

Racial Justice Coordinator NY Conference Annual Report 2022-23

Programming

- Collaborated with a team of clergy to develop and rollout the Culturally Responsive Ministry Training (CRMT) for Clergy. Co-facilitated the program four times and led the last hour (the white affinity group portion) during two additional sessions. A total of 120 clergy participated in the CRMTs that I co-facilitated. Additional CRMT sessions were also led by other facilitators.
- Co-developed a specialized version of the CRMT for Committees on Ministry and co-facilitated the session with Rev. Dr. Marsha Williams.
- Offered three programs for five congregations in the Western Association after the mass shooting in Buffalo. The sessions focused on the following:
 - History of Racism
 - Micro-aggressions
 - Reparations
- Began collaborating with Rev. Jason Boyd, pastor of First Congregational UCC in Norwich to have his congregation partner with other local congregations for a year-plus-long journey that will involve liberation listening, shared learning through the New and Right Spirit “Let’s Talk Race” program, and shared community vision-casting and then “living into” the vision. We anticipate at least five congregations, including First Congregational UCC, Norwich, to engage with this program.

Community Presentations

- Offered a program titled, “Facing Racism with Faith”, at the Spiritual Renewal Center in Syracuse in collaboration with Rev. Dr. Marsha Williams. There were 25 people who participated in this ecumenical program.
- Led a program, “Building Bridges by Embracing Diversity” for the Adoptive and Foster Family Coalition of New York. Thirty people participated.

Book Studies

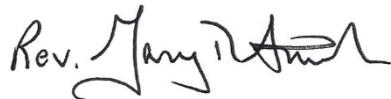
- This year’s book discussions centered voices of color to give a broader perspective of cultural and lived experience. The books used were written by people from the following cultural backgrounds: African American, Moroccan, Indigenous, Hispanic, and Korean. In the eight book discussions, 125 people participated.
- The following books were used this year:
 - *Loneliest Americans* by Jay Caspian Kang
 - *The Sum of Us* by Heather McGhee
 - *Dog Whistle Politics* by Ian Haney Lopez
 - *Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates
 - *Undocumented Americans* by Karla Cornejo Villavicencio
 - *How the Word Is Passed* by Clint Smith
 - *Conditional Citizens* by Laila Lalami
 - *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer

Other

- Participated in a meeting with Rev. Dr. Marsha Williams and the Kentucky-Indiana Conference to discuss the racial justice work of the New York Conference, and to share ideas about programming and best practices.
- Facilitated a Racial Justice Working Group at Plymouth Congregational UCC in Syracuse. In that capacity I collaborated with church members to develop three “Action Teams” that are currently working on actions and programming related to antiracism. Approximately 35 people comprise the three “Action Teams.” The focus of the “Action Teams” are as follows:
 - African American Music – working to bring African American musician and singer, Kim Harris, to Syracuse for a public learning program on the history and meaning of African American music.
 - Art and Race – working to incorporate more inclusive signage for the church and to partner with a local artist who will create a work of art related to race that will be shared with the community.
 - Reparations – working to educate people about this challenging topic and engage in the process of re-developing the NYS Route 81 corridor.
- Met with the Cortland LGBTQ Center (along with Rev. Dr. Marsha Williams) to prepare for the next CRMT module.

NOTE: This work involved more than 100 volunteer hours for the UCC-NY Conference.

Submitted by:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rev. Gary T. Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rev. Gary T. Smith, Racial Justice Coordinator, NY Conference, UCC