

WISCONSIN CHARTER FOR RACIAL JUSTICE – 2012

Who: For all units/local organizations/circles in Wisconsin Conference
What: A program geared to Wisconsin about issues of race. Duration 30-45 minutes.
Where: At any place that United Methodist Women meet
When: Any time in 2012 and after
Why: *To become aware of what is happening in our own communities
*To become more aware of people hurting around us
*To be able to live peacefully in our neighborhoods, both local and extended
*To get credit for #7 on the Mission Today activities list
How: By using this prepared program in your local unit/organization/circle.

“Thoughts, Words, Deeds”

Focus statement from the Charter for Racial Justice: (read together)

Left side: BECAUSE WE BELIEVE (#5) we must declare before God and before each other that we have sinned against our sisters and brothers of other races in thought, word, and deed....

Right side: WE WILL (#5) increase local churches' awareness of the continuing needs for equal education, housing, employment, and medical care for all members of the community, and create opportunities to work for these things across racial lines.

Worship

Hymn: “Wounded World That Cries For Healing” - #2177 Faith We Sing
(Note: If you do not have FWS, use “Jesu, Jesu” -- #432 in the United Methodist Hymnal. If you don't have an accompanist, sing acappella or read the words chorally.)

Scripture: Matthew 22: 34-40. *Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question, “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”*

Jesus replied, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Message:

Love God, neighbor, self--this is a commandment. This is not optional. We fail to do this at our peril and the peril of the world. This is the way the world is made. All boundaries are trumped by this commandment to love God, neighbor, and self. When I dehumanize you, I dehumanize myself. When the toe is hurting, the whole body hurts.....

Love of neighbor is the most important way we express our love to God, as we recognize the image of God in each human being. If we love one another, God lives in us. To love is to know God. Love is the primary virtue. “If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of

angels but do not have love, I am a noisy gong and a clanging cymbal” (I Corinthians 13:1).

In Matthew, the Great Commandment is preceded by Jesus’ teaching about the centrality of love and that “love of neighbor” includes the enemy. Luke illustrates the commandment with the story of the Good Samaritan that addresses the question of who is my neighbor. In this story, we find that the neighbor is not just one of our clan or our religious community, but the stranger. Our neighbor includes our enemies, and anyone in need. (excerpted from our 2011 School Of Christian Mission study book, The Journey, by Stephanie Hixon and Thomas Porter, p.49-51.)

Stories from Wisconsin:

Reader 1: Allowing myself plenty of time, I arrived early for an ultra-sound appointment at my clinic in Eau Claire. While observing other patients who were waiting to be called to their specific test, I noticed an older Hmong woman holding her appointment data. Even after my test, she was still firmly holding her appointment sheet and still waiting. Did she not read the sign reading...’If after 20 minutes you have not been called, return to the reception desk.’ ? I questioned whether I should intervene...talk to the woman or tell the receptionist. I did nothing. I left still concerned, but I did nothing thinking it was none of my business. Did I allow her to be ignored? Did I miss an opportunity to talk to her? What would you do in this scenario?

Reader 2: Project 16:49 is a film that debuted at the 2009-2010 Beloit International Film Festival. 16:49 stands for how many hours a person is not in the classroom from the end of one day to the start of the next and has to find a way of surviving if they have no permanent place to live. There are teenagers from all ethnicities in the film. As a result of this film, funding is being sought to build a house for homeless teenagers in the Rock County area. In the current school year (2011-2012) there are over 250 unaccompanied teenagers in the Rock County area. The film uses real persons, the actual students. Here is a quote from Cory Winters who watched his straight A grades fall while he dealt with the stress of living apart from his siblings. "You feel like you're the only person in the world who's gone through this stuff," "You feel not human."

Reader 3: Near Spooner, there is a half-way house for Native Americans from all over. After completing treatment for addiction, they go to ****Ain Dah Ing** to strengthen their resolve. They have group counseling sessions everyday and opportunities for recreation. Billie LaBumbard reports that the Spooner UMC wanted to help in some way, if possible. Rather than giving what the church thought Ain Dah Ing could use, they asked first., which showed respect. Softball equipment was the request, so the Spooner UMC gave them theirs, since they no longer had a team themselves. Ain Dah Ing plays against other treatment centers. The church also joined them on the Spring walk for sobriety, which was an honor. On Native American Sunday, a counselor came to speak and she made fry bread for everyone to enjoy after the service. It was fun. ******(pronounced “ahn-dah-ing)

Reader 4: Northcott Neighborhood House, located in a low income, mostly African American area of Milwaukee, serves 10,000 residents annually. Education is a high priority for preschool through adult participants. Northcott operates three Head Start Programs, serving 300 children annually. It also collaborates with Milwaukee Public

Schools to provide after-school tutoring and recreation. One of Northcott's most innovative projects is Fresh Start, a program that trains youth in home-building skills, while they attend academic classes to earn a high school diploma or tech school competencies. This program is so successful that the city of Milwaukee has contracted with Northcott to renovate existing houses and build new homes in low income neighborhoods. This neighborhood ministry was started in 1951 by a few Methodist women who saw a need. It is now a health and welfare ministry of our Wisconsin Annual Conference and is one of UMW's national mission sites.

Reader 5: Another ministry begun by United Methodist Women is Hmong House of Good News, also in Milwaukee. It serves Hmong senior citizens who have been isolated in their homes due to lack of the ability to speak and read English and lack of understanding of our American culture. Part of the programming for Hmong House is to offer education about nutrition, exercise, and hygiene practices that promote good health.

Last year the staff and board members took the elders to the nursing home section of Village at Manor Park, an assisted living complex that has ties to our United Methodist Church, so that they could learn about long term care when their families could not provide it. One of the participants told how her husband had been handled roughly in a different nursing home, when he was recovering after surgery. He could not speak or understand English, so he could not express his needs or follow directions. The staff at that place were mean to him, but she could tell it would be different here, where people were respectful and kind.

That started a discussion about the need for a nursing home with a wing for Hmong patients, where aides could speak Hmong, and the kitchen could provide traditional Hmong food. Similarly, there could be a need for wings to accommodate those who speak Spanish.

Reader 6: Since the arrival of the Somalians to Barron to work in the Turkey processing plant, life for them has changed. They were more involved in the community to begin with, but now since more of them have come to reside there, they have formed their own worship center and grocery store and have returned to some of their own, familiar social activities. The young people are involved in the schools. Many participate in sports, but yet many others do not mingle with the other students very much. Sometimes the learning process in our American schools does not move along well for them. The United Methodist Church in Barron has strived to reach out to them, but with their own worship center, they prefer to remain with their own folks. (information from Laura Church of the UMC in Barron)

Litany on Concerns in Wisconsin.

(Attached separately so that it will be easier to copy for group participation)

Discussion:

1. Talk about your community. How many ethnic groups live there? Do they live in separate neighborhoods or are they mixed together? Why do you think that is? Are there any tensions? How many ethnic groups are present in your church? Is everyone welcome? Are your committees, choir, circles integrated?

2. Talk about education. Statistics show that white children consistently score higher in school and graduate at higher rates than African American or Hispanic children. What do you think accounts for that? What role does poverty play? English as a second language? Student behavior? Parental involvement? Teacher competence? Attitudes of students/teachers/ parents? Are any factors, either positive or negative, related only to race- or do all races in Wisconsin share the same challenges? Is there any way you could get involved to help struggling students?

3. Talk about medical issues. Statistics show that African American children have higher incidents of asthma than other ethnic groups. [Black= 22%. Native American, Asian, Hispanic, and white = 10 to 13%] Why is that, do you think?

They also have the highest percentage of low birth weights and infant deaths before age one. What causes that? What could you do to help a pregnant woman or a new mother to care for herself and her baby?

(NOTE: Medical researchers have identified one factor that can be responsible for lower birth weights and more infant deaths. Research shows that black women at all income levels have high incidents of stress, which affects growth of their babies in utero, contributing to low birth weights and premature births. These factors, in turn, contribute to higher infant mortality rates.—Wisconsin Department of Health Services report, Jan. 2010)

Closing:

Song: “They’ll Know We Are Christians By Our Love” - #2223 in Faith We Sing
(Note: If you do not have Faith We Sing, use #549 from the UMC Hymnal, “Where Charity and Love Prevail” – v. 1,2, 4, & 6. The tune is the traditional one used for “In Christ There Is No East or West.”)

Prayer: Read together. #456 in UMC Hymnal. “For Courage to Do Justice”

RESOURCES

Here are a few of the Response articles on racial justice:

Criminalization of Communities of Color (October 2011)

Facing a New Jim Crow (April 2011)

Speaking Out for Justice (September 2011)

DVD “16:49”- the video about homeless teens in Janesville. Available for your return postage cost through Judy Vasby (608-576-0173 or vasby.umw@gmail.com)

2012 reading program books

Color-blind

The New Jim Crow

Census information: Wisconsin Quick Facts from the US Census Bureau at

<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/55000.html>

Optional activity: Colored Hands, a skit done at the 2011 School of Christian Mission in which participants wore brightly colored gloves to represent skin tones and acted out a story about accepting the “other” -- Available through Judy Vasby (608-576-0173 or vasby.umw@gmail.com)

LITANY ON CONCERNS IN WISCONSIN

Leader: In Wisconsin, the 2010 Census reported a population of 5,686,986, an increase of 6% since 2000.

People: Thank you, God, for these men, women, and children who were created in Your image.

Leader: In Wisconsin live people of many racial and ethnic backgrounds- Native American, Asian, Hispanic, African American, and Caucasian.

People: Thank you, God, for the richness of our diversity.

Leader: In Wisconsin about 20% of children under age 18 live in poverty. This is one in five! But in Milwaukee, Sawyer, and Menominee counties the rate is higher.

People: Open our eyes, Lord, that we might see the living conditions of our neighbors.

Leader: In Wisconsin, African American babies die at a rate of 15 per 1000 live births within their first year, which is three times the rate of White babies and 2.5 times the rate of Hispanic babies. In fact, only four other states have a higher mortality rate for Black infants.

People: Open our ears, Lord, to hear the cries of those who mourn.

Leader: In Wisconsin, African American babies are born with low birth weights—less than 5 pounds, 5 ounces—at more than twice the rate of Hispanic or White babies.

People: Open our minds, Lord. Why is this happening?

Leader: In Wisconsin, across all income levels, 27% of the Hispanic population has no health insurance, compared to 15% for African Americans and 9% for Whites.

People: Open our hearts, Lord, to the plight of our neighbors.

Leader: In Wisconsin, while 9% of White children and 10% of African American children have been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, 16% of children of mixed races have been identified as having this condition.

People: Open our eyes, Lord, to see the needs of our children.

Leader: In Wisconsin, for persons aged 25 and older, 91% of Asians, 88% of Whites, and 84% of African Americans have graduated from high school, but only 63% of Hispanics have received a diploma.

People: Open our ears, Lord. Help us to hear reasons for this disparity.

ALL: Here are our hands, Lord. They reach up in prayer and reach out to offer assistance in order to enfold our sisters and brothers in Your care and grace. Show us what to do. Help us to love our neighbors as much as we love ourselves. AMEN.