Creating and Operating a Team in the Congregation or Mission Center

World Church Diversity Team 2015
## INTRODUCTION

- Define focus and purpose of team
- Identify potential team members
- Conduct survey to assess potential members’ interest

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## IDENTIFY RESOURCES

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The gospel of Jesus Christ reveals the unqualified love of God and the inestimable worth of all persons. An awareness of God's love and of the love of others is essential to human fulfillment. For these reasons, we celebrate the rich diversity of human life.

We declare our belief that "all are called according to the gifts of God to them." We therefore acknowledge and affirm human diversity by creating a spirit of openness and peace within our congregations where all persons may find acceptance and the opportunity to share their giftedness. We commit ourselves to work with all persons of goodwill to promote mutual respect, appreciation, and peace in all relationships.

—From "Affirmation of Human Diversity" (World Conference Resolution 1226)

The reason to have diversity teams in congregations and mission centers is to enable focused peace building and foster just relationships. In congregations and mission centers we can work cooperatively to build and support communities of joy, hope, love, and peace. Working together locally in inclusive and loving ways with members, friends of the church, and the larger communities affirms God's love and the Worth of All Persons.

At times, there are challenges to acting as conduits of God's love. Some of the challenges include fear, ignorance, and individual flaws in attitudes and actions. Setting up a diversity team can confront these challenges and bring healing ministry to all involved.
Define Focus and Purpose of Team

Diversity means difference and much more. It means a rainbow of colors in human faces. It means variety of beliefs, traditions, and superstitions in ethnicities and cultures, and in opportunities. Diversity means some can do that which others cannot, and others can do that which some cannot. Diversity means having different life experiences and seeing life differently. It is often not the difference that causes discomfort, tension, or conflict. It is how we have learned to think about those differences.
When beginning the work of creating a local diversity team, it is crucial that individuals and teams name or explain:

a) What does diversity mean to you?
b) What diversity concerns, circumstances, and issues need to be dealt with in your congregation, mission center, and community?
c) How can you increase inclusiveness and affirm the Worth of All Persons so there is Unity in Diversity and expansion of the Blessings of Community?

For clarity of understanding and purpose, consider the following:

- How does your congregation define diversity?
  - Is further clarity needed?
- What is the present state of inclusiveness in your congregation?
  - Is there diversity in leadership (i.e., gender, age)?
  - Are your buildings accessible for people with disabilities?
  - Do you use inclusive language?
- Identify how diversity will benefit the group.
- Discuss what your team could do specifically to be more inclusive.
  - Identify ideas of embracing diversity in worship, meetings, retreats, and other programs and events.
  - How does your understanding of diversity fit with Community of Christ’s Mission Initiatives?
  - What do you want to happen that is not happening now?
  - What do you want to stop happening that is happening now?

Other actions you can take for clearly defining the purpose and objectives of the diversity team include creating a team charter with stated annual goals and objectives. Set up specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely (SMART) objectives and action plans to ensure that you don’t become overwhelmed.

See the Team Charter for the World Church Diversity Team that appears in the Support Network section of this manual.
Identify Potential Team Members

Ask the following questions or other questions when considering potential team members:

- What skills are important for team members to have?
- How diverse should the team membership be?
- Who has shown an interest in diversity issues or concerns in the congregation, mission center, or community?
- How many team members are desirable?
- What are the expectations of team members?

Responses to these and similar questions will help to identify potential members. Answers will be mainly subjective, so it will be helpful for people to self-identify as having the passion, ability, and availability to work as members of a diversity team.

Conduct a Survey

Conduct a survey to assess potential members’ interest in a diversity team, as well as their thoughts about the ability of their congregation or mission center to support such a team. A sample survey is provided in the Appendix.
Setting up the Team

When developing a local diversity team, there are steps to follow to ensure the effectiveness of the team. They include:

• Organization of the team (team charter, consultation with mission center or congregational leadership, and others)
• Membership on the team (who will serve, length of commitment)
• Vision, goals, and objectives of the team (the purpose)
• Frequency of the meetings (regular or as needed), frequency of the projects (advocacy, training provided, networking with worship and service programs of the mission center or congregation, community relations)
• Continuing evaluation of the success of the team

Diversity Training

Team members need to take part in diversity training before assuming leadership on a diversity team. Doing so helps those involved

• develop an awareness of personal attitudes towards diversity.
• increase knowledge and sensitivity to diversity issues.
• understand cultural competence and its importance.
• improve communication skills that lead to effective discussions about controversial topics.
• learn how to promote inclusiveness.

The World Church Diversity Team can provide training or help identify credible organizations that can provide appropriate diversity training.
Support from World Church Diversity Team

The World Church Diversity Team is appointed by the First Presidency. Team members serve during the three-year interconference periods. Members can serve more than one term.

The team is guided by a team charter. It states, in part:

"The Enduring Principles of Worth of All Persons, Unity in Diversity, All Are Called, and Blessings of Community emphasize our focus on inclusiveness. There is a significant need for education and sensitizing of members of the church…"

The Diversity Team’s charter guides the team to focus on the following areas:

**Education:** Prepare educational content on inclusiveness, sensitivity to exclusive behaviors, awareness of language and activities that separate rather than unite us in mission.

**Advocacy:** Encourage intentional, sensitive, and knowledgeable advocacy for those who are marginalized.

**Communications:** Develop editorial articles and study guides. Ensure and support discussion about diversity among church membership. Work with International Headquarters staff to use current and developing tools to communicate to church members and friends about diversity topics, resources, and programs. Write helps and worship service outlines for Racial Justice Day each year.

**World Church Representation:** Engage with selected teams and IHQ councils and committees to ensure perspectives for diverse populations within the church are included in presentations and decision-making that may have an impact on those populations.

The World Church Diversity Team is available to local diversity teams in congregations and mission centers to coach and encourage their development and ministry. The World Church Diversity Team has created this manual as an aid to local teams.

For additional information, contact either Gwendolyn Hawks-Blue at gwendolynblue@hotmail.com or Cathi Cackler-Veazey at ccacklerveazey@CofChrist.org.
Connection to Mission Center Leadership

Local diversity teams should organize and operate with the knowledge and support of the mission center. Doing so increases opportunities to make an impact in both the congregation and mission center. The mission center can benefit from a diversity team’s contribution that can educate and speak for inclusiveness and justice.

Relation to Local Congregations

A diversity team can start in a congregation or mission center. The responsibility of the team should be based on the needs of the body it serves, the passion of the team members, and the opportunities for supporting the mission of the church. This manual provides guidelines that can be adapted to a team that serves a congregation or a mission center.
Here are a few suggestions for team-coordinated ministries or sponsored programs:

**Advocacy**
- Work with local or national organizations to encourage or support equality, justice, and diversity concerns.

**Events**
- Consider having quarterly, twice yearly, or yearly events that celebrate the diversity that exists within congregations and mission centers.
- This could include events such as meals with foods from various cultures, local organizations providing speakers on diversity and justice topics, or panels talking about immigration issues.

**Study circles**
- Use study guides from Everyday Democracy (formerly known as Study Circles Resources Center), a US organization that helps communities find ways for people to think, talk, and work together to solve problems.

**Discussion groups**
- Contact the peacebuilding specialist at Community of Christ International Headquarters about listening circles for congregational or mission center gatherings.

**Partnerships with other organizations and groups**
- Identify local organizations and groups engaged in justice projects or diversity celebrations and join them.

When meeting, identify what the local diversity team’s focus should be and other ministries that might address particular needs and interests of the area.

*An important consideration is how to align with Community of Christ Mission Initiatives and live out the Enduring Principles.*
Local diversity teams, in congregations or mission centers, should have creditable resources (people, training, and publications) that

- increase members’ understanding of diversity.
- inform participants how to engage in productive conversations about topics of diversity, justice, and peacemaking.
- align with Community of Christ theology and beliefs.
- adhere to Community of Christ Mission Initiatives and Enduring Principles.
- offer opportunities for sharing a broad continuum of perspectives using the Faithful Disagreement Statement to define principles.

A list of books, study guides, and helpful organizations is included in the Appendix for consideration. Teams are encouraged to seek additional resources that might aid in their work.
Resources

CULTURAL PROFICIENCY AND TRANSFORMATIONAL RESOURCES

“Can Empathy Reduce Racism?” www.greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/empathy_reduces_racism/. 


DISABILITY RESOURCES


GENDER AND ORIENTATION RESOURCES


RACE AND ETHNICITY RESOURCES


“Cows literally jump for joy after being released into an open field.” A wonderful visual representation of undoing stereotypes we hold on to in our minds, as well as the joyful liberation from a form of oppression. www.m.wimp.com.


BOOKS


Mazel, Ella. And Don't Call Me a Racist! - A Treasury of Quotes on the Past, Present, and Future of the Color Line in America, 1998. (This book is not for sale, but available without charge to non-profit organizations and institutions for educational purposes by calling (781) 862-4521.


Stepanek, Mattie. *Heartsongs Collection: Journey through Heartsongs, Loving through heartsongs, Music through heartsongs*, [music CD].


**TEDx TALKS**

Directory of TEDx Talks Topics. [www.ted.com/conversations/topics](http://www.ted.com/conversations/topics).

“Inclusion, Exclusion, Illusion and Collusion : Helen Turnbull at TEDxDelrayBeach.” [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com).

“My philosophy for a happy life: Sam Berns at TEDxMidAtlantic 2013.” [www.youtube.com/watch?v=36m1o-tM05g&sns=em](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=36m1o-tM05g&sns=em).

“The Paradox of Diversity: Dr. Marylin Sanders Mobley at TEDxCLE 2013.” [www.youtube.com/watch?v=WCgqkY5jIXc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WCgqkY5jIXc).

“TEDxConejo - Reza Aslan - Unity in Diversity.” [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com).


“Wade Davis: Dreams from endangered cultures.” [www.ted.com](http://www.ted.com).

“Why diversity is upside down: Andrés Tapia at TEDxIndianapolis.” [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com).

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Diversity Survey

1. I am knowledgeable about the issues of diversity.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Neutral
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

2. I value diversity.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Neutral
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

3. I believe diversity celebrates human differences of many types.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Neutral
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

4. I think my congregation has the capacity (space, people, financial support, passion, and knowledge) to start a diversity team.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Neutral
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

5. I think my mission center has the capacity (people, space, fiscal support, passion, and knowledge) to support a diversity team.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Neutral
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

6. I would like to participate in a diversity team.
   - Yes
   - No
The gospel of Jesus Christ reveals the unqualified love of God and the inestimable worth of all persons. An awareness of God’s love and the love of others is essential to human fulfillment. For these reasons, we celebrate the rich diversity of human life.

However, human beings often fear, hate, and abuse each other because of ignorance about such factors as socioeconomic status, culture, race, gender, age, size, sexual orientation, and mental or physical disability. Such prejudicial behavior undermines the personal and spiritual development of both abuse and abused, and denies the mutual benefits of shared giftedness.

As persons of faith, we confess our own imperfections in attitude and action. Nevertheless, we accept the responsibility to resist fear and hate in all forms and to strive continuously to eliminate expressions of prejudice and discrimination.

We declare our belief that “all are called according to the gifts of God to them.” We therefore acknowledge and affirm human diversity by creating a spirit of openness and peace within our congregations where all persons may find acceptance and the opportunity to share their giftedness.

We commit ourselves to work with all persons of goodwill to promote mutual respect, appreciation, and peace in all relationships.