sarah Pradt, and Segundo Velasquez. Following the 2-1/2 day analysis of racism training in March, two additional members were appointed: Allen Giles, who was one of the founding team members, and Mari McCauley. Segundo recently resigned due to the press of other obligations which limited his ability to participate.

The team organized a two and a half day analysis of racism training in March 2009. This training is required for all ARLT members. It is also offered in order to meet the expectation that Board members, ARLT members, and other lay leaders in the church have an understanding of racism as a systemic issue. We worked with the Unitarian Universalist Association's (UUA) office of Congregational Services to bring in one of their trainers as a co-presenter with a trainer from the Minnesota Collaborative Anti-Racism Initiative (MCARI), with the intent of building a stronger relationship with the UUA's anti-racism work. Unfortunately, the UUA trainer cancelled at the last minute due to illness.

An invitation to attend was sent to almost 300 people, including Board members, community outreach team and welcome team members, worship associates, church staff, Tower Club members and their parents, and others who had previously shown interest. These invitations were followed up with phone calls to a portion of the list. Ultimately, 24 individuals attended the training, including several members of the Board of Trustees.

Providing training opportunities for congregants and lay leaders, and the funding to make them available, continues to be a challenge. Our goal would be to offer the 1-day introductory workshop,

which presents the definition and overview of systemic racism, at least annually, and the two and a half day analysis of racism training every two years.

After the March training event, two follow-up gatherings were held to have a conversation about people's thoughts about the training and some possible next steps. The discussion was lively and good ideas were generated. Follow-through on the part of the team has not been as timely as we would like, given that we were focusing on incorporating new team members.

The team continues to struggle with developing effective ways to incorporate new members into the work of the team. Because some of the team members have questioned the usefulness of caucusing, this practice has been on hold since January.

The team currently uses a model of "shared leadership," with team members taking turns facilitating team meetings and recording the notes. This has worked well for managing the meetings, but lacks something in the areas of keeping the big picture in mind and being strategic about the team's work. After several months of feeling stuck, the team organized a retreat to focus on team development and set some action priorities. The team has recently created a leadership structure that will enable us to be more effective.

#### **D. Religious Education**

It is part of the team's mission statement that an anti-racist perspective will be integrated into the religious education curricula in some fashion. It has been a challenge to figure out how to assess how we're doing in this area. Last year, Kerri Meyer, the Director of Religious Education, encouraged members of the team to experience the curriculum and review the materials directly. A six-week session on race was offered in the fall of 2008, a segment that is taught every three years.

In response to Kerri's invitation, one team member taught a module of the race curriculum. That member gave feedback on the experience and the curriculum to Kerri, including the following:

It was a challenge to adapt the curriculum to a different group of children each week, each group of a different age. As white adults, we don't have much practice talking about race in a thoughtful way, and it tends to make us uncomfortable and worry about making a mistake. There are many questions about how an "understanding of the dynamics of racism commensurate with their grade level" can and should be incorporated into a religious education program that meets once a week for a little over an hour.

The team has also discussed having a conversation/focus group with people involved with the religious education program — teachers, parents, staff, and potentially children — with the intent of grappling with the question of how we talk about race, racial healing, and our commitment to anti-racism with our children.

### ***Part Two: Report of Worship, Communications, Board and Executive Team and other Activities of Unity Church during the 2008-2009 Church Year***

As in previous ARLT Annual Reports, we assess the Church year using our developing anti-racist lens.

We reviewed services, projects, and communications, looking for the five themes in the evolving ARLT lens:

1. Acknowledgement of white privilege as a reality in our world.
2. Support for the “whole self” at Unity Church. The term “whole self” refers to the idea that we are all wounded or imperfect. Our hope is that our church community will become one in which people know that they are welcome here as they are, with their woundedness, their anger, and their failures as well as with their talents, strengths and accomplishments.
3. People of color recognized as spiritual leaders and sources of wisdom.
4. Direct references to anti-racism work, and anti-racist action.
5. Unity’s involvement in the community outside of its walls.

Recognizing that an antiracist institution intentionally and affirmatively sees racial and cultural differences as assets, we take this opportunity to identify activities and programs that occurred during the Church Year that relate to these themes as seen through our evolving antiracist lens.

#### **A. Review of 2008-2009 Sermons**

*Acknowledgement of white privilege as a reality in our world.*

Privilege was seldom mentioned in sermons during this year, and when it was, it was not specifically white privilege as seen through an anti-racist lens.

*Support for the “whole self” at Unity:*

The fact that we are all imperfect was quite often part of the worship service. Examples include acknowledging that we are all capable of evil, the need to admit wrong-doing before forgiveness is possible, and the story of a Unitarian pirate seeking redemption.

*People of color recognized as spiritual leaders and sources of wisdom:*

Again this year, a person of color was frequently part of the worship service. Generally this was Hallman ministerial intern Leon Dunkley, an African American, who was an important part of several services, preached a number of times, and led most of the chapel services at Wellspring Wednesdays. Rev. Mark Morrison-Reed, a UU minister and author who is African American, preached in October.

*Readings and references to people of color* were used frequently in the services. The references included well-known spiritual leaders such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Bishop Desmond Tutu and Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh; writers, artists, and musicians such as Langston Hughes, John Coltrane, and Kate Rushin; and leaders from justice movements such as John Lewis and the East Timor Truth & Reconciliation Commission.

*Direct references to anti-racism work, and anti-racism action.*

There were direct references to racism or anti-racism work in at least one sermon every month. The majority of references were to examples of resistance. Some references were to what we need to do to combat racism.

*Unity’s involvement in the community outside of its walls.*

Unity has continued the practice of giving away a majority of the weekly offering, and each Sunday the recipient of the offering is described. References are also sometimes made to activities with

community partners. For example, ten Unity teens spent the night on the street in Minneapolis as participants in a program sponsored by Plymouth Congregational Church to help understand the lives and needs of homeless youth.

There were a number of references to the Central Corridor light rail project and the potential impacts, both positive and negative, that related development will have on the surrounding community. A number of meetings were held at Unity to explore roles the church might play in supporting communities before and during development.

## **B. Other Worship Activities**

Each year as a part of the pledge renewal canvass, Unity Church invites a prominent Unitarian Universalist leader to participate in church activities and to preach the sermon on the Sunday celebrating the pledge canvass. This past year, African American Unitarian Universalist minister Dr. Mark Morrison-Reed, author of *Black Pioneers in a White Denomination*, visited the church for several days of activities in October. Those activities included meeting with ARLT members who worked on the historical audit of Unity Church, holding a leadership workshop on Saturday, reading from his new book, *In Between: Memoir of an Integration Baby* and preaching the sermon “Dragged Kicking and Screaming Into Heaven.”

The Hallman Ministerial Intern for 2008-2009 was Leon Dunkley, an African American student in his last year at Starr King School for the Ministry. The Sunday after the Rev. Dr. Mark Morrison-Reed preached, Leon Dunkley preached the sermon “Tripping On My Own Wings and Flying.” We note the significance of sermons on consecutive Sundays by African American Unitarian Universalist ministers.

At most services, the worship leader is assisted by a Worship Associate, a member of the congregation. One of the Worship Associates for this church year is an African American, Allen Giles.

We believe that adding the brief greeting of neighbors in the pew at the beginning of each service brings a warmth and a connection to others that is part of helping us all live into practicing radical hospitality.

## **C. Activities Reported in the Unity Church newsletter *CommUNITY***

Unity Church newsletter *commUNITY* visually portrayed the religious leadership and spiritual wisdom of people of color by displaying the photos of Kao Kalia Yang, Rev. Mark Morrison-Reed and Leon Dunkley.

Monthly worship themes announced in *commUNITY* provided focus and opportunities for many individuals, leaders and lay people to share spiritual wisdom. Spiritual growth was promoted in the text, and in the recommended films and readings that frequently included materials either written by or about people of color.

Films recommended that dealt with racial issues: *Amazing Grace* (about slavery); *Crash*; *Long Days Night* (South Africa); *Shawshank Redemption*; *Ruby Bridges*; *Au Revoir, les Enfants*; *Fiddler on the Roof*; *The Color Purple*; and *Soul Food*.



Books were recommended each month with each worship theme as well as through the Library Team column, Family section, and book clubs. These books provided opportunity for individuals to deepen their understanding of other cultures and individual struggles. Some of these books or authors included: *Malcolm X*; Desmond Tutu; playwright Tony Kushner; Rabbi Harold Kushner; José Saramago and his *Gospel According to Jesus Christ*; Chief Jake Swamp; Kenyan Wangari Maathai and the book *Wangari's Trees of Peace*; *The Autobiography of Mahatma Gandhi*; *Being Peace*, *Energy of Prayer* and others books by Thich Nhat Hanh; *No More!: Stories and Songs of Slave Resistance*; *The Soul is Here for Its Own Joy: Sacred Poems from Many Cultures*; *They Dance in the Sky: Native American Star Myths*; *The Late Homecomer: a Hmong Family Memoir* by Kao Kalia Yang; *Race Matters* by Cornel West; and *Barack Obama: Son of Promise* by Nikki Grimes.

In February Karen Hering wrote about diversity in prayer with references to Rumi and Joy Harjo, poet and a member of the Mvskoke (Creek) Nation. Black History Month was promoted with articles by Leon Dunkley and the Library team. Leon wrote about Martin Luther King's six dreams. The library team quoted President Barack Obama and recommended books. Leon discussed the Obama victory from his personal perspective in December.

Our ministers' "Just Words" column in *commUNITY* also addressed racial issues: in November Rob discussed diversity in the Beloved Community. Sources of wisdom cited included the Dalai Lama, Mahatma Gandhi and African American UU minister Mwalimu Imara. In March Rob wrote about hats and Sunday "dress code" of some church-going African Americans and discussed what message is sent when people dress down for church.

To increase awareness of antiracism in our congregation, the ARLT placed several articles in *commUNITY*. In October the ARLT addressed the Ends Statements along with the institutional audit results and the history of the ARLT. In January the ARLT explained the "Continuum on Becoming an Anti-Racist Multicultural Institution," and in March the ARLT invited congregants to participate in the two and a half day antiracism training conducted by MCARI.

During the year several art exhibits were highlighted in *commUNITY* that brought attention to issues of race: "I Love a Parade" featuring art by 11 formerly homeless women; Bill Nelson and Jane Weis' photographs and paintings of China; the Tower Club's "Fashion Show for Social Change." Susan Armington's "Water and Thought" display also promoted the Suitcase Project for community building across differences of language and culture. Other events held at Unity Church also made direct references to antiracism issues. Joan and Segundo Velásquez spoke on ethical dilemmas in international social justice in November. Kao Kalia Young spoke about her book *The Late Homecomer: a Hmong Family Memoir* in April.

The Board of Trustees made several contributions to the *commUNITY* which highlighted the Board's commitment to antiracism. In December the Board discussed the need to repair injustices committed by whites on communities of color. In January the Board's column addressed resistance to intolerance, and in February the Board highlighted the new antiracism language in the Ends Statements.

The December *commUNITY* announced that the Board of Trustees had voted to charter the ARLT, making it an institutional entity that will observe, report, and advise the Board on fundamental church structure and action.

#### **D. Wellspring Wednesday Activities**

“Wellspring Wednesday” gatherings offered opportunities to grow in our understanding of antiracism, and promoted discussions within the congregation about this topic:

- a) In the fall, the teens discussed the rebuilding of New Orleans; Principal Lori Simon of Webster school spoke about opportunities for and relationship between the school next door and Unity Church. The Junior-High group discussed the Los Amigos Program Report.
- c) In the winter, Benjamin Mchie, Executive Director of the African American Registry, spoke on the topic of “Building Leaders for the Community.” There were two sessions on white privilege called “What’s Love got to Do with It? White People Working for Racial Justice.” There was a presentation called: “My Journey to Mae Sot: Lessons about Refugees (Thailand and Burma).” Jim Farrell spoke on “Abraham Lincoln and the Politics of Hope.”
- f) Spring offerings included presentations by with Mission Haiti Inc. on conditions in Haiti. St. Paul City Council member Melvin Carter talked about the challenges and opportunities related to the proposed light rail between St. Paul and Minneapolis. Imran Ahmad, author of *The Path Unimagined*, who emigrated to England from Pakistan as a toddler and grew up as a Muslim in London, spoke on the rehumanization of the Christian and Muslim worlds.

#### **E. Other Activities Deserving Special Notice**

After many years of quiet presence in our neighborhood and community this year we proudly announced our identity to our neighbors, and anyone driving by the Church, with a sign placed near the Holly Avenue - Grotto Street corner.

After attending a summer program with Penumbra Theatre Company (a celebrated and nationally recognized African American repertory theatre company), Tower Club member Nathan Eckstein proposed a novel idea building on what he had learned at Penumbra: a fashion show about racism using wearable art. The Fashion Show for Social Change was put on by the Tower Club. After the show, the art was displayed for all to see in the Church’s fellowship hall. This was a powerful, direct expression of antiracism and awareness-building.

The Racial Justice Outreach Team joined with the Unity Church Affordable Housing Team to sponsor a New Orleans Pilgrimage. Rev. Carl Walker of St. Paul’s Morning Star Baptist, and Rev. Ron Smith of Unity Baptist, both predominantly African American churches, joined Unity members and staff for the pilgrimage. Soyini Guyton, executive director of the Summit University Living at Home Block Nurse program (SULAH) also participated.

The Racial Justice Team also worked with members of other area churches to organize and plan another “Faith Float” for the Rondo Day Parade in July. These meetings were not only a time for planning, but an opportunity to connect across boundaries of class, race and religious convictions. As a result, the second annual “Faith Float” included more congregations and was even more successful than the first year.

#### **F. Reports of the Executive Team**

The Executive Team (ET) provides monthly reports to the Board of Trustees. They include program ends and outcomes, financial condition and staff changes. The following are selected relevant

highlights from the ET Reports. Events or activities discussed previously in this report are mentioned only briefly.

The ET observed that the youth have engaged in interfaith work connected with the summer conference “Leadership Education Advancing Democracy and Diversity,” and a service/learning opportunity about poverty.

The ET reported that the Racial Justice Outreach team, in addition to planning the Faith Float and the work trip/pilgrimage to New Orleans, are providing support for the Unity/New Hope Baptist Church relationship. The ET also discussed the establishment of the Saint Paul Interfaith Coalition for Racial Justice.

### **The Executive Team’s 2008-09 Annual Work Plan**

The Executive Team (ET) presented a work plan in its February Report. It is worth citing at length how the team’s work plan sought to incorporate an antiracist lens and action into its implementation of the Ends Statements. (The points below do not necessarily represent all the ways in which this was planned to happen, or did happen.) Bold text below indicates the Ends Statements; bullet points in italics are chosen from among the ET’s plans, and some of these points have been edited for brevity or in retrospect.

#### **Ends Statement #1**

**Within – The people of Unity Church – Unitarian have a deeply meaningful, transforming religious experience which includes:**

- **A rich and diverse worship life that challenges, nurtures and inspires.**
  - *Devise a process for informing the congregation about how our worship life is shaped by people from marginalized communities and experiences. When presenting each month’s worship themes in the newsletter, we include resources for people who want to deepen their understanding of the theme. The resources are chosen from a variety of traditions and perspectives.*
- **Compassionate pastoral care in times of joy, sorrow and transition.**
  - *We have made changes to the Embracing Meditation to be more inclusive of issues that people are dealing with.*
- **Spiritual and theological deepening through both personal and family-based religious practice and ritual.**
  - *Joseph LaFerla has drafted a "How-to" manual for Community Outreach Teams to use for recruiting teens to their teams.*
- **Lifelong opportunities for growth, learning, engagement and racial healing.**
  - *Further develop the relationship with New Hope Baptist and opportunities growing out of the Shades of Praise visit in April of 2008.*
  - *Facilitate and encourage relationships with moral owners, with emphasis on immediate neighbors and the Central Corridor.*

#### **Ends Statement #2**

**Among – Unity Church Unitarian is a radically hospitable, spiritually vital and supportive community where:**

- **People of all ages feel welcome and connected across identities including race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ability, politics and education.**
  - *Consider developing rituals and using symbols that transcend race, class, etc.*
  - *Provide a liturgical response in the event of a community crisis.*

- *Expand anti- racism, anti-oppression, multiculturalism work in programs and with leadership teams.*
- *Structure a conversation with the Board around the implications of the tension between specific identity and universal embrace.*
- *Pay more attention to multicultural visual arts as visual symbols of welcome.*
- **Shared ministry is actively encouraged and the circles of power, opportunity and access are intentionally widened.**
- *Support the Board in having a visible presence on a regular basis where they can talk with people about policies, vision, etc.*
- *Encourage people to “Find Your Voice / Change the World” through a series of workshops.*

### **Ends Statement #3**

**Beyond – Unity Church Unitarian is a visible leader and partner, making a positive impact in our neighborhood and in the world through:**

- **A commitment to anti-racism and racial healing in covenant with people and communities of color.**
  - *Wellspring Wednesday programming is more in tune with the church Ends Statements.*
  - *Convene and support the Interfaith Coalition for Racial Justice. The Coordinator of Community Outreach Ministries continues to attend the meetings of the Coalition and share that information with appropriate outreach ministry teams.*
  - *Pursue partnerships in the redevelopment of the Central Corridor by bringing together outreach ministry teams (Affordable Housing, Racial Justice, Restorative Justice and Green Sanctuary) and groups that are working in the Central Corridor for purposes of developing a shared values vision, sharing information and actions.*
  - *Provide pastoral care to non-Unity neighbors.*
  - *Re-examine our gift-giving relationship with Model Cities.*
  - *Deepen and integrate our New Orleans partnerships by planning an interfaith, inter-racial pilgrimage to New Orleans.*
- **Advocating in the public arena for liberal religious values in response to prejudice, injustice and oppression:**
  - *Engage community outreach teams and congregation members in considering a trial membership in Isaiah, which works for economic and racial justice.*
  - *Where possible, participate in lobbying efforts aligned with our Community Outreach teams. Teens to participate in Outfront's "Just Fair" Lobby Day in April. In addition, several Tower Club members will participate in "Night on the Street" with the Plymouth Church Neighborhood Foundation in April, which ends with a letter-writing campaign.*
  - *Develop a series of programs to explore issues raised when the church and its members get involved in global health, development and social justice issues.*
- **Proclaiming the transforming power of our faith;**
  - *Provide outreach into the neighborhood through publicity, positive personal contact and invitation. A small group of Unity members went caroling in December to neighbors who are served by SULAH.*
- **Working with congregations and institutions around shared values.**
  - *Unity teens have been involved with the interfaith programs of the Saint Paul Area Council of Churches.*
  - *Strengthen our collaboration with SULAH.*
  - *Convene and support the Interfaith Coalition for Racial Justice.*
- **Acting and investing in environmentally responsible and sustainable ways.**
  - *Work in partnership with others to help “green” the Central Corridor.*
  - *Encourage work at the intersection of environmentalism and racial justice.*
  - *Conduct a vendor audit to screen for environmental responsibility.*

The April ET report mentions plans to host a regional training weekend for the Leadership Education Advancing Democracy and Diversity (LEADD) project, a training that would happen over MLK weekend in January of 2010.

Project Home ended the month of May with many Unity Church volunteers serving as hosts to Ramsey County families temporarily without homes. To date, this is the largest number of volunteers for the Unity Church Project Home since it started in May of 2000.

Unity Church people serving as mentors for 5th and 6th grade children at the newly named “Michelle and Barack Obama Community Service Learning Elementary” (formerly “Webster Magnet Elementary”) came together recently to share stories of their experiences and to offer planning and recruitment suggestions for the next school year.

In order to better present the work of the outreach ministry teams to potential new church members, the Coordinator of Community Outreach Ministries will produce a short video presentation for the “Finding Yourself at Unity” membership classes that will feature the stories of church outreach ministries.

### **G. Minutes of the Board of Trustees**

The following are selected relevant highlights from the Board of Trustees (BOT) minutes applying our developing antiracist lens. Again, activities and events mentioned above have been omitted.

At the Board’s September meeting Pat Haff spoke about the vitality and commitment of the community outreach work. The board is committed to linking with moral owners within and beyond the walls of the church. A task force was formed to work on details and report to the Board at the October meeting.

The Board passed a resolution regarding the New Orleans Pilgrimage at its meeting in January, resolving that Unity Church’s 2009 pilgrimage to New Orleans is considered an official project of the church. This resolution allows contributions to the Church for this purpose to be tax-deductible.

Soyini Guyton discussed the mission of the SULA Block Nurse program at a board meeting. SULA, housed at Unity, works to enable seniors to live independently in their homes as long as possible. It serves seniors in the Summit-University and Frogtown neighborhoods. Unity Church provides support through a Sunday offering and caroling, and hopes to be able to offer spiritual support to clients as well.

Rob mentioned that in the Central Corridor conversation, asset-mapping, a method used by community organizers, is being explored. The notion of the big dream-- what we want to be and how we want to grow — would lend itself to being useful at Unity as well.

There was also a discussion of evaluation tools, including the congregational survey. The purpose of the survey is to understand the transformational experience in the church held up against the Ends Statements.

At the May Board meeting Rob stated that will he join the Board of the Gateway Educational Foundation, a group that makes docudramas about the civil rights movement and that will purchase the Boynton House. One of the rooms will be dedicated to the memory of UU minister James Reeb.

### ***Part Three: Becoming an Antiracist Institution***

#### ***The Way Forward, Observations, and Questions based on the 2008-2009 Church Year***

##### **A. “Living Up” to the New Antiracist Identity**

The 2008-2009 church year was the first year in which Unity as an institution began to “live-in” or “live-up” to the antiracist institutional identity adopted by the Board of Trustees. Antiracism and racial healing have been incorporated as a part of the path toward wholeness and spiritual discovery. Two particularly significant events are the creation of a more formal role and relationship between the Board and the ARLT, and the incorporation of ways to implement the racial healing and antiracist aims of the Ends Statement into the Executive Team’s annual Work Plan.

##### **B. What might be some of the components of “institutionalizing” antiracism?**

- A clear organizational role for antiracism, defined by the policies and limitations of the board.
- Affirmative action policy and procedure.
- Financial support—for example, funding to support activists attending General Assembly, Crossroads Advanced Organizer event, visiting other congregations or organizations, and for visits by experts/advisors.
- A budget to support offering a 1-day workshop presenting definitions and analyses of systemic racism at least yearly; and an in-depth analysis training at least every other year.
- Religious Education, Adult Ed, membership classes, covenant groups, Community Outreach Ministry Teams all incorporate antiracism as appropriate.
- Increased racial and ethnic diversity of the congregation: identifying what the institution might do to make this happen.
- Institutional support for regular gatherings of people of color (resources to make this happen)
- Regular opportunities for facilitated conversations about race, racism, and white privilege
- Support for a network of anti-racism activists, and the building of networks among and beyond Unity Church members and friends.

##### **C. Connecting with others within Unity Church-Unitarian**

After review of our research and findings for the annual report, the ARLT has made the following determinations, in order to better fulfill the leadership capacity of the Team.

1. The ARLT needs to establish better communication with various groups within the church, including the Executive Team, the Worship Team, the Board of Trustees, the Racial Justice Team and other Community Outreach Ministry Teams, and the congregation as a whole. Establishing formal and informal means of doing so is a team priority.
2. Unity congregants have a desire for more conversation about race and racial healing. This desire is clear in the enthusiasm of the many church members and friends who attended the “Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner” antiracism dialogue and meal sponsored by the ARLT in April 2008, the excitement around the Tower Club’s anti-racism fashion show, and the high level of

interest in the workshops on white privilege and on “The Color of Wealth.” In January 2009, there was a two-part series at Wellspring Wednesday on race and white privilege, facilitated by Lisa Albrecht from the University of Minnesota. Both sessions were very well attended and participants were struck by the excerpts shown from the film “Mirrors of Privilege: Making Whiteness Visible.” Responding to requests, the ARLT sponsored a showing of the entire film, followed by a thoughtful discussion. Several people were interested in having more regular opportunities to discuss race and white privilege.

The ARLT will continue to develop, as well as coordinate with other church entities and programs, opportunities to deepen the conversation throughout the church year.

3. The Team feels strongly that there is an opportunity to broaden recognition of our diverse sources of spiritual wisdom, particularly where it is most broadly and visibly utilized – in worship service reading selections. The ARLT will develop an appropriate way to make note and communicate cultural information on these sources.
4. To function better as both a coordinator and monitor of the church’s AR initiatives, the Team plans to begin soliciting the needs/wants of various outreach groups. We are in planning stages of initiating focus groups and other methods of conversation to help us determine priorities for our work.
5. The ARLT and the Racial Justice Ministry team were invited to meet with the Tower Club to talk about the work these groups are doing on the journey toward being an anti-racist institution. The question was raised about youth involvement in the ARLT. We agreed to explore other ways that youth could be involved with the team besides being a member.

We are challenged to find ways to engage other people and groups, including our youth, in the work of the ARLT and Unity in our efforts. The team is working to institute a structure and process that can include the input and involvement of more people.

6. The ARLT must find ways to let the congregation at large know more about the work and activities of the Team and the church as an institution. Many in the congregation may remain unaware of our progress. The Team intends to intensify efforts to communicate the analysis of systemic racism, white privilege and its effects, and the continuum on becoming an anti-racist organization.
7. Following the chartering of the Team this year, we are looking at what effect this has on the relationship of the ARLT to the Board of Trustees. The ARLT and BOT are in the process of establishing regular formal and informal methods of communicating, advising and interacting.

#### **D. Observations on progress**

Since January, 2003, Unity Church-Unitarian has officially been on a journey of identity transformation. At that time, the ARLT was commissioned to “lead a process that will transform the identity of Unity Church into one that is actively anti-racist in its stance in the world.” This past year, the congregation adopted a set of new Ends Statements in which that journey is embedded throughout.

The Continuum on Becoming an Anti-Racist Multicultural Institution, a tool used by MCARI, is one of our benchmarks of progress toward becoming an actively anti-racist institution. The Continuum has the following six stages, each with a list of indicators:

1. Exclusive A Segregated Institution	2. Passive A "Club" Institution	3. Symbolic Change A Multicultural Institution	4. Identity Change An Anti-Racist Institution	5. Structural Change A Transforming Institution	6. Fully Inclusive A Transformed Institution in a Transformed Society
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In the audit, the team determined that Unity Church was established in 1872 as a "Club" institution, or Stage 2. In 2003 at the first 2-1/2 day training, attended by 10 team members and 24 congregation members, the group put Unity between Stage 2 and Stage 3. In the fall of 2005, there was a second 2-1/2 day training. That group thought the church had moved to the edge of Stage 3 and was poised to cross into Stage 4. At a team retreat in September 2009, the team put the church squarely in Stage 4.

Stage 4 represents an anti-racist institution with an identity change. Some of the markers of stage 4 include

- develops intentional identity as an "anti-racist institution"
- develops analysis of systemic racism
- new consciousness of institutionalized white power and privilege
- growing understanding of racism as barrier to effective diversity
- increasing commitment to dismantle racism and eliminate inherent white advantage
- sponsors anti-racism training programs
- begins to develop accountability to racially oppressed communities
- anti-racism efforts inform institutional response to other social oppressions: classism, sexism, heterosexism, ageism, etc.

The new Ends Statements and increasing efforts to be a positive presence in the larger community are all positive steps. Learning edges for the institution are

- developing a heightened consciousness of institutionalized white power and privilege and looking at structures and culture that maintain it,
- building an institutional life that reflects full participation and shared power with diverse racial, cultural and economic groups, and
- creating a sense of restored community, a "holy" community, of mutual caring.





# Continuum on Becoming an Anti-Racist Multicultural Institution

Racial and cultural differences seen as deficits.



Racial and cultural differences are tolerated



Racial and cultural differences are seen as assets

*MONOCULTURAL*



*MULTICULTURAL*



*ANTI-RACIST*



*ANTI-RACIST MULTICULTURAL*

## 1. EXCLUSIVE A Segregated Institution

- Intentionally and publicly enforces racist status quo throughout institution.
- Intentionally and publicly excludes or segregates African Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans.
- Institutionalization of racism includes formal policies and practices, teachings, and decision-making on all levels.
- Usually has similar intentional policies and practices toward other socially oppressed groups such as women, disabled, LGBT, Two-Thirds World citizens, and so forth.

## 2. PASSIVE A "Club" Institution

- Continues to intentionally maintain white power and privilege through its formal policies and practices, teachings, and decision-making on all levels of institutional life.
- Tolerant of limited number of people of color with "proper" perspective and credentials.
- May still secretly limit or exclude people of color, in contradiction to public policies.
- Often declares: "We don't have a problem."

## 3. SYMBOLIC CHANGE A Multicultural Institution

- Makes official policy pronouncements regarding multicultural diversity.
  - Sees itself as "non-racist" institution with open doors to people of color.
  - Carries out intentional inclusiveness efforts, recruiting "someone of color" on committees, office or professional staff.
  - Expanding view of diversity may include other socially oppressed groups such as disabled, elderly and children, LGBT, Two-Thirds World citizens, and so forth.
- But...**
- "Not those who make "waves."
  - Little or no contextual change in culture, policies, and decision-making.
  - Is still relatively unaware of continuing patterns of privilege, paternalism, and control.

## 4. IDENTITY CHANGE An Anti-Racist Institution

- Develops intentional identity as an "anti-racist institution"
  - Develops analysis of systemic racism
  - New consciousness of institutionalized white power and privilege
  - Growing understanding of racism as barrier to effective diversity
  - Increasing commitment to dismantle racism and eliminate inherent white advantage.
  - Sponsors anti-racism training programs
  - Begins to develop accountability to racially oppressed communities
  - Anti-racism efforts inform institutional response to other social oppressions: classism, sexism, heterosexism, ageism, etc.
- But...**
- Institutional structures and culture that maintain white power and privilege remain intact and relatively untouched

## 5. STRUCTURAL CHANGE A Transforming Institution

- Commits to process of intentional institutional restructuring, based on anti-racist analysis and identity
- Audits and restructures all aspects of institutional life to ensure full participation of people of color, including their world-view, cultures, and lifestyles
- Implements structures, policies, and practices with inclusive decision-making and other forms of power-sharing on all levels of the institution's work
- Commits to struggle to dismantle racism in the wider community and builds clear lines of accountability to racially oppressed communities
- Anti-racist multicultural diversity becomes an institutionalized asset
- Redefines and rebuilds all relationships and activities in society, based on anti-racist commitments and accountability

## 6. FULLY INCLUSIVE A Transformed Institution in a Transforming Society

- Institution's life reflects full participation and mutual power with diverse racial, cultural and economic groups in determining its mission, structure, constituency, policies and practices
- Full participation in decisions that shape the institution; inclusion of diverse cultures, lifestyles, and interests
- A sense of restored community and mutual caring
- Allies with others in combating all forms of social oppression
- Future vision and institutional action towards a wider community that has overcome systemic racism