

Embracing Unity: A Framework for Racial Reconciliation

We desire to follow God's desire for us to live in true fellowship with one another, caring for, loving and forgiving one another. Racial unity has been neglected for so long in the American church. In order to reflect the diversity of our community in our church, we need to devote attention to this area. As part of our commitment to learning more about God's desire for unity, we hope to engage our partners and our community in a variety of discipling activities that allow for diverse levels of knowledge, engagement and growth.

Some examples of these activities include training in how to have healthy conversations; church-wide learning/training for our core leaders; curating a library of resources to support GTWY's learning; and, sponsoring unity conversations with multicultural participants.

What do we mean when we say, "racial reconciliation/racial unity"?

As we examine historical racism in the Church and in America, we hope to honestly acknowledge what has been done to foster disunity, whether intentionally or unintentionally. We also seek to take intentional actions to have our church reflect our community and to pursue living in solidarity.

What assumptions and truths will undergird our engagement with racial reconciliation?

Imago Dei - everyone is created in the image and likeness of God

Micah 6:8 - Do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with God

John 17:20 - 23 - Jesus desire for unity in the body of all believers

Acts 10 - Peter's encounter with Cornelius - God shows no partiality

Matthew 5:14 - We are the light of the world

What does racial unity look like (for GTWY?)

As our church values to protect Biblical unity among all believers, we hope to live in solidarity. This may lead to being uncomfortable in some ways, but learning to live and love through our cultural differences is something we value. We would like to have healthy conversations about matters concerning racial unity and racial injustice. We would like to provide opportunities for culturally diverse experiences in worship and in times of fellowship.

Is this topic (reconciliation/racial unity) something that GTWY is planning to work to build openly with intentionality?

Lord willing, we hope to create a rhythm for engagement on the topic of racial unity at a variety of levels of learning. We hope that this will be learning that takes place over time.

What do we mean when we say we want reconciliation/racial unity to become part of our culture at GTWY?

We hope to develop a kingdom mindset on this topic as we explore the meaning of Imago Dei and truly understand God's heart and desire concerning unity.

How will we develop a shared language in engaging in this conversation?

We plan to create GTWY-specific content and norms that we will share with core leaders and everyone engaging in the conversations about reconciliation/unity over time.

What kinds of resources will empower our leaders at all levels in directing healthy conversations?

Some resources we have found to be helpful include: the intentional practice of Matthew 18:15-17, resources from the and(&) Campaign <https://www.andcampaign.org/> and A Gentle Answer: Our Secret Weapon in an Age of Us Against Them by Scott Sauls. Over time, we may also consider hosting practice sessions for redirecting unhealthy behaviors/conversations and creating a video series on how to disagree while still honoring one another.

How will we support the experiences and trauma of a variety of people groups?

We acknowledge that emotions can run high and may require extra support from our care leaders. We choose to intentionally respond with empathy and have reasonable expectations of growth. We hope to be sensitive to emotional bandwidth ebbs and flows both individually and corporately. We also have available a list of professional providers for those who may need additional care.

What are the structures and supports that will be put in place to ensure that GTWY is and remains that "safe space"?

We intend to conduct regular temperature checks and gauge the pulse of partners and attenders. We would like to create a space for regular prayer sessions for those called to intercession specifically in this area.