



# RFP: Institutional Equity Assessment, Training, Recommendations Regarding Racial Justice & Equity.

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**Due Date:** September 30, 2020

**Send Proposals electronically to:**

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The United Church of Christ Board (UCCB) seeks proposals from consulting firms to help the organization: discern barriers to full inclusion in the denomination, including both governance and decision-making; and design and implement programs and services to address these barriers.

The United Church of Christ (UCC), a denomination of 36 Conferences divided into 7 regions and about 5,000 Local Churches that span the US, was founded 63 years ago. UCC currently has a staff of 115 (approximately 1/3 of its size when the National Setting relocated from New York City to Cleveland 30 years ago). The National Setting of the UCC is governed by the UCCB, which is comprised of representation across the breadth of the denomination. The National Setting works collaboratively with Local Churches but not prescriptively. Members of the United Church of Christ are 89% white. Larger congregations (more than 50 people on a Sunday) are commonly urban or suburban and consist predominantly of college-educated people with few in attendance in their 20s or early 30s. In this context, with the exception of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) congregations, a very racially diverse congregation would be 10% BIPOC.

Currently the National Setting of the UCC focuses on complementing and supplementing the work of our Conferences and congregations, creating greater welcome and inclusion in the UCC, strengthening people's experiences of UCC praxis and faith and thereby strengthening congregations, and enhancing growth, diversity and inclusion within the entire denomination.

For years, there has been concern in the UCC about the lack of ethnic and racial diversity in UCC pulpits and congregational life. There have also been formal and informal allegations of racism and/or racial bias within the National Setting.

Currently we have a Minister of Racial Justice who has developed anti-racism trainings that are outward facing for congregations and affiliate ministries. Some Local Churches and Conferences participate and others do not. Some Local Churches and Conferences have either constructed their own anti-racism trainings or contracted with outside vendors. Some churches have not engaged at all. In addition to anti-racism training, the Minister of Racial Justice:

- Builds and supports regional racial justice cohorts.
- Supports the Council for Racial and Ethnic Ministries.
- Creates, disseminates, and facilitates the National Setting's signature platform: Sacred Conversations to End Racism. (SC2ER)
- Trains SC2ER facilitators to promote regional engagement of the curricula.

Other institutional efforts to address this racial inequity include:

- 2016, Publishing *A White Privilege Curriculum*.
- General Synod Resolutions in support of racial equity and anti-racism.
- United Church of Christ by-laws that mandate racial/ethnic balance in General Synod delegations and on the United Church of Christ Board.
- Designation, representation and financial support for the Council for Racial and Ethnic Ministries.
- Repentance and moderate reparations to the Council for American Indian Ministry and Hawaiian Congregations.
- Daniel Hand Endowment allocations to Historically Black Colleges & Universities (HBCU).
- Consistent and consecutive public witness against racial and ethnic injustice since our founding.
- The Human Resource Department has procedures and policies in place that are designed to prevent racial discrimination in the hiring and operational practices of the National Setting.

We believe our work has had a significant impact. Both the UCCB and National Setting are racially diverse. Nevertheless, we still are a denomination of predominantly white ministers and congregations, and non-white enculturation remains challenging.

In addition to issues of race and racism, we know that there are other ways in which we are not a fully inclusive denomination. Many young adults continue to report that they feel marginalized. Members with physical and other disabilities often feel unsupported. Approximately 30% of our Local Churches are designated Open & Affirming, a designation adopted by churches that are welcoming of LGBTQIA+ individuals. Both working class and upper class people who worship in our congregations sometimes report experiencing exclusionary bias. Our 20/30 clergy group, members of the Next Generation Leadership Initiative, a new pastors mentoring program, and our international interns are overwhelmingly White. Ultimately, we want to understand the barriers to inclusion in all these areas as we work to become a more whole organization -- welcoming and fully inclusive to all.

While we acknowledge the need to address all these concerns, there are several reasons why the focus at this time needs to be on race. Some of the reasons include:

- The desire to build on the anti-racism work that we have been undertaking as an institution for 63 years.
- Reports of anti-black racism at several levels of the denomination.
- The recognition that Black, Indigenous, and People of Color who are engaged with the UCC have asked that we undertake an Institutional Assessment focused on race and racism.
- Acknowledgement that several Conferences, affiliate ministries, plus several congregations, have formal communications endorsing becoming anti-racist bodies.
- Recognition that the UCC, in general, is responding to the concerns of the Black Lives Matter movement.
- The realization that a race-focused plan will generate more concrete and meaningful institutional change needed to fully live into the community scripture calls us to be.

## Goals for Our Racial Equity Assessment

1. **Building institutional capacity** around seeing and overcoming structural racism. The UCC wants to acquire the skills to continue this work without the help of outside consultants.
2. **Naming the barriers to full participation** in the UCC at all of its levels. The UCC wants to be thorough in examining all levels and aspects of the institution.
3. **Revealing steps and pathways that will lead us to be the racially inclusive church that we know God is calling us to be.** The UCC seeks to be a more welcoming, racially inclusive organization.
4. **Providing clear sense of next steps – both content and direction.** The UCC wants clear goals that we can hold ourselves accountable to in the next 1 to 3 years.
5. **Helping the UCC articulate change goals and develop wide ownership of these goals.** The UCC wants to develop a vision for inclusion that is broadly owned by staff, governance, and our member bodies.

**We dream that the Assessment and the resulting work undertaken by the UCC is informative and inspirational.** Although the focus of the Assessment is on the UCC National Setting, we hope that it will provide a model and specific ideas for change in our congregations. One important sign of success of the Assessment will be that members who previously felt marginalized will comment that they see positive changes toward belonging.

Our long-term vision is UCC congregations throughout the US which by and large mirror the changing demographics of society and the communities they are in—in terms of race, class, gender, educational attainment, age, ability, etc.—and that congregations will exist in a wide variety of places.

## Required Features of Proposal

1. Itemized Budget for the scope of work necessary to formulate and execute an institutional assessment of the UCCB and National Setting, and the accompanying work of senior level training and accompaniment to initiate institutional recommendations.
2. Generic Timeline (not tied to specific calendar dates). How much time will the Assessment need, over what length of time?
3. Structure of engagement in the Assessment by staff and volunteers – and estimate of time needed from these people for the Assessment. In other words, what is the time cost of the Assessment?
4. A balance of effectiveness and affordability. Multiple options showing this balance are appreciated.
5. Experience with religious institutions.
6. A case study of a previous client that describes their process while working with the organization writing the proposal and demonstrates the change(s) in that client organization.
7. References: Former or current client organizations who we can talk to about their experience with your firm, and the outcomes they experienced.
8. Consulting staff biographies: the UCCB values a diverse and inclusive workforce in the vendors that we select. Please provide biographies of proposed consultants for this project that reflect these values and how their expertise and/or experiences will benefit the UCCB.

## Proposals are one step in the UCCB's Decision-Making Process

We want to be very clear with those preparing proposals. **We have institutional support to go forward with an Assessment.** We will use the proposals as a way of demonstrating to our governing body what an Assessment might accomplish, and at what cost.

When we do an Assessment, we want to do it right – to make sure it has the staff and volunteer engagement it needs to provide useable data and have real impact.