

Greater Rochester Community of Churches and John Knox Collaborative Anti-Racism Workshop

2022 Collaborative Ministries Grant Report

The Greater Rochester Community of Churches (GRCC) and John Knox Church held a Sacred Conversations on Race Workshop at John Knox Presbyterian Church on Saturday February 28, 2023. There were 42 registered attendees. In addition, there were four registrants who either did not attend, or did not sign in if they did attend.

Twenty-eight of the attendees came from Presbyterian churches and fourteen from non-Presbyterian churches which broke out as follows:

Presbyterian		Universalist	5
John Knox	12	Trinity (Episcopal)	4
DUPC	4	Assumption (Fairport)	1
Medina	4	Messiah (ECLA)	2
Gates	3	Latter Day Saints	1
Lyndonville	2	League of Women Voters	1
Third	1		
Nunda	1		
Retired	1		

In general, the workshop was very well received with about half of those attending completing evaluation forms. Of those responding, all but one thought the day was meaningful and all but three would recommend it to a friend or acquaintance. A summary of those results as well as participants comments are attached to this report.

		#	%
Was workshop meaningful and/or informative	Yes	21	96%
	No	1	4%
Would you suggest this for a friend, colleague etc.	Yes	19	86%
	No	3	14%

The interest among the Presbyterian churches would support the PGV support of the Matthew 25 initiative and comments received from attendees would seem to indicate that much new information was shared especially related to the history and beginning the process of developing a common memory. We are continuing to schedule workshops and follow up support. We have been contacted by an attendee about doing a workshop with several East Ave. churches including Third and Asbury. We also have continued our conversations with the Latter-Day Saints and will be working towards further expansion.

A summary of comments from attendee's evaluation forms on the workshop is outlined below.

What portions were most helpful?

- Overall history
- Discussion of Doctrine of Discovery, handouts were good to take home
- The historical context was really interesting and well-presented.
- History building to contemporary issues; learning about organizing
- History; all portions interesting and helpful.

- The History
- William's history was eye-opening
- Historical context and basis for racism.
- Rimming the sails and the social-historical background of the history of racism in this country.
- Common understandings of the Doctrine of Discovery
- Historical background on racism.
- The history portion. William, I could listen to you forever.
- Time to reflect and be together
- First half – History/Context.
- The discussion we had at our table about the Continuum on Becoming an Anti-Racist Multicultural Organization.

What portions were least helpful?

- Intro too long
- The table discussions could have been better organized and/or directed
- Sometimes the voice of the presenter was too soft, not near enough to the microphones.
- Sorry about tech challenges with videos. Please send out information of where to find videos.
- A little slow on getting started. Needs to get through conversation and conduct rules a little quicker.
- Balance between teaching and small group conversations at tables/groups.
- Lecture hard to follow; so much to learn; complicated.
- It would have been helpful to also view some videos
- There could have been less information presented; somewhat of an information overload
- Too much information but reading the handouts will help
- Slow start on the day.
- Wish we had more time to cover more of the slides.
- I found the portion before lunch to be disjointed and superficial.

What areas would you like more information/conversation on?

- History
- General information on the tribal mind, i.e. racism is named by the Romans but predates that.
- Synergy between organizations and church social and justice work
- more detailed history
- More discussion on the trauma of racism
- White Privilege and subtle actions that could be seen as racist.
- Maybe include in handouts information (links, title etc) for videos, books and racism/structural equality reports.
- Not sure. So much to chew on.
- More specifics on what we can do; a way forward
- It might have been good for us to share our own "lightbulb" moments when we realized that it is impossible for "whites" to really understand what "non-whites" experience day to day.
- Include examples of how congregations have tried and succeeded and/or failed in addressing racism. (failure is not bad, just a process of learning).
- More talk and discussion on White Privilege.
- Might have been helpful to start with some clear definitions of things like racism, privilege, etc.
- How to overcome institutional inertia to get things moving. How to get past older members who think they "own" their congregations and won't engage with change. Maybe depending on the person.

What other suggestions do you have for the organizers.

- Listening to others; Table conversation; ending was good
- Smaller room; hard to hear in this setting.
- Would have liked a bit more Christian application. The group was faith-based and might have appreciated a bit more grounding in the Gospel and Scripture.
- If mixed church groups participating perhaps suggesting sitting with people you don't know.
- Would like to see a program i.e., a class with multiple workshops w/ reading and homework and networking; and brainstorming on real boots on the ground issues.
- Make future events more inclusive i.e. Invite Jewish, Islamic, Bahai communities etc.
- More faith experience; hearing questions in print (?) as some could not be heard; Role playing conversations stating judgmentalism between Jews and/or blacks and healthy responses.
- It was a great seminar. Well done by organizers.
- range of attendees, more diversity.
- Bring in someone from one of the other organization etc., perhaps one working on the current results of redlining etc.
- Connection to the church/spiritual aspect clearer in the history part.
- More attendee centered activities and less sitting at the tables
- It might be good to mix a church and non-church group as attendees; try to get a wider age range.
- Would have liked to have seen the videos.; Have all handouts in folders.
- Definitely could use follow up workshop time to discuss conversation in purple churches. How to deal with "nasty" responses; love the idea of a workshop on trauma and information on medical care.
- Sharing video links to email list.
- I have been to many workshops on race from a faith/church perspective that seem to be about "starting a conversation." I've been having this conversation for about 20 years. I would love workshops that go beyond that initial step. Some of us need the next level.