

Racial Justice Committee Meeting of the Unitarian Universalist Charlottesville congregation  
June 9, 2019

**In attendance:** Ann Forno, Shirley Paul, Frank Dukes, Edith Good, Marc Goldberg, Mary Rose Curtis, Patrick Mingas, Carol \_\_\_\_\_, Kit McNally, Joel McNally, Bob Gross, John Anderson, Walter Hoffman, Rev Erik Wikstrom, Cathey Polly, Kate Fraleigh, Maggie Record, \_\_\_\_\_  
(My apologies if I missed your name or misspelled it. Please send me any corrections.)

**Minutes:** Ann Forno

Rev Wik agreed to come to the meeting today so that we could ask him questions about our racial justice work in our congregation, and say goodbye to him. I captured the discussion that we had as well as I could. ~Ann Forno

Wik said that his hope is that the vacuum created by him leaving will pull our congregation together. He said that people have stopped coming to church for a variety of reasons, such as the toxicity that they were feeling in our congregation.

Question from Frank Dukes: What do we need to be aware of, going forward?

Wik said:

- 1) Adam Slate has picked up on the direction and work of the UUA, in terms of work being done to dismantle white supremacy.
- 2) We should make use of the resources developed by the UU folks who did the teach-ins in UU congregations across the country last year.
- 3) We should listen to folks who have been critical of connections that we are not making, as a congregation, within the Charlottesville community.

Question from Kate Fraleigh: (I missed the question.)

Wik said:

- 1) When the work was being done to pass the Black Lives Matter Public Witness Statement, it gave the congregation "a thing" to rally around, and that was useful.
- 2) We should tell the story, to the congregation, of the efforts being made on behalf of racial justice that fall under the guise of the Public Witness Statement.
- 3) We have unresolved issues here in our congregation: we have people who want to conserve things as they are and have always been done because that makes them comfortable, versus people who are risk-takers and are able to process that discomfort.
- 4) A lot of work was done by the Undoing Racism Committee; the records are in Wik's office.  
(Note: Wik has since passed those records on to me [Ann Forno]; I am happy to hold onto them until we figure out where they are best stored.)

Question from Ann Forno: How do we know when we're where we need to be with our racial justice work? What will it look like?

Wik said:

- When people of color say, "Awesome."

- Think about the difference between saying “You are welcome here” vs. “This was built for you.”
- The idea that “the other side is just wrong” will preclude us making progress in our congregation.
- From a book about the civil rights movement: The civil rights movement was not its leadership; it was the people doing the work who were pushing the leadership.

Question: What do we look for in a new minister?

Wik said:

- Avoid someone with too much ego, and avoid someone who is reactionary.

Question: Does the Racial Justice Committee play a role in the healing that needs to happen at church?

- Yes; one critique has been that we are doing a lot of navel gazing; we need to challenge that perception, and we need to keep pushing:
  - Do a racial justice audit
  - Get on the ministerial search committee
  - Be part of the covenanting process

Other things Wik said:

- We must create opportunities for having hard conversations, in a safe place, about what has been happening here--those conversations should not happen in the Social Hall.
- Good book to read: After the Good News: Progressive Faith Beyond Optimism, by Nancy McDonald Ladd
- UU's tend to have a “don't ask, don't tell” policy about our differences
- Back to the question of the response to the racist letter someone sent to our Director of Administration and Finance: Should we make that person feel welcome here? Not as an institution.

There were many expressions of gratitude and praise to Wik: gratitude for his leadership, acknowledgement of and gratitude for his work in the area of racial justice, expressions of how much he will be missed.

In addition, there were also expressions of anger at those who have worked for Wik's removal or departure, disbelief at the white supremacist sentiments expressed by people here after the letter was sent to our DAF, and great sorrow about the behavior of those who have opposed Wik's, and others', work on racial justice.