

Racial Justice Coordinator NY Conference Annual Report 2023-24

Programming

- Co-led 5 Culturally Responsive Ministry Trainings on Race, including one for the Conference Board. Three additional CRMT-Race modules were offered by other facilitators with most sessions at the 20-person maximum.
- Collaborated with a team of clergy and laity to develop a NEW MODULE of Culturally Responsive Ministry Training (CRMT) for Clergy. This new CRMT is focused on gender and sexuality and will begin being offered in summer 2024.
- Co-led two separate sessions of “Let’s Talk Race”, our Conference’s six-week racial justice series. The first church that participated was First Congregational United Church of Christ in Norwich. As a result of the series, First Congregational United Church of Christ in Norwich committed \$15,000 to move this work forward in 2024. GRATITUDE! The second congregation to participate in the six-week series was Fairmount Community Church in Syracuse. In total 35 people participate in both congregations.
- Co-led an Anti-racism program for members of Committees on Ministry throughout the UCC-NY Conference. The program was hosted by Homer Congregational Church in Homer, NY and more than 50 people participated.
- Led “Approaching Anti-Racism Work in a Faith Context and Anti-Racism Challenges”, a program about the importance of white congregations participating in racial justice, for the Southern Tier Interfaith Coalition (several Susquehanna Association UCC congregations participate). Approximately 35 clergy and lay leaders participated.

Community Events

- Participated in the Interfaith Racial Equity Coalition in Syracuse to represent the UCC-NY Conference. In addition to providing racial justice resources and educational opportunities in Central New York, the coalition also sponsored, “Christian Nationalism: Why It’s Dangerous for Democracy and the Gospel” by Dr. Greg Carey, Professor of New Testament at Lancaster Theological Seminary. More than 100 people participated in the event.
- Rev. Dr. Marsha Williams participated in the New York State Council of Churches “Ecumenical Advocacy Days”, speaking with lawmakers about Faith-Based Affordable Housing.

Behind the Scenes

- Worked with Bylaw revision team to draft new by-law language to increase diversity and equity in our Conference. These revisions will be voted on at Annual Meeting 2024.

Book Studies

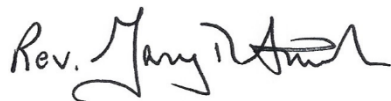
- This year’s book discussions centered on fiction from authors of color (except the last one) to give a broader perspective of cultural and lived experience. In the five book discussions, 65 people participated.
- The following books were used this year:
 - *The Prophets* by Robert Jones, Jr.
 - *The Tress* by Percival Everett
 - *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison
 - *The Love Songs of W.E.B. Du Bois* by Honoree Fanonne Jeffers
 - *Afro-Christian Convention* edited by Rev. Yvonne V. Delk

- In addition to the above mentioned book studies, the final book discussion of the academic year 23-24 will be *The False White Gospel: Rejecting Christian Nationalism, Reclaiming True Faith, and Refounding Democracy* by Jim Wallis.

Other

- Participated in 3 Gender and Sexuality Justice Ministry sessions offered by the UCC National Setting.
- Participated in a Faith-Based Affordable Housing Bill seminar sponsored by the New York State Council of Churches in preparation for Policy Day.
- In addition to my work in the Conference, Roger Cook has been heavily involved in Climate Justice throughout the year (and WELL before!). In his capacity as liaison to the Education for Faithful Action Team, United Church of Christ, National Ministries, Cook was involved in the following:
 - Partnered with the Interfaith Climate Justice Community of WNY and the NYS Public Research Group to advocate for the NYS Climate Change Superfund Act which would require large oil companies to pay into a “superfund” to help municipalities to repair and/or improve resiliency of infrastructure.
 - Riverside Salem United Church of Christ and Disciples of Christ members joined with New York State Parks and the Grand Island Nature Alliance to plant a native plant garden on State Parks’ property in front of their Riverside-Salem building. The congregation also continued to purchase oak trees to replace the ash trees which succumbed to the invasive emerald ash borer in the area. Lastly, Riverside-Salem collaborated with a nearby Buddhist contemplative community to transplant swamp white oaks saplings from the Buddhist property to Riverside-Salem’s environmental sanctuary.
 - Riverside-Salem received a UCC stipend to hire an intern to address environmental issues from a faith perspective for their congregation; especially climate change, biodiversity and pending NYS legislation to protect rain forests and to reduce the production and use fossil fuels.

Submitted by:



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