

Eastern Pennsylvania Annual Conference

Response to the Northeastern Jurisdiction Call to Action

Presented to the Annual Conference June 15, 2017. Revised August 8, 2017

The statements in bold type are taken verbatim from the Call to Action resolution presented to and approved by the 2016 Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference in Lancaster, PA. The plain text that follows some statements reports our conference's actions so far in response to the recommendations and demands of the resolution.

1. In an effort to address, confront and otherwise demand systemic, fundamental and institutional change both within the church and the world we strongly encourage that the NEJ College of Bishops, the lay and clergy leadership of the NEJ and each Annual Conference to do the following:

To confront y/our racism, and affirm that, while all lives matter in God's eyes, in the current cultural and social context of this country, Black lives and all lives of color really do matter. Commitments of the bishop:

- a) Bishop Johnson has an Intercultural Coach to help her address her own blind spots (meeting four times a year).
- b) Bishop Johnson took the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) to make herself more aware of cultural issues.
- c) Bishop Johnson is committed to visiting every black church in her area and has visited many.
- d) Bishop Johnson and her Cabinet had an overnight retreat in the fall, facilitated by the Kaleidoscope Institute, to address Intercultural Competency.
- e) Bishop Johnson visited the Birmingham (Alabama) Civil Rights museum and the 16th Street Baptist Church in December.
- f) Bishop Johnson and the Cabinet viewed and discussed during a Cabinet meeting the documentary "13th" about the tradition of mass incarceration and economic exploitation of African Americans since the Constitution's 13th Amendment ended slavery.
- g) Bishop Johnson intentionally has weekly conversations with people of color, especially those of African American descent, and encourages others to do likewise.
- h) Bishop Johnson spoke with the UMW and UMM about promoting the Call to Action through the "Charter for Racial Justice" (UMW) and the discipling ministries of the UMM.
- i) Bishop Johnson writes blogs regularly on topics of race, privilege and equality.
- j) Bishop Johnson and the Cabinet read and discussed the book *The End of White Christian America*.

2. That the NEJ College of Bishops collectively and as individuals commit to lead the Church in healing the wounds caused by unchecked racism, white privilege and internalized oppression.

3. That District Superintendents and staff of all conferences comply with #1 above.

- a) All Conference staff and superintendents have and are expected to attend the "Changing Racism" 3-day retreat run by Visions, Inc. (supervised by the bishop and the Conference Committee on Race and Religion). This is an ongoing program of the Conference.
- b) A superintendent who had not previously taken the IDI test did so in the fall of 2016.
- c) A dedicated Religion and Race webpage now appears on the conference website offering access to helpful information and links to a multitude of resources.

- 4. To initiate ongoing internal and external conversations on white privilege, white supremacy, racism and oppression, including internalized oppression on every district, sub-district and within each local church. Realizing that viewing each other through the eyes of Christ and remaining at the table during the hard/difficult discussion is the only way/path to new genuine relationships and partnerships. Out of this, new and more sustainable relationships and partnerships will emerge.**
- a) All 6 districts are holding ongoing white privilege and racism workshops and focus groups throughout 2016-2017.
 - 1) **Central** – “Straight Talk about Racism” conversations: December 4, 2016, February 4, 2017, and March 25, 2017
 - 2) **SW** – Periodic Racial justice dialogues
 - 3) **NW** – April 29, 2017 – “Tools for Ministry” workshop theme of racism
 - 4) **NE** – February 7, 2017, March 7, 2017, April 4, 2017 – Vital Conversations
 - 5) **East** – January 20-21, 2017 – Two Day workshop: “Walking With”
 - 6) **SE** – 2/16 White Privilege Dialogue, 4/19 – District Dialogues at Lincoln University to learn the history of the first African-American degree granting institution and the history of the underground railroad; 1/16, 4/29 Conversations on Racial Reconciliation
 - b) All pastors under appointment and all Certified Lay Ministers must take the mandatory “Changing Racism” class as a prerequisite for certification.
 - c) All pastors were called to preach on social justice and racism on Sunday, January 15, 2017.
 - d) Pastors in Cross Racial/Cross Cultural appointments received ongoing training and fellowship over lunch at the episcopal residence May 15, 2017.
 - e) Cross Racial/Cross Cultural pastors and church members attended an annual workshop June 3, 2017
 - f) The Urban Commission is preparing to engage in “Black/Brown” racial conversations.
- 5. To initiate training in areas of racism, white privilege, white supremacy and racial equity for the entire College of Bishops, as well as the District Superintendents, Annual Conference staff and lay leadership within the NEJ. Furthermore, these areas shall also be a focus of all NEJ-sponsored leadership events and efforts, such as See Know Love. Those groups and agencies such as Volunteers in Mission, Association of Conference Lay Leaders, Young Adult Council, and NEJ Youth are urged to hear this call as well and to incorporate training and conversation around systemic racism and cross-racial and cross-cultural power dynamics into their gatherings and ministries.**
- a) The conference Committee on Race and Religion hosted a second level “Changing Racism” workshop in January and June 2017 with plans to do so twice yearly. All participants in the 3-day Changing Racism Workshop and those who had attended the predecessor, Healing the Wounds of Racism workshops, are strongly encouraged to attend the 1-day follow-up workshop.
 - b) The Bishop addressed racism and invited dialogue with the Clergy and the Laity of our Annual Conference on the Bishop’s Days on the District in the fall of 2016
 - c) Historic St. George’s UMC’s hosts the “Time Traveler” who performs historical presentations for visitors and confirmation classes several times a year, describes the mistreatment of black people at St. George’s that led to the formation of the A.M.E. Church under Rev. Richard Allen.
 - d) The Conference Council on Youth Ministry facilitated a diversity retreat in March 2017 and address the issues in its campus ministry initiatives.
 - e) The 2016 Annual Conference Theme was Racial Justice. Bishop Linda Lee gave a morning workshop on racism and how to build relationships.

- f) Order of Elders Day Apart – November 13, 2016 featured a “Social Entrepreneurial Development” seminar, followed by a dialogue on race that ended with a commitment to continue the conversations into the future.
- g) Order of Deacons Day Apart - April 22, 2017 - “Racial Injustice” talk- explored the call and ways to respond.

6. To evaluate and address the impact of structural and institutional racism on people of color in the NEJ: particularly in response to the study in Section 4 of the next section, with regard to the closing of Black churches.

There was dedicated and thorough conversation this year with one African American church that decided to close prior to the 2017 Annual Conference.

7. How current ordination processes in the Annual Conferences affect Black persons interested in ordained ministry.

- a) Bishop Johnson spoke with the chairs of BOOM to emphasize the importance of recruiting African American candidates for ministry and to take note of the racial biases that can appear in the interview process for commissioning and ordination.
- b) Conference camp leaders are intentionally recruiting African American youth at African American churches for participation and leadership development in summer camps.

8. That each Annual Conference provide an annual update on work in all of the above to the NEJ Committee on Episcopacy, the Vision Table and the Multi-Ethnic Center, and share experiences that may be helpful to others in the NEJ.

That each Annual Conference provide a written report to be included in the 2020 NEJ Advance Daily Christian Advocate. This report should include its (1) progress within the 2017-2020 Q and (2) plans for the 2021-2024 Q. The College of Bishops, the Vision Table, the Multi-Ethnic Center for Ministry and each Annual Conference should identify and develop funding to support this proposal.

9. In addition, we encourage the College of Bishops, the Vision Table and the Multi-Ethnic Center identify and provide seed funding for the implementation of the following goals to be accomplished by the end of the 2017-2020 Quadrenium. Those areas with a significant demographic of people from African descent should reflect a proportional number of Black leaders, both lay and clergy at every level of the Jurisdiction and Annual Conference.

- a) The conference has 27 African American Churches out of a total of 415 churches. African Americans make up 33% of the Appointive cabinet and hold some major leadership positions in the conference: Conference Associate Lay Leader, Dean of the Cabinet(2015-2017), Chair of the Connectional Table, Loan Board Chair, former Nominations Committee Chair (2016-2017), Metro Ministries Board Chair, several district lay leaders and associate lay leaders, Conference UMW Co-Chair and Conference UMM President. In addition, the Communications Director is African American.

10. To establish at least one new faith community of African descent focused on engaging black children, youth and young adults in every Episcopal Area in the NEJ, which has a ten-mile radius with a Black population of 30,000 or more.

The Congregational Development Team began preliminary conversations in 2016-2017.

- 11. To increase the number of viable and sustainable Black churches and ministries in the NEJ.**
- 12. To study the impact of structural and institutional racism on Black people in the NEJ, in particular:**
- 13. Closing of Black churches**

There was dedicated and thorough conversation this year with one African American church that decided to close prior to the 2017 Annual Conference.

- 14. The impact of the ordination process on the number of black persons interested in ordained ministry.**
 - a) Bishop Johnson spoke with the Executive Team of BOOM to emphasize the importance of recruiting and supporting African American candidates for ministry.
 - b) BOOM is evaluating its process to see where we can improve.
- 15. To encourage UM related seminaries within the NEJ to intentionally recruit and offer resources to more students of color, to offer an urban ministries track that is contextual to the Black Lives Matter movement and to initiate training for faculty in the areas of racism, white privilege and white supremacy.**