

## Supporting People of Color in Our Pulpits

*Blessed are those who can't fall apart because they have to hold it together for others.*

Adaption of The Beatitudes from the Church Council of Greater Seattle's  
100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Service

People of God's Grace,

The April 27th UCC Pacific NW Conference Annual Meeting includes a reflection on how eliminating racism from our lives and our society brings us closer to God working in and through us. Since August 2016, an issue team of the Conference's Justice & Witness Ministries Committee has devoted itself to dismantling racism. As committee members moved from trust-building to action, the concerns raised by our clergy of color invited the team to consider ways to affirm and support their ministry. We also came to understand their challenges are heightened due to their ministry in predominantly white congregations. By lifting silence, we deepen critical relationships.

We intend this to be a time of deep listening and reflection on our relationship with all our clergy. How can the calling of our pastors be transformational for us all, not solely transactional?

We have discovered among ministers of color pain and untended stress, particularly among clergy who are helping others of us face the long-standing divisions racism has inflicted upon us. How can we as individuals, as churches, and as a denomination become more fully human to each other and united to end racism? There are no outliers in this work, we all have so much farther to go on this common journey

Please take the time to read and reflect upon these three on-line articles written by Black members of our clergy in 2017:

<http://www.ecclesio.com/2017/11/dance-continues-kelle-brown/>

<http://www.ecclesio.com/2017/11/dance-inclusion-african-american-leadership-dominant-culture-churches-by-bianca-davis-lovelace/>

<http://www.ecclesio.com/2017/11/first-steps-darrell-goodwin/>

During the hour and a half, we will hear from conference ministers of color and reflect on what we hear with help from members of the People's

Institute for Survival and Beyond. Finally, we will state first effective steps for personal and collective action to respond, guided by God's grace.

Many Conference congregations have taken the ***White Privilege: Let's Talk—A Resource for Transformational Dialogue*** curriculum. *Thank you.* The work to remove racism and its impact from our society is urgent and requires consistent tending. Let us continue an honest and open conversation about race in America, in our congregations, communities, and personal lives outside the bounds of the course. Conference leaders and the Dismantling Racism Team are committed to this end.

This conversation is a difficult one, and White people are often uncomfortable and awkward discussing race. This is fully the topic of U.W. professor Robin DiAngelo's book, *White Fragility*, which you will receive at the Annual Meeting. Comfort and silence will not lead us forward, and together a vision of the Beloved Community can be realized.

The Dismantling Racism Team's active members include or have included:

**Steve Clagett**, All Pilgrims

**Rev. Dr. Kelle Brown**, Plymouth

**Rev. Bianca Davis-Lovelace**, REACH and Poor People's Campaign

**Chris Hanson**, Plymouth

**Lin Hagedorn**, Northshore

**Robert Brown**, University Place

**Don Bell**, Plymouth

**Diane Schmitz**, Everett

**Leslie Cushman**, Olympia

**Ruth Brandon**, Everett