

MUCC RACIAL JUSTICE GROUP

ANNUAL REPORT 2021

Mission Statement

We at McFarland UCC recognize the ongoing acts of injustice against people of color, and we stand in support of those who bear the burden of inequity in our nation. We believe in our interconnectedness as human beings, and we pledge to work together as a congregation to educate ourselves and to take action to improve the lives of those who have been oppressed. Psalm 82:3 (New International Version) exhorts us to “Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed.” As we begin to understand the extent of racial injustices in our nation, we are called to work toward a more just and equitable future for all of God’s people.

In May, we publicly set our intention to be a presence for equity and racial justice, and the inherent dignity of all human beings - in our community, our nation and beyond - by inviting the community to a brief time of simple time of prayer and togetherness at Larson Park, open to all faith traditions and community. Together, we recognized the countless acts of injustice, and stood together in prayer for all of those who are impacted by racial tensions and all those who work toward a more just and harmonious future.

July’s full team meeting identified additional ideas for moving our commitment forward, in addition to the inclusive arts group and book club opportunities that have been ongoing since 2020. Below, you will find updates on each of those subgroups and opportunities to engage in action toward a more just and equitable future for all of God’s people.

Outdoor Movie Nights

A small group of individuals worked together to organize two outdoor movie nights. Each included, in addition to the viewing of the films *Remember the Titans* and *Ruby Bridges*, a bonfire, games, and some simple food/snacks. The evening ended with an opportunity to discuss lessons learned from the film. Thank you to everyone who volunteered time and resources to allow these events to happen! Relationships were formed and solidified, and the discussions were so important.

Letter-Writing Campaign for Racial Justice

In October 2021, a team of Judy Taber, Lavon Geasland and Jayne Fischer organized a letter-writing campaign to legislators in support of ending gerrymandering in Wisconsin. The letter proposed supporting an independent commission to draw district lines through a process that uses objective criteria, much like the Iowa model that has been in use since 1980.

Gerrymandering disenfranchises voters by drawing district lines to favor whichever party is in power in a census year – and both political parties have been guilty of this. The Bible emphasizes the need to seek justice and equity, especially for those who are most vulnerable, and this is one of the actions that we

brainstormed in July at our Racial Justice Ministries meeting led by Rachel Saladis. Gerrymandering affects all of us, but particularly people of color who are concentrated (packed) into voting districts. By drawing partisan district lines, our individual votes matter less.

We solicited signatures at the McFarland Café and at church in October, and we sent a total of 234 letters to Wisconsin legislators, Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, and Senate Majority Leader Devin LeMahieu.

MUCC Inclusive Arts group

The MUCC Inclusive Arts group was established as one part of our congregation's identified work toward a more racially just community and world. The team of 7 met 4 times over the 2021 year, continuing with our goal of decentralizing whiteness in our church building.

The majority of our time the past year has been exploring options around inclusive arts and print in all areas of the building and for all ages. Our work will be actualized in the upcoming year, as we begin diversifying the artwork, books and toys within the building.

We are committed to assessing our environment to create an inclusive, welcoming space. We do this by ensuring our artwork, printed materials and toys create spaces in which all people feel safe and valued, and see themselves represented throughout our building. We believe this is an outreach, which represents the belief of our congregation, where we accept, love, honor and cherish persons of all races.

Racial Justice Book Group

We are continuing our journey, which began in 2020, to educate ourselves on what has happened and is still happening to people of color in our country. The Racial Justice Book Club is one way we are doing this.

We completed our discussion of the book, "Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City" by Matthew Desmond in 2021. We also read and discussed over several months:

- "Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents" by Isabelle Wilkerson
- "The Color of Compromise: The Truth About the American Church's Complicity in Racism" by Jemar Tisby.

Throughout our discussions, we've learned things about our country's history that we never knew. We've also shared some of our own experiences, things we may have seen in our workplaces or heard from people of color. We have a dedicated group of 8-10 people who have been active participants in our discussions, and anyone who has an interest in understanding what racial justice means and why we as a nation still struggle with equality today is welcome and encouraged to join us. Read the Pulse for information!