

WESTMINSTER RACIAL AUDIT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

October, 2022

The 2022 Racial Justice Audit of Westminster Presbyterian Church was intended to listen to the community, show patterns of the dominant culture, try to make sense of the patterns and work toward transformation.

The audit of Westminster's leadership and ministry was conducted by the Mission Institute of Northborough, Ma., which has conducted audits nationally with various religious organizations. The Mission's report noted that Westminster has begun working on racial justice in an effort to gain healing.

In 2019, the Racial Justice Working Group was formed at the invitation of the Heads of Staff. After a period of study, the Working Group hosted a variety of film and book studies and other events for the congregation. In 2021, Session approved the formation of a Racial Audit and Task Force, and in 2022 approved the Task Force's recommendation of a contract with Mission Institute to perform the Audit. In 2021-22, members from the two groups and others participated with other Oregon congregations in a Reckoning with Racism curriculum supported by Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon. Out of this came a video acknowledging the history of our congregation's land and the dispossession of Indigenous peoples and exclusion of people of color from our neighborhood.

Mission Institute's written surveys and interviews with 73 leaders of the congregation indicated that 92 % of respondents believed that racial justice work should be part of the life and ministry of Westminster.

The leadership community is older, better educated, and whiter than Portland as a whole: 49% are 71 or older, 30% are 56-70, 12% 41-55. Of respondents, 67% have a masters, doctorate, or professional degree and 90% identify as white compared to 66.4% in the general city population.

The dominant culture (or "white dominant culture") sets the unquestioned standards of behavior and ways of functioning that are seen as mainstream. It defines what is "normal," "professional" or even "good."

The Mission Institute team analyzed the survey responses and interviews, from which they identified five dominant patterns in how our community deals with race.

---LIMITATIONS OF INTEGRATION AND DIVERSITY

1. Overall, Westminster's leadership expressed a passion for doing anti-racist work, but two different ideals appear: an integrated church versus a primarily white church that joins larger coalitions to address city-wide justice.
2. Acknowledgement of Whiteness and Culture at Westminster. Folks were both confused and curious about the impact of our mostly white community and want to explore that further.
3. Spiritual Grounding and Motivation. Most all the leaders grounded their racial concerns in their faith and spiritual understanding.
4. Exhaustion and Unsettling in a Time of Crisis. Many leaders mentioned the stress of Covid together with events that have brought renewed attention to racism in America.
5. Wrestling with Individuals and Community Identity. Leaders struggle to reconcile their perception of themselves and Westminster as good and caring with their awareness that we have inherited many ways of being that may exclude and cause harm.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TAKING THE NEXT STEPS:

- + Develop a team to continue the work, which could be the Racial Justice WorkingGroup.
- +Build relationships for trust and resilience, but don't be afraid of conflict. Learn how to work with it.
- +Grapple with the data and dominant patterns seen in the audit.
- + Find ways for intra- and inter-generational dialogue about race and racism.
- +Determine if racial equity practices are part of hiring, electing, recruiting, and promoting processes at Westminster. The processes aren't clear to many members.