

CCORR PRESENTATION TO THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE SESSION 2020

Bishop Minerva Carcaño, friends and members of our California/Nevada Annual Conference Session 2020. Today, we find ourselves witnessing and experiencing new challenges that have caused us to pause for a moment and reflect on “where” God may be leading us as members of the body of Christ that is so culturally and racially diverse and “what” God may be calling us to do.

With our diversity we are uniquely positioned to provide intentional processes for increasing the inclusion and effectiveness of those transformed to be Christ-like, that is to be engaged in this ministry of reconciliation. Indeed, we are all taking bold steps to learn to adjust to the ‘new norm’ as we live and minister together as God’s people during these unprecedented times.

With the vast challenges that confronts our society, racism has crept to the fore-front of our communities and sometimes even seen in the church or Christian communities. Racism is a systematic sin which we will continue to face in our lives. Friends, we need to be bold to refute and strongly rebuke this sin of racism. We thank Bishop Minerva Carcaño for her leadership during such times as these. She has been in dialogue with the Conference Commission on Religion & Race and recently with the partnership of our Conference Lay Leader, Micheal Pope, and the support of the district superintendents, she met with the pastors and leaders of all 6 of our historic African American congregations and our African American pastors serving in cross-racial/cross-cultural appointments as we respond to the Black Lives Matter movement and the causes behind this movement. With her Extended Cabinet she has met with all racial-ethnic ministry-focused conference committees and caucuses and has followed that up with meetings with racial-ethnic leaders as ministry challenges and opportunities have arisen.

These are the Framework of our task:

1. Expand our understanding of racism beyond personal prejudice and hate to systemic racism.
2. Focus on actions and impacts rather than attitudes and intentions.
3. Add a racial lens to conversations on class, gender, sexuality, etc.
4. Cultivate discourse that centers on the humanity and leadership of people of color.

We propose that all levels of our AC commit to accountability to addressing, repenting of and moving beyond this sin within our denomination, our Conference, our local churches, our communities and in ourselves. It is clear that confronting personal and systemic racism can be confusing and challenging as well as a spiritual task. How easy it is to make pronouncements. How often we have heard that after resolutions and recommendations are agreed upon, nothing concrete really happens! However, actions are needed if we are to address, repent of and move beyond racism in its various forms, if our resolutions are to have integrity and lead to effective and wide-spread justice shaping change.

CCORR has struggled with how to facilitate such engagement within our local churches, our districts, and with our conference leadership. All such engagement begins with us as individual Christians with our different realities and our various levels of responsibility to family, to

community and to church. We all need to be open to learn, to reflect, and to challenge our assumptions. We are led to be open to the movement of the Holy Spirit to give us the vision and the courage to change our behavior, to act as individuals, as local churches and as our denomination to effectively engage systemic and individual racism. This will only happen if we are committed and keep the justice-seeking gospel of Jesus the Christ in front of us and within us.

To that end the Conference Commission on Religion & Race commits to the following actions:

1. To develop and facilitate webinars aimed at various constituencies of our Conference.
2. To develop and facilitate, via ZOOM, cross-cultural/cross-racial communication workshops. These will be designed to be relevant to various constituencies within our Conference, for example but not limited to, youth, clergy, laypersons, congregational leadership, candidates for ministry, clergy and congregations in cross-cultural/cross-racial appointments. The scheduling of these workshops will be coordinated with the district superintendents, leadership development, congregational development, and conference communications leaders.
3. To work collaboratively with the bishop and the district superintendents in resourcing local churches and pastors in their work of:
 - Eliminating racism and racial inequity and intentionally striving to become the beloved community God calls us to be;
 - Receiving and welcoming a cross-racial and cross-cultural appointment;
 - Sharing facilities with communities of other races and cultures, and who may speak a different language;
 - Seeking to faithfully respond to the ministry needs of communities of color.

The bishop and her Appointive and Extended Cabinets will meet with the CCORR twice a year to plan and assure that this work is done intentionally and effectively.

In connection with this, the Conference Commission on Religion & Race has spoken with Bishop Carcaño and she has recommended that we join her in reading the book, *How to Be an Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi, in this coming appointment year. We would also recommend the following books for reading and discussion in our local churches and Circuits.

- *Waking up White and Finding Myself in the Story of Race* by Debby Irving
- *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* by Michelle Alexander
- *The Disinherited* by Howard Thurman
- *America's Original Sin: Racism, White Privilege and the Bridge to a New America* by Jim Wallis

We recognize that these books are all in English which may exclude those for whom English is not their native language. Therefore, CCORR will identify audio-visual materials which address racial justice/racism issues to be available for these congregations and groups as well.

Our hope is that congregations would engage in this study to move the race conversation forward and live in God's beloved community. This could be done in local churches, youth groups, and within other entities, for example, Circuits, and District and Conference committees, agencies, and caucuses. Local church groups that share in such a study could let their District Superintendent know and/or include their experience in their Annual Charge/Church Conference report.

In conclusion, Bishop, friends and members of our Annual Conference, it has been my honor and privilege to have served you for these past four years, as the Chairperson of our Conference Commission on Religion & Race. Next month, effective on October 1st, my colleague and sister in-Christ, Iunisi Tovo will become the new Chairperson of Conference Commission on Religion & Race. My colleague, Iunisi Tovo, currently serves as the pastor of Sebastopol United Methodist Church, in Sebastopol. It is our hope and prayer that the good Lord will guide and shepherd us through these challenges times together. Vinaka vakalevu and blessings to all of us and our loved ones.