

Notes from Table Groups – Anti-racism workshop with Adele Halliday

Anti-racism is like the kingdom of God; a journey not a destination

Quote from Martin Luther King Jr: the fierce urgency of now... but we are between now and not yet.

Living in the tension between magical “snapping of fingers” and long work of change

Importance of the whole body working together; circle model in indigenous cultures, where time is not as important as all voices being heard

Policies and laws affect culture; they affirm expressions of what represents the “norms”

Not an easy conversation, so it is important that leaders are equipped for compassionate engagement rather than confrontation.

Listening well is crucial to receive insights from all parts of culture in order to heal.

Small churches may wonder how this conversation is relevant if situated in a less diverse environment, but important to know how to converse and accept, to be welcoming rather than excluding

Does dominant culture shape our continued forms of institution? How is it lived out?

Church has a big role to play – outreach

Challenging for communities of faith and society – tend to revert to the comfort of previous norms.

Change is a threat to comfort or feeling of safety.

Racism is difficult to address because of its invisibility to those with privilege, leading to unintentional support of racist systems.

Important to equip leaders to share responsibility of helping others i.e. to train and engage more leaders

Anecdote: Story from Anglican church inviting communities of faith from other countries to share stories, leading to more questions about different experiences of faith – eye-opening

Cultures shape expressions of church (and hopefully, vice versa!)

Book – Thriving Churches: one marker of thriving churches is adaptability and ability to welcome newcomers and embrace new life and new ministries

Conversion of OUTRAGE to ENGAGE

Stumbling blocks and antidotes

Anecdote: intercultural and interfaith exchange eg being aware of food that is appropriate to different cultures and faith traditions – thoughtfulness and awareness by hosts, graciousness by guests

Concepts of hospitality; can we be both host and guest?

Exploring layers of faith, going deeper?

Anecdote: ministry student visit to Cree Nation experiencing personal account of residential school experience in the setting of the community affected

We struggled a bit to get the questions in front of us, then discussed anti-racism without specifically addressing the questions.

We acknowledged we are

- overwhelmed by the subject;
- part of the system, i.e. we have a problem;
- awaiting the resource material, e.g. study guide, which in another gathering Adele said should be available in fall;
- on a continuous journey as the people of God;

- We want to make our worship places safe, e.g. concern of “attack” because hosting an Arab men’s group, considering hosting a synagogue;

- We should list our privileges (as recommended by Oluo in “So you want to talk about racism.”)

“We like [and I guess, therefore seek] dichotomy” – (I found this one interesting)

Question: How can the church guide us to get our point across?

- Voice of church is a very small voice
- Voice needs to recognize Racism
- Need to be inclusive (Easier to be inclusive within our church but what about in the community)
- We fear getting to know someone who is different
- We need to start talking and get to know each other, not just the ones we have known all our life.
- language differences can be a barrier to getting to know each other
- people are judgemental
- We do not advertise church as we are afraid we will not be well received.
- In Quebec Bill 21 has fueled the fire of hate and racism

Cedar Park Book Study "So you want to talk about Race"

(This book highly recommended and a must for anyone who wants to be part of the solution)

White persons take what we have as advantage

We need to learn to listen to other groups, we can't put ourselves in their shoes.

Really listen without being judgemental

Need to dialogue with people experiencing Racism

Listening is key

Listen to the environment around us

We are living in a society that is seemingly going the opposite way

Political parties do not recognize that there is a problem

There is a lot of talk about the need to have a solution but what we need is action

MCM and Saint Columba House are good examples of a more equitable society with diverse cultural groups. They give another perspective working towards closing the gap.

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- 1) What initial reflections would you offer about the principles for becoming an anti-racist denomination?
 - Teach and guide people to communicate correctly
 - Listen when made understood that what said made my be offensive and if unclear ask why.
 - 2) How might some of these principles—and the work of becoming anti-racist—be lived out in your community of faith?
 - Invite the new arrived refugees to join the activities in our community
 - 3) How might markers of White supremacist culture be manifested in your community of faith or other areas of church life?
 - Unopened for change; > this is the way we always done it

How might some of the antidotes become part of community life?

- Help people be aware and encourage change
- Commit to learning of about other's cultures and try to introduce some reflection within our community

4) Are there any additional reflections?

- Consult and use the material document within the truth and reconciliation guidelines
- Offer a large "Welcome to our Community"; Tell us about yourself

Once past the shyness and unsureness notably of new participants of what to say how to begin sharing of thoughts, time allowance ticked rapidly.

Il est facile de dire qu'on n'est pas raciste, mais il est difficile de parler des privilèges des Blancs.
Quels sont des exemples de suprématie blanche au sein de notre église? Un exemple, le marteau du président d'assemblée, symbole de pouvoir.
Decolonizing the Bible
Faut trouver des moyens dans nos organismes, groupes, etc. de recruter des personnes autres que des Blancs et des Blanches.
Faut arrêter de penser que tout est correct de mon point de vue personnel.
Les vitraux de nos églises qui représente Jésus comme étant un homme blanc. C'est un bon endroit pour commencer une conversation au sujet du racisme.
Comment devenir accueillant.
Choisir d'autres images, d'autres photos.
White fragility.
Le racisme prend plusieurs formes.
Faut sortir de nos églises, aller à la rencontre des gens.
Faut prendre la responsabilité de s'éduquer soi-même, faire ses recherches; il y a plusieurs vidéos sur YouTube, etc.
Faut nous engager nous-mêmes.

Reflections

Education is vital – to tackle the distortions of history and broaden our understanding of each other
Acknowledge our privilege – consciously thinking our white skin/corollary is the person is brown
History plus education – how do we engage our leaders because not everyone is at the same place – right across the board but particularly our church leaders
How do we put our principles to work and in our worship services – asking Robert Patton and Satewas and Nakoset and Dr. Williams Minutes for Mission type model to raise up actions that are underway
Learning Day to meet people on Indigenous Sunday to speak on their experiences
How are the markers of white supremacist culture present in our worship?

- Perfectionism
- Sense of urgency
- Defensiveness
- Quantity over quality
- Love the written word
- Paternalism
- Either/or
- Individualism
- Progress is better, bigger is better
- Objectivity-objectification
- Attachment to times and agendas

We pack our agendas so full that there isn't full and there isn't time for conversation
One antidote – give people more time

1. Initial reactions:

Yes! Needed because societal shifts have been decades long, it's not going to happen without effort. Faith communities have gifts to offer general society, creating safe spaces to challenge and de-colonize that is done in spirit of reconciliation, repentance and forgiveness. Language is powerful... having the Policy give us words with which to work it great.

3. White supremacist markers

Wow! The list is expansive/inclusive of so many norms on display in church life! (Including privileging the agenda over conversation!!!)

De-centering white normativity through careful reframing of language (Welcome to our table, becomes welcome at God's table, or better yet, God welcomes all at the table....)

Re-structuring our governing bodies and discernment bodies to include all, with full voice... Changing the modalities of meetings to not privilege exclusively written word, time slots, individualism, and to encourage listening, slow speaking, oral wisdom, etc.

To be V. careful to listen before asking dumb and microaggressive questions. Don't wait for people to come, but go and be where people are.

Three deep sharing moments of experiences of racism in Canada and in church life and how communities did or might respond, or do better now they know better (Maya Angelou).

And then we ran out of time!

Thanks to Adele for rich rich provocation and inspiration.

Submitted with respect and with self-forgiveness for obviously imperfect notes!!!

1 - dualistic thinking -we need to listen and come out of dualistic thinking

2 - the emotion in the 'I hear your pain' comments but we do it all the time

3. We need the experience of incidents where we may mis-understand what really happened to people who look different

4. the fact that there has been over 25 years the UCC has been working on this, gives some hope

5. the greatest human problem is them/us in societies everywhere

6. This process is too much too fast and we might use work from other entities such as G20 there is a general frustration that we come in contact with the fact that 'racism does not exist'

holidays in the church are Christian only.

We assume our holidays are "white."

Education is needed, especially in our school systems.

Racism is world wide and White Privilege is systemic.

This is more an issue of culture and not of racism. The GC should be addressing discrimination.

The UCC could include the Thanksgiving Address in our Statements of Faith.

How do we expose our communities to "others?"

We can invite "People of Colour" (other than White) to speak in our communities.

What music (including hymns), language do we use?

Recollections of when the mandatory Racial Justice Training was implemented about 10 years ago, people couldn't understand why we needed to do it. And, that the same comments we had from 2010, we are hearing now which underscores the need for the work.

Reaction is to feel under attack; you're not being attacked to offer/extend rights to all. We need education, sensitization and information.

We all have the ability to evolve and to change; thanks be to God.

Challenged in a leadership role to deliver or extend the training to those we are ministering to.

Urban centres are more noticeably diverse, moving the change and conversation forward. In rural settings, there is a strong dominance of whiteness and less motivation or experiences driving conversation and change.

Noticing that when PowerPoints are prepared for Sunday services, the images used are often predominantly white. How do we actively notice these pieces and make change?

The need to actively look at our leadership to see who is at the table, who isn't, and why?

Looking at the context of scripture and sharing that when delivering scripture to ensure that it is placed properly and isn't seen and used as a way to prop up racism.

Making assumptions about someone based on their appearances, in unintended ways – such as “you are very tanned!” when they in fact have some Indigenous heritage. (Seen as white yet identify as both white and Indigenous).

Becoming aware of “microaggressions” and learning what they are and how to recognize and stop them.

When considering that our communities are only white, we miss looking at those working and supporting our community.

When expecting (and inviting) marginalized persons into our midst, what can we do to ensure they are welcomed? What is it we are offering them? Assumptions that they would or wouldn't feel welcome is dangerous.

Education is a key piece to the work. Finding ways to continue to inform and educate that can grow into change – normalize a new way of being together.