

PREAMBLE TO LEGISLATION

Commission on Religion and Race

Over the past year, following our Annual Conference's direction, the Conference Commission on Religion and Race (CCORR) examined the cross-racial & cross-cultural appointment process of our Annual Conference. To support these appointments, we developed and adopted as a living document our Foundations for Cultural Competency and Cross-Cultural and Cross-Racial Appointments document. You can click on the following link to view the document: <https://dscumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/DSC-Foundations-For-Cultural-Competency-04.29.2021.pdf>

This document helps identify the reality of how we continue to fall short of fully including and supporting people of color in our Annual Conference. From this work, conversations emerged around how we can do better in supporting our clergy serving in these appointments. We also discussed what we can do to lift up our ethnic local churches. In doing our work, we came to understand cross-cultural competence as the ability to understand and engage effectively with people from different cultures. As a team, CCORR acknowledged our tendency to make assumptions regarding the cross-cultural competencies of ourselves and members of our Annual Conference. As a whole, we believe there is a tendency to over-estimate our competencies. Our overestimation causes more harm than good when doing work within cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments. Injury is being done to both our clergy and our congregations. As we acknowledged these harms, CCORR began a dialogue around the next steps we can take as a conference to increase our education and action in these areas. What can we do to develop a greater understanding grounded in love for our differences? We do not want to erase our differences or force assimilation to one cultural perspective as we do this work. Instead, we hope to be more aware of how to reduce and eliminate the space between cultures to develop a mutuality of understanding.

As Christians, we continue to stand in this liminal space between the full realization of God's kingdom on earth & our ongoing sinful nature. As we continue to be in this space, CCORR continues to grapple with the question of what can we do? What can we do as individuals as we struggle with our ability to make changes? And collectively, how can we use the opportunity to do intentional work around understanding how our unconscious bias is doing harm? In the tradition of John Wesley, we seek to do no harm, do good, and stay in love with God. Loving God means loving one another as Christ loves us. Knowing we need to engage in careful work to correct our brokenness, CCORR asked leadership from across the Annual Conference to engage in an Inclusion & Diversity Task Force. This task force examined ways our Annual Conference can do better, specifically in intercultural understanding through concrete action. Specific goals were identified to begin working toward educating and training leaders, churches, and congregation members so we can collectively push against the brokenness of our system. Those goals can be found here: <https://dscumc.org/religion-and-race/>.

Because of our desire to fully include all of God's children in the life and ministry of our Annual Conference, CCORR is bringing legislation to begin addressing systemic sins born of racism. Please take the time to review the links in this document so you can be informed of the work CCORR has done leading up to this legislative proposal. We also encourage you to read *Anxious to Talk About It: Helping White Christians Talk Faithfully about Racism* by Carolyn B. Helsel and *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* by Beverly Daniel Tatum. These books examine systemic racism and cultural identity development. If you have any questions about the work of CCORR or the legislation being presented to this year's Annual Conference, please contact Rev. Javier Olivares or Rev. Khalif Smith. Please join us in prayerful discernment as we engage in justice work for the equity of all God's children who call the Desert Southwest Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church home.