EVALUATING THE EXPERIENCE OF RACISM BY BLACK CLERGY PERSONS WITHIN THE INTERCULTURAL VISION OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA

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Paul Anthony Douglas Walfall

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ABSTRACT

EVALUATING THE EXPERIENCE OF RACISM BY BLACK CLERGY PERSONS WITHIN THE INTERCULTURAL VISION OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA

Paul Anthony Douglas Walfall

First United Church, Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta, Canada.

What has been the effect of The United Church of Canada's vision of becoming an Intercultural church on the experience of racism within the church? This paper offers an answer that question. The United Church of Canada in 2012 committed itself to a vision of becoming an intercultural church. This vision came after many years of work by the church to address the issues of racial diversity within Canada and within the church. Racial justice was at the heart of the movement to become an intercultural church, although interculturalism was expanded beyond the issues of racial justice alone. In this paper the tool to evaluate the intercultural vision of the church is the experiences of Black clergy persons.

The faith statements of the church, and in particular 'A *Song of Faith*,' was presented in 2012 as the theology of interculturalism to guide the church. Six biblical/theological themes are highlighted and discussed in the paper. These themes undergird both the intercultural vision and offer a framework for a theology against racism. An overview of the historical journey that led to the vision of an intercultural church is also presented.

Research was done in two parts. In the first part, interviews were done with six Black ministers of The United Church of Canada to discuss their experiences of racism in the church.

The second part of the research tested the understandings of interculturalism and racism of White members in three congregations. These congregations were led by White ministers, a total of forty-five members participated. Analysis of the data reveal that the effectiveness of interculturalism is dependent on the extent that congregations (Communities of Faith) seek to become intercultural. I conclude that anti-racism awareness is needed and should be done intentionally and in tandem with movements to become an intercultural church.

To Kathleen Walfall, Pauline Walfall and

the blessed memory of Alfred S. Walfall and E. Elaine Lomax

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: THE PROJECT

In this project I evaluate the intercultural vision of The United Church of Canada (UCC) using the experiences of racism by Black clergy within the church as the lens through which this evaluation will occur.[1] In seeking to accomplish this aim some factors need to be acknowledged from the beginning. These factors set a framework for this paper and help to avoid certain misrepresentations of reality. The first is that this paper does not aim to prove that racism exists in Canada or in the UCC. The assumption is that this has already been established by various scholars and policy statements of the UCC. In 2000, for example, the UCC adopted a policy on Anti-Racism made tacit acknowledgement of racism within the church and also made the confession that enough was not being done about racism.[2] It should be acknowledged that the policy of anti-racism was the culmination of many years of anti-racism work done by the UCC. Shepherd (2019) states that "in the late 1940's, it *[the UCC*] continued to press the government to redress their discriminatory policies against the Japanese, called for the

[1] The United Church of Canada is the largest Protestant denomination in Canada. It was formed in 1925 through a union of the Methodist Church in Canada, Congregationalist churches, local Union churches in western Canada and 70% of Presbyterian churches

[2] *"That All May Be One", Policy Statement on Anti-Racism*, *37th General Council of The United Church of Canada* (Toronto: The United Church of Canada, 2000).

repeal of the 1923 Chinese Immigration Act, and called upon the government to receive more refugees."[3] The 2000 Anti-Racism policy notes, however, that at times The United Church of Canada has been complicit with racism. This complicity was noted primarily in the work of assimilation, especially for First Nations people, thus ravaging their cultures and anglicizing them into auto-ethnic alienation:

> The historical response of The United Church of Canada to the diversities of Canada and to racism has been mixed. The church's early involvement with indigenous and immigrant peoples was primarily evangelistic and charitable, providing congregational ministry and social services. In doing this, it worked to assimilate them.[4]

Ultimately in 2012 the drive to seek racial justice was a contributing fact to the acceptance by the 41st General Council[5] of a vision to become an intercultural church by The United Church of Canada.

The 41st General Council accepted the following definition of an Intercultural church:

> To be an intercultural church is to respond to the call to live together in intentional ways that engage in mutual recognition, respect, and understanding of difference: and through intentional self-examination, relationship building and equitable access of power, we as the church seek to be fully committed and faithful in our response.[6]

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[3] Loraine MacKenzie Shepherd, "The United Church's Mission Work within Canada and Its Impact on Indigenous and Ethnic Minority Communities," in *The Theology of the United Church of Canada*, ed. Don Schweitzer, Robert C Fennell, and Michael Bourgeois (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2019). 294

[4] *"That All May Be One", Policy Statement on Anti-Racism*. 7

[5] The General Council is the highest decision making body in The United Church of Canada and has the responsibility to determine denominational shaping decisions.

[6] *Intercultural Ministries: Living into Transformation*, *General Council Executive of The United Church of Canada, March 24-26,2012* (Toronto: The United Church of Canada, 2012). 162

In accepting to walk the path to make this vision a reality, the General Council viewed interculturalism as the tool that would combat racism within The United Church of Canada.

Having acknowledged that the reality of racism is understood as existing in the church and society, the question that this paper seeks to answer is how effective the church has been in addressing the presence of anti-Black racism. Hogarth and Fletcher (2018) observe that the racism experienced by Black people in Canada is oftentimes covert and manifested in insidious ways.[7] Maynard (2017) states that "Anti-Blackness in Canada often goes unspoken. When acknowledged, it is assumed to exist, perhaps, but in another time (centuries ago), or in another place (the United States)."[8] The church exists in society and the ethos and ways of being in society are to be found in the church. The church is not insulated from the thinking of the society around it. If this is true then there may well be in the church, using the words of Maynard (2017), "a wall of silence"[9] about the presence of anti-Black racism existing within the UCC. It is not that anti-Black racism is not present but there may well be something which leads to an impotence of the church to confront it and the church may well 'sweep it under the carpet.' This feeling is captured well in a statement made by a commissioner to the 43rd General Council in July 2018 and reported in the November 2018 issue of *The United Church Observer*,

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[7] Kathy Hogarth and Wendy L Fletcher, *A Space for Race: Decoding Racism, Multiculturalism, and Post Colonialism in the Quest for Belonging in Canada and Beyond* (New York: Oxford Press, 2018). 21
[8] Robyn Maynard, *Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada from Slavery to the Present* (Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2017). 3
[9] Ibid.

> The institutionalized racism that exists in Canada is so deep and saturated and, in the system, that the level of oppressiveness is intense beyond having it in your face . . . It is like having a wall that you cannot see . . . because you don't know where exactly the issue is.[10]

The reality of this silence about anti-Black racism and impotence to address it when highlighted can cause some to feel that the church is not doing anything about racism. In many respects it brings into question the church's effectiveness in dealing with racism using the tool of interculturalism.

Outline of the Study

This study is organized in 5 chapters including this introduction. In this chapter I present my experiences in the church. This study had its genesis primarily in my experience of racism as a Black male minister in The United Church of Canada. The chapter then closes with basic definitions of 1) interculturalism, 2) race, 3) racism, and 4) White privilege and White supremacy.

In seeking to evaluate the effectiveness of interculturalism to address the issue of anti-Black racism I provide in Chapter 2, an overview of the history of how The United Church of Canada came to adopt interculturalism. I seek to anchor this project within

[10] Mugoli Samba, "Wilbur Howard and the White Church," *The United Church Observer*, November, 2018. 32

the historical and social reality of Canada and how The United Church of Canada has, since the 1960's, sought to respond to the changing Canadian context. In that chapter I discuss why the church ultimately did not imitate the Federal Government's policy of multiculturalism but instead set out on a vision of interculturalism.

I engage in Biblical and theological reflection in Chapter 3. In doing this my aim is to engage in the biblical/theological reflections on interculturalism Throughout this paper, I endorse the 2012 proposal in acknowledging that the faith statements of the UCC provide the theologies for interculturalism for the UCC. In Chapter 3 I highlight certain biblical/theological themes which arise when one considers interculturalism. These themes, and others, provide a theological undergirding for the church to live out the vision that was agreed upon in 2012. In Chapter 3, I also discuss the issue of racism, as this is the lens through which interculturalism will be evaluated in this paper.

In Chapter 4, I present the findings of the research conducted. The research was done in two parts. In the first part I conducted ethnographic interviews with six Black ministers of The United Church of Canada. These interviews were to glean their experiences of racism and to elicit their response to the effectiveness of the church in addressing anti-Black racism. In the second part of the research I surveyed the opinions of White members of the church who were members of congregations led by White ministers. Three congregations were involved in this survey. Specifically, the congregations were in the provinces of British Columbia, Ontario, and Prince Edward Island. Fifteen members from each of these congregations were selected to be part of

this research. The report of the interviews and results of the survey are presented in this chapter.

Finally, having presented the report of the interviews and the results of the survey I analyze the data in Chapter 5, and I compare the gleanings from the two parts of the research. Three questions guide this analysis: 1) What was heard; 2) What was discovered; and 3) What is being learnt. As I address this last question, I discuss my conclusions about the effectiveness of the intercultural vision of The United Church of Canada to address the issue of anti-Black racism within the church.

Autoethnographic Survey

In this section of the Chapter I offer three of my experiences in the church as they relate to interculturalism and racism. Each of these experiences occurred at a different level of the church's structure.[11]

[11] The United Church of Canada changed its organizational structures on January 1, 2019. Prior to this the church had a "four court" structure. These structures were 1) Congregation/Pastoral Charge, 2) Presbytery, 3) Conference and 4) General Council. The pre-2019 structures are being referenced in this section.

Experience at the Congregation Level

I came to Canada in August 2010 after serving sixteen years with The Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas[12]. Anecdotally, Canada has been considered as a nation open to Black people[13] and where the issues of anti-Black racism are rare. Racism to my mind, at the time, conjured up images of the Ku Klux Klan and intentional, visible actions being perpetrated against Black people. In coming to Canada therefore racism was the furthest thing from my mind. At the same time, I was coming to a church which advertised itself as being an intercultural church. The issues of whether I would be accepted, welcomed or feel a sense of being accepted because on my race or the colour of my skin were far from the thoughts I had as I readied myself to come to Canada and The United Church of Canada.

Not long after arriving in Canada, I had an experience that caused me to pause and re-evaluate what I was experiencing. An accusation was made by a White female minister that she was verbally abused by the leadership of her church. I was, at the time, appointed to be the chair of the committee of the church body charged to investigate that situation. I went, with a White colleague, to the congregation to gather the facts of the case. While there, and during a short coffee break, I heard a member of the

[12] The Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas (MCCA) is an autonomous Methodist church established in 1967 out of The Methodist Church of Britain. The MCCA is found in the islands of the English, French and Dutch speaking islands of the Caribbean, Haiti, Guyana, Costa Rica, Panama and the Bahama Islands.

[13] The use of the term "Black people" is not intended to suggestion that there is a universally understood Black experience in Canada. In Canada several terms are used to characterize and explain the Black experience. These terms include "people of colour,' African diaspora, African ancestry, African-Canadian and Black Canadian. The use of the phase Black people is also accepted in some situations to describe those from Africa or of African ancestry.

congregation's leadership say, "We have to put that little black boy in his place." I was the only Black person in the room at the time, and to the best of my knowledge there were no Black members of that congregation. In that moment I feared for my safety in a way that I have never had before in my life. This was the first of many experiences I have had with racism while being a minister in The United Church of Canada. I left that meeting as quickly as I could.

Experience at the Presbytery Level

Arising from the experience at the congregation I reported the encounter to the next meeting of the Presbytery Executive. It must be remembered that the Presbytery in the polity of the UCC was the body which had oversight of congregations/pastoral charges and oversight of ministry personnel. As I went to the congregation in question as an agent of the presbytery, I took the opportunity to inform the executive of what had happened and to explain the context in which the statement was made.

The response I received was silence. The silence may well have been a few seconds, but for me it seemed to last too long. The silence was broken by the Presbytery Chair moving on to the next item on the agenda. There was no response to the incident I recounted. A response came during the break time when one member suggested to me that I must have misunderstood what had been said.

Despite the silent initial response, I referred to the incident in subsequent meetings and each time it was met with silence. Things came to a crucial point when an

invitation was issued for the members of the executive to attend an event at the congregation where the statement was made. I immediately made it clear to the executive that I would not attend unless the Presbytery could guarantee my safety. This time I was met with the response that the matter would be investigated. Days later I received a letter from the person who made the statement, offering an apology for the statement made. In the letter the person sought to make it clear that he was not a racist, but he acknowledged that his statement caused me hurt.

Experience at the General Council Executive Level

In July 2018 the church agreed to a change in its organizational structure. One of the changes made was to have a smaller General Council executive (GCE). The GCE prior to this was made up of over 50 persons and the majority were White people. The church decided to have a GCE made up of 15 elected persons and the membership of the GCE would reflect the cultural diversity of the church. The result is that 6 of the 15 elected GCE members are racialized persons and 3 of these are Black people.

From the first meeting of the GCE the Moderator introduced a process to ensure that everyone had an opportunity to speak and no one person or group of persons dominated the meeting. The process was for each speaker to call upon another member of the meeting to speak. This would continue until all persons had an opportunity. At the first meeting I noted that I was the penultimate person asked to speak. This was not odd to me; it was our first meeting and I thought this was simply “the luck of the draw.”

During that meeting I noted that the Black members of the meeting were continually called upon after the first 9 members spoke and that a Black member spoke last. I wondered about this pattern and made a mental note that I would watch more closely how the meeting progressed and what happened in the future. I was to discover that indeed the pattern continued.

At the second meeting of the GCE the topic of White privilege was discussed. We received a report from a Task Force that was appointed to look at the topic of White privilege and to recommend to the GCE how the church could address White privilege. The conversation in the meeting suggested that the issue was something external to the group and that there was no manifestation of White privilege or racism within the meeting. I could not take it any longer, I had to speak up. I brought up the pattern I had observed. The response initially was silence. Later members of the meeting came to me to acknowledge that they too had taken note of this pattern, but also confessed that they were trying to find the best way to bring it up. Since that time there has been a more intentional approach to ensure that the Black members of the meeting were not left until the last to speak.

The first casualty of these experiences was my understanding of racism. I had to redefine this phenomenon, and, in the redefinition, I was able to see how common place racism is in the society in which I live. Yet I was also to wonder if my experience was isolated or whether other Black ministers in the church were having similar experiences. These experiences were dissonant with the narrative I was hearing about Canada and The United Church of Canada. In my mind this was a puzzle that needed to

be solved: “could persons in a church that is seeking to be intercultural experience racism?” Ultimately the question that I was asking was, “What has been the net effect of being an intercultural church as it affects occurrence of anti-Black racism, White privilege and White supremacy in the United Church of Canada?”

The preceding experiences helped to motivate my interest in racism and interculturalism. I conclude this chapter with basic definitions of some key concepts which will occur throughout the paper. These concepts are 1) Interculturalism, 2) race, 3) racism, and 4) White privilege and White supremacy.

Initial Definitions

The following are basic definitions for some of the concepts that will be dealt with in this paper. The definitions are termed basic as they provide the understanding that is at play in the thesis of this paper and they clarify my thinking on these key concepts. I will explore more detailed discussions on these terms much later in the paper.

Interculturalism

Interculturalism may be defined as the creation of a culture of diversity in the society through dialogue and interactions among, and within, different cultures and

identities. This interplay is expected to be occurring primarily, but not exclusively, at the "micro-levels' or places of daily living among peoples. It is important to note that interculturalism does not strive simply for tolerance and acceptance of differences among cultures and identities. In seeking for the equal acceptance of all cultures and identities, it does not support measures for the assimilation of cultures into a dominant culture or a normative mode of being in society. According to Negru (2015) cross-cultural interactions between cultures and their members are advocated by interculturalism.[14] Cantle (2014) notes that the intercultural model "builds interactions between and within cultures" and further notes that it offers better support for society where "difference is no longer simply defined by 'race' and that identity has become multifaceted and dynamic."[15]

Cultural and racial diversity continues to be a feature of many nations in the world. The history of the world describes many movements of people from various geographic locations to another. Some migrations are and were voluntary others were compelled by coercing factors. The Transatlantic trade of humans into slavery is an example of non-voluntary movements of peoples. Today, immigration has been a major factor in the movement of large numbers of people. The result of the movement of peoples has been the intensification of cultural and racial diversity in the locations where people either chose or are forced to settle. Cantle (2014) observes that today in almost all western economies there exists the experience of "super diversity" or "hyper

[14] Marinel Negru, "Intercultura;Ism and Civil Society," *Journal Plus Education* XII, no. 1 (2015). 102
[15] Ted Cantle, "National Identity, Plurality and Interculturalism," *The Political Quarterly* 85, no. 3 (July - September 2014).

diversity" where there are "over 300 language groups" existing in many of major cities (e.g. Toronto, New York, Vancouver, London and Amsterdam).[16] With the reality of diversity has come the need for policies to ensure the peaceful co-existence of varied racial and cultural groupings. Multiculturality and interculturality have become two forms of understandings that have developed to address the issues of cultural and racial co-existence in society. Multiculturalism's main understandings are "tolerance, equal rights and the avoidance of assimilation."[17] However, The United Church of Canada has been clear that it is seeking for interculturalism and not multiculturalism.

Race

The concept of race points to a categorization of human beings based on certain observable phenotypic differences which are falsely believed to affect physiology, ability and capability. Race as a concept is completely a social construct. This concept would seek to falsely assert that the physical differences of humans are determinants of ability, capability and status. The word race first appeared in the English language in 1508 when the poet William Dunbar spoke about kings and their inherited rights.[18] However the use of the word in relation to the categorization of human beings based on facial features and skin colour was to occur in 1684 when the French physician, François

[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid. 313
[18] Joseph Mensah, *Black Canadians: History, Experience, Social Conditions* (Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2010). 13

Bernier suggested the division of humankind into four races.[19] It was Bernier's categorization which used skin colour and certain observable differences as the means for determining intelligence and functional usefulness to society. Kawuki-Mukasa (2005) indicates that the understanding of race was used to the advantage of European expansion.[20] The use of Bernier's categorization made it possible for non-European peoples to be viewed in terms of a false narrative which held that the biological traits were unalterable.

Mensah (2010) notes that "most scholars now reject the biological conception of race in favor of an approach that regards race as a social construct used to describe and explain certain physical and genetic differences among groups of people."[21] The discrediting of the biological/scientific claim meant that the phenotypic differences between human beings were not determinants of anything but a phenotypic difference. Yet even with this debunking, the concept of race has not lost its allure in modern society. Its continued usage in social discourse makes race a concept that must be considered in our contemporary Canadian society. Its power exists in the way society has constructed its usefulness. Race as a social construct distinguishes "a human population . . . on the basis of socially perceived physical traits such as skin pigmentation, hair texture, facial features and the like."[22]

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[19] Ibid.
[20] Issac Kawuki-Mukasa, *The United Church of Canada's Policy against Racism: Constructing a Theology of Inclusion* (Toronto: Toronto School of Theology, 2005).
[21] Mensah, *Black Canadians: History, Experience, Social Conditions*. 14
[22] Ibid. 6

Racism

Fredrickson (2015) notes that racism is not simply the holding of a prejudiced view of one category of humans against another. The issues of power and control are to be found in the concept of racism. Fredrickson (2015) notes that implicit in the concept of racism are the issues of "difference and power".[23] He explains that racism "originates from a mindset that regards "them" as different from "us" in ways that are permanent and unbridgeable."[24] Yet the reality that race and racism are social constructs defy the belief of "permanent and unbridgeable" differences between persons with different skin colors.

Racism means that one group has power in the society over another and they use this power to exercise control and hegemony over other groups. Racism is not "simply a modern theory that biology determines history of culture."[25] Instead, the concept of racism purports to establish a racial order which is believed to reflect the laws of nature and the decrees of God.[26] Racism implies a situation in which one group dominates another based on ideas of racial supremacy and inferiority. This social understanding is falsely considered as being normative.

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[23] George M. Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015). 9
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.

White Privilege and White Supremacy

Having discussed the definition of race and racism, we must now briefly discuss White privilege and White Supremacy. White privilege describes the advantages and privileges that White people have in society solely because of their race. DiAngelo (2018) notes that it is "a sociological concept referring to advantages that are taken for granted by whites and that cannot be similarly enjoyed by people of colour in the same context."[27] White privilege is a concomitant of racism. These advantages or privileges are assumed, by White people, as normative for all persons in society until they are challenged. Eden-Lodge (2017) describes White privilege as White people not having to experience the negative consequences of racism as felt by non-White people; it is the absence of racial discrimination for White people.[28]

According to DiAngelo (2018) White supremacy is an ideology which "promotes the idea of whiteness as the ideal for humanity."[29] She notes that it is present especially in those countries which have a history of colonialism by Western nations.[30] This ideology is important for consideration because it is not overtly acknowledged and because it permeates every aspect of the society. In his book *The Racial Contract,* Charles W. Mills states that White supremacy is "the unnamed system that has made

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[27] Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018). 24
[28] Reni Eddo-Lodge, *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018). 81
[29] DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*. 29
[30] Ibid. 2

the modern world what it is today."[31] The power of White supremacy is because of its invisibility and presence within the political, economic and social structures.

In offering basic definitions to certain key concepts of this paper the aim has been to ensure that there is an alignment of understandings. These concepts are central to the thesis of the paper and are key to the issues that are to be discussed.

Summary

The purpose of this paper is to evaluate the movement of the UCC towards becoming an intercultural church using the presence of racism as the means of evaluation. In introducing what I am setting out to do in this paper I have also presented my experiences within the UCC as an autoethnographic study. Later in the paper the voices of other Black ministers will be heard as they describe their experiences in the church. A key understanding in this paper is that of interculturalism. I will now engage in an overview of how The United Church of Canada came to describe itself as an intercultural church and to hold a vision of interculturalism to guide its work.

[31] Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997).

Chapter 2

INTERCULTURALISM AND THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA

How did The United Church of Canada come to a vision to become an Intercultural church? The answer lies in a consideration of the history that culminates in the decision of the General Council in 2012. This Chapter will show that interculturalism is, in many ways, part of the ongoing mission and witness of the UCC. The chapter will also show that the acceptance of the vision to be an intercultural church was also a response to the need for the church to be relevant to the needs of the Canadian context. The vision called on the church to change so that it could become a change agent within Canada.

In 1967 the Government of Canada changed its immigration policy and began to allow a greater number of persons from Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and South America into the country as permanent residents. The result was that there was greater racial and cultural diversity in the country. The greater diversity of Canada warranted a response from the government of the time. It also meant that all institutions in the country would have to develop policies and strategies to deal with the 'new normal' of a more culturally diverse country. The United Church of Canada, like most other Canadian institutions, had to respond to the increase in diversity of cultures

and races. The responsibility to lead the church through these changing times fell to its Division of Ministry in Canada (DMC).

Ministry in Cultural Diversity

In 1978 the National Ethnic Committee (NEC) was established by the Division of Ministry in Canada (DMC) to be a standing committee that would, *inter alia*, seek to "develop new congregations and ethnic ministries among ethnic peoples."[1] The actions of the church assumed that keeping peoples of a particular ethnic or cultural background together and formed into congregations would be a better way forward than seeking to integrate these persons into existing congregations. In some ways the creation of the ethnic congregations could be seem as the creation of two different United Churches of Canada -- one with White people and the other with the "other" people. At the heart of this was the assumption that the norm of United Church membership was a White person. The work of the NEC may not have been met with much enthusiasm from reports received from around the country from presbyteries and conferences.[2] Ultimately, it was asserted by the General Council that the Ethnic

[1] Hyuk Cho, ""We Are Not Alone': Historical Journey of the United Church of Canada's Response to Become an Intercultural Church," *International Review of Mission* 100, no. 392 (April 2011). 53

[2] The United Church of Canada was organized into four decision making levels or courts of the church. These were the local church (or pastoral charge), the presbytery (which was a grouping of pastoral charges), the conference (which was a grouping of presbyteries) and the General Council. The General Council was the highest decision-making body of the church and was made up of primarily of persons elected from conferences. Each level had specific responsibilities which were outlined in the Manual of the church.

Ministry was a national responsibility of the church and guidelines were therefore developed to guide this ministry throughout the country.

In 1982 the *"Ethnic Ministry Policy and Guidelines"* was laid before the General Council. Included in this document was a section which outlined the history of the ministry of the church with peoples of different cultures. The section, entitled "Inherent Assumptions," confessed that:

> There is an unspoken conclusion that our culture is superior to any other, and our method of expressing the gospel is the norm; the church should be paternalistic in relationship with ethnic congregations; the church knows the need of ethnic people, and thus the church does not have to listen to them, nor adopt their ways. The theology and ways of worship of ethnic people are dismissed as inferior, if they are even heard at all; in a generation or two, the need for ethnic work would be obsolete for assimilation should be complete.[3]

This confession was noteworthy because it was the first time that the church formally acknowledged the racism that existed within its work and system**.** This laid the basis for future actions of the church, including the "Apology" to the Indigenous peoples of Canada in 1986. This confession, and the document that contained it, said nothing about the way forward or how the church would move beyond this racist reality to become something more. The NEC was, however, in the years following to be the frontline of the church's structure to lead the its anti-racism movements. These include the publishing of resources such as *"Moving Beyond Racism: Worship Resources and Background Materials"* and *"Exploring Racism"* in 1987.[4] In 1987 the NEC was renamed the Ethnic

[3] Cho, ""We Are Not Alone': Historical Journey of the United Church of Canada's Response to Become an Intercultural Church." 54
[4] Ibid. 55

Ministries Working Unit (EMWU), in order to better focus the work of the church on the diversity of cultures present in Canada.[5]

Engaging Multicultural Ministry

The church was to expand its concern from dealing with racism alone to that of responding more holistically to the diversity of cultures in the society. It is at this stage that The United Church of Canada adopted language like that of the rest of the country and began to speak about a multicultural ministry. At the 32nd General Council in 1988, based on proposals received, a resolution was passed to broaden the focus of the EMWU by giving it a mandate "to foster multiculturalist emphases in the Church's ministry."[6] At the same General Council, the DMC was called upon to convene "a national consultation on strategies to strengthen and expand our multi-cultural ministry and witness."[7] The move towards embracing multiculturalism was further seen in the statement of the Moderator at the time, the late Very Rev. Sang Chul Lee, when he wrote to *the Mandate* magazine in 1989 stating, "In Canada's multicultural society, this means the church must, to some extent, become a multicultural church."[8]

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[5] Ibid.
[6] *32nd General Council Record of Proceedings Record of Proceedings* (Toronto: The United Church of Canada 1988). 695
[7] Ibid. 162
[8] Cho, ""We Are Not Alone': Historical Journey of the United Church of Canada's Response to Become an Intercultural Church."56

By the meeting of the 34th General Council in 1992 an Anti-Racism Task Group was established. This task group consulted widely within the church across cultural heritages and included Indigenous peoples. The outcome of the consultation was a policy paper on anti-racism and strategies for action by the church. In 1997, the 36th General Council accepted the Anti-Racism policy which stated that "The United Church of Canada commits itself to working to end racism internally and in the wider society with allocation of resources to support this commitment."[9] This statement was a renunciation of the implicit racism noted in the 1982 *Ethnic Ministry Policy and Guidelines.*

Towards an Intercultural Vision

In 1994 the Ethnic Ministries Council was established.[10] The Ethnic Ministries (EM) ~~e~~established a Revisioning Task Group in 2005, out of the need to ensure that the church's ministry was "built on a foundation of racial justice."[11] In the report of this revisioning task group in 2006, the term "multicultural" was not used. It was felt that the term was said to have "political baggage," but the report does not expand on that

[9] *36th General Council Record of Proceedings*, *The United Church of Canada* (Toronto: 1997). 311
[10] The Ethnic Ministries Council was to be latter renamed Ethnic Ministries when the General Council Office was restructured in 2001.
[11] Cho, ""We Are Not Alone': Historical Journey of the United Church of Canada's Response to Become an Intercultural Church." 58

statement.[12] Instead, the report called on the church to embrace a vision of becoming an intercultural church. The report observed that multiculturalism emphasizes diversity but did not encourage interactions among cultures. The task group's report showed that multiculturalism should only be the beginning for the church's ministry. The General Council accepted the report and committed the church to becoming an intercultural church. 'Interculturality' was defined as "mutually respectful diversity and full and equitable participation for all."[13]

In 2012 the 41st General Council received a report entitled "*Intercultural Ministries: Living into Transformation."* In this report the definition of intercultural was expanded to state:

> To be an intercultural church is to respond to the call to live together in intentional ways that engage in mutual recognition, respect, and understanding of difference: and through intentional self-examination, relationship building and equitable access of power, we as the church seek to be fully committed and faithful in our response.[14]

The definition lays emphasis on the intentionality of respect, relationship building and the equitable access of power. Undergirding this definition was the need for cultural interactions to help create new understandings, and a more just society. The difference between multiculturalism and interculturalism was to be seen in the emphasis of the latter on cultural engagement. The 2012 definition accepted by the General Council

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[12] Ibid.
[13] *Intercultural Ministries: A Process of Church-Wide Transformation (Interim Report)*, *40th General Council of The United Church of Canada* (Kelowna: The United Church of Canada, 2009).
[14] *Intercultural Ministries: Living into Transformation*. 162

points to cultures not only co-existing and respecting each other but also involved in dialogue and interchange. The aim of the intercultural vision was the development of a church that was transformed and transforming based on justice, equity and the redress of power. [15] The report puts forward a vision that, by definition, meant the church accepted that it had not yet arrived at the destination envisioned, but was committing itself to living into this destination.

Summary

The United Church of Canada is very clear that it is an intercultural church and not a multicultural church. We have examined some of the history that led to the acceptance of the 2012 proposal of vision and transformation. When we examine the history of the UCC as it moves to interculturalism, we see a church struggling with its own assumptions and underlying prejudices as it strives to be an embodiment of the gospel it proclaims. Yet the vision of an Intercultural church raises the question of the theology that undergird this understanding. The policy document presented to, and accepted by the General Council in 2012 mentions that "becoming an intercultural church is a faithful response to being the church that moves us back to the very beginning of our faith."[16] The document highlights a number of biblical/theological

[15] Ibid. 146
[16] Ibid.

themes which include 1) humankind made in the image of God, 2) cultural diversity, and 3) love. In looking at the themes associated with interculturalism, I have included three additional themes for consideration. These are 4) hesed, 5) social justice and 5) sin. These biblical/theological issues will be our consideration in the next chapter.

Chapter 3

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

In this chapter, I seek to highlight some of the biblical and theological themes which arise from a consideration of the topic of interculturalism. In doing so, I will be using the words from the UCC's statement of faith, A So*ng of Faith,* to offer a framework for my discussion. The reality is that interculturalism is, in many ways, part of the ongoing mission and witness of the church. I will also examine the concept of racism as this the lens through which I evaluate the effectiveness of interculturalism.

In 2006, the 39th General Council of The United Church of Canada approved a new statement of faith called *A Song of Faith.* At the 40th General Council in 2009, a proposal was accepted that set in motion the process to change the section of Doctrine in the Basis of Union to include *A Song of Faith*, along with two other faith statements as subordinate standards.[1] At the 41st General Council in 2012, these statements of faith were officially added to the Doctrine section of the church's Basis of Union and

[1] A subordinate standard means that it is subordinate to the scriptures. The 2019 Manual of The United Church of Canada speaks of the "primacy of scriptures." *A Song of Faith* is one of four statements in the section on Doctrine, that are subordinate to scriptures.

considered as one of the UCC's subordinate standards. Lines 52 – 79 of *A Song of Faith* states the following:

> *Made in the image of God,*
> *we yearn for the fulfillment that is life in God.*
> *Yet we choose to turn away from God.*
> *We surrender ourselves to sin,*
> *a disposition revealed in selfishness, cowardice, or apathy.*
> *Becoming bound and complacent*
> *in a web of false desires and wrong choices,*
> *we bring harm to ourselves and others.*
> *This brokenness in human life and community*
> *is an outcome of sin.*
> *Sin is not only personal*
> *but accumulates*
> *to become habitual and systemic forms*
> *of injustice, violence, and hatred.*
>
> *We are all touched by this brokenness:*
> *the rise of selfish individualism*
> *that erodes human solidarity;*
> *the concentration of wealth and power*
> *without regard for the needs of all;*
> *the toxins of religious and ethnic bigotry;*
> *the degradation of the blessedness of human bodies*
> *and human passions through sexual exploitation;*
> *the delusion of unchecked progress and limitless growth*
> *that threatens our home, the earth;*
> *the covert despair that lulls many into numb complicity*
> *with empires and systems of domination.*
> *We sing lament and repentance.*[2]

A Song of Faith has been used by the church to offer a theological undergirding to interculturalism. The above excerpt highlights certain themes that, in many respects, help to theologize about interculturalism. These themes include: 1) human beings made

[2] *The Manual* (Toronto: United Church Publishing House, 2019). 22

in the image of God, 2) human diversity, 3) love, 4) right relations, 5) social justice, and 6) sin. The 2012 proposal indicated that the statements of faith already adopted by the church provided the theologies for interculturalism that were needed for the church. [3] Consequently, it was felt that there was no need for creating new theology, or theologies, of interculturalism for the church. This chapter offers theological and biblical reflections on the some of the themes that arise from a consideration of interculturalism, using the words from *A Sing of Faith* as my reference points.

Theological Themes

The Image of God

Lines 54 and 55 of *A Song of Faith* says, "Made in the image of God, we yearn for the fulfillment that is life in God."[4] These two lines of the faith statement point to the teaching that human beings were made in the image of God. In the first story of creation in Genesis 1, God creates the world in six days and rests on the seventh. As the culmination of the creative activities, God creates humans. Unlike the second story of creation in Genesis 2:4bff, the source of Genesis 1 creates a story that seems to build up

[3] The faith statements of The United Church of Canada are the 20 Articles of doctrine (produced at the time of the creation of The United Church of Canada in 1925), "A Statement of Faith" (produced in 1940), "A New Creed" (produced in 1968), and "A Song of Faith" (produced in 2006).
[4] *The Manual*.

to a high point. This high point is the creation of humankind and stands as the pinnacle of Creation. In Genesis 1:26 & 27 (NRSV), we read:

> **26** Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."
>
> **27** So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

It is said only of humanity, that God created them in "our image, and according to our likeness." The passage points to the reality that something of the divine is shared with this creation (humans) that has not been given to other creatures[5]. This suggests that humanity is given the additional task of having dominion over the other aspects of creation. All humankind was given the gift of bearing the image of God (imago Dei). It must be emphasized that the biblical narrative says that this specialness extends to all of humankind, and that there is no set, or group, of humans who have been denied this specialness. Rodney S. Sadler, Jr. (2010) notes that "the most significant messages from Genesis 1 is that we are all created *betselem elohim*, or in the 'image of God.' The image of God is a strong foundational theme for the universal worth of all humanity . . .."[6] At the same time, we must acknowledge that the Bible also offers the picture of a God who has given preference to one group of persons over others.

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[5] What makes someone human? This definition may involve many complex discussions. However, the Bible suggests that involved in being human are the following characteristics --1) made in the image of God, 2) having freedom of will and 3) having the potential to create new things based on the physical or psychological endeavor.

[6] Rodney S Sadler Jr, "Genesis," in *The Africana Bible: Reading Isreal's Scripture from Africa and the African Diaspora*, ed. Hugh R Page Jr. et al. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010).

Terence F. Fretheim (2008) notes that the understanding of being created in the image of God must include an understanding of relationality that points to the social nature of humanity, because humans were made in "our image" and "our likeness."[7] He further notes that the dominion of humanity is over the other realms of creation, and not over each other. He contends that the domination of humans over each other would be a distortion of the original intention of God.[8] Yet, if we are to come to terms with this statement by Fretheim (2008), we must take into consideration those cases in the Bible where there are issues of favoritism and preference. While Fretheim's statement may stand as a good point for the purposes of debate, the reality of inter-human relationships in the Bible is far more nuanced. For example, the Bible contains such events as the routing of the Canaanites by the Hebrew people as well as the exilic experience of the Israelites in Babylon.

When looking at the concept of the *imago Dei* we should consider some issues that are in the Bible, as they challenge an understanding of the equality of all human beings. Two of these issues are: 1) divine preference, and 2) the curse of Ham. The impression should not be that the Bible offers a view of an egalitarian relationship of humans with God. A study of the Bible reveals the reality of God showing preference for one group of people over others. Kaminsky (2006) notes that "the notion God favors some individuals and/or groups over others is a central and recurring theme within the

[7] Terence E. Fretheim, "Image of God," in *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2008).
[8] Ibid.

Bible."[9]In the book of Genesis, for example, it appears that divine favor, such as the favoritism displayed for the young siblings, sometimes goes against social convention. Kaminsky (2006) suggests that this may be an example of showing how "human attempts to control outcomes are subverted by God."[10] He speaks of this preference as an example of an "underdog motif" in the Bible. Kaminsky (2006) describes this as occurring where "God's plan always prevails, frequently even by means of resistance to it or through those who seem to be marginal and powerless."[11] The idea here seems to be that the understanding of being chosen, or preferred by God, fulfills a larger purpose within biblical narratives.

Genesis 9: 20ff tells the story of Noah cursing his son, Ham, and telling him that his son, Canaan, shall be the "lowest of slaves shall he be to his brothers" (Genesis 9: 25b, NRSV). In this story, Noah gets drunk and, because Ham saw "the nakedness of his father," Ham's offspring was cursed to enslavement. Here the Bible story calls into question the issue of the equality of all human beings. Sadler Jr (2010) asserts that this passage of scripture has been used by Euro-Americans to justify their treatment of Black peoples from Africa, as they were now deemed to be "the Sons of Ham."[12] Bailey (1994) offers the interpretation of this scripture to show that the underlying issue is that of sexual abuse. Bailey (1994) says that "the curse itself is the result of an act whereby

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[9] Joel Kaminsky, "Chosen," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible , a-C*, ed. Katherine Doob Sakenfield et al. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006).
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Sadler Jr, "Genesis," in *The Africana Bible: Reading Isreal's Scripture from Africa and the African Diaspora*.

Ham (or Canaan in an earlier version of this account) sexually abused, or was sexually abused, by his father, Noah."[13] Using this analysis, it would be difficult to generalize the actions contained in the passage to an entire group of people. This passage has the potential to illustrate the domination of a less preferred group of people by a more favored group. Sadler Jr (2010) notes that, to use "the pericope to justify the abuse of the "Other," is to misappropriate the meaning of the passage. "[14] Sadler Jr (2010) cautions that ". . . the authors of this passage did not intend to legitimate an oppressive paradigm based on 'racial 'criteria. . .."[15]

Birch (2007) notes that the *imago Dei* forms a part of the ethical norm in the Hebrew scriptures. He explains that, in seeking to imitate God's character and conduct, people will fall into the natural patterns of the created world.[16] A moral life is a life patterned after the life of God. In this regard, the *imago Dei* not only addressed the intrinsic worth of individuals, it also placed an apparent expectation on the ways in which peoples lived and operated within community. Speaking out for justice, mercy, and compassion, the prophets were also saying to the community that these attributes found in God are to be seen in the interactions of the community.[17] By saying this, the prophetic proclamations seem to have been grounded in an understanding of the *imago*

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[13] Randall C. Bailey, "They're Nothing but Incestuous Bastards: Polemical Use of Sex and Sexuality in Hebrew Canon Narrative.," in *Readings from This Place, Social Context and Biblical Interpretation in the United States*, ed. Fernando Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994).
[14] Sadler Jr, "Genesis," in *The Africana Bible: Reading Isreal's Scripture from Africa and the African Diaspora*.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Bruce C. Birch, "Ethics in the Ot," in *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible , D-H*, ed. Katharine Doob Sakenfield et al. (Nashville: Abngdon Press, 2007). 342
[17] Ibid.

Dei. People are expected to behave this way because they were made in the image and likeness of God.

When looking at the concept of the *imago Dei,* or image of God, within all humanity, we note that there is a specialness inherent in all human beings. The concept also seems to speak of an equality among human beings. Yet it must be acknowledged that the Bible does not always speak with one voice on the issue of human equality. While this is true, the message of human being made in the image and likeness of God continues to ring out. One of the implications of this understanding is that, even though persons may be different, they are still made in the image of God. The image of God was stamped upon the female just as it was upon the male. One can argue that the same image of God is present in peoples of different cultures and races. The image of God is a mark of our common humanity. We now turn our attention to the understanding of diversity.

Diversity

The understanding of the diversity of creation is spoken about in *A Song of Faith* when it proclaims, “Finding ourselves in a world of beauty and mystery, of living things, diverse and interdependent, of complex patterns of growth and evolution, of subatomic

particles and cosmic swirls, we sing of God the Creator."[18] The statement of faith speaks about diversity as both a gift from God and a reflection of an attribute of God.

Kuan (2007) notes that the ancient Israelite community was not a society in which everyone descended from a single-family lineage. Instead, it was an ethnically complex and diverse community.[19] Kuan states that, in the book of Genesis, Abraham's ancestry is found in Ur of the Chaldeans, in Mesopotamia, and, in the book of Deuteronomy, there is a suggestion of ancestry among the Arameans (cf. Deuteronomy 26:25).[20] Both ethnic and cultural diversity were known in the times of the Bible, and other cultures co-existed with the ancient Israelite people.

In Genesis 10, the writer provides a listing of the nations of the earth following the experience of the flood. The passage comes after the curse of Ham, and it has been used by some to suggest that this listing belies the reality of racial differences. Scholars such as Sadler Jr (2010) have indicated that, far from suggesting a racial narrative, the text shows a listing of the ethnic groupings in the then known world.[21] What Sadler Jr (2010) proposes is that the list displays the connections of the human family. He says, "The griots who compose and relay this patronymic go to considerable lengths to

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[18] *The Manual*.
[19] Kah-Jin Jeffery Kuan, "Diversity," in *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, D-H*, ed. Katharine Doob Sakenfield et al. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007). 141
[20] Ibid.
[21] Sadler Jr, "Genesis," in *The Africana Bible: Reading Isreal's Scripture from Africa and the African Diaspora*.

demonstrate the kinship of humankind."[22] It could be argued that this list in Genesis shows the reality of diversity in the human family.

We see a similar picture in the start and growth of the Jesus movement in the Acts of the Apostles. Hurtado (2013) observes that there was diversity from the onset of the early Christian community." As early as the Jerusalem church, there was linguistic diversity, as probably reflected in the Acts' depiction of 'Hebrews' and Hellenists,' terms which probably designate respectively those Jews in the Jerusalem church whose first language was Aramaic and those whose first/primary language was Greek."[23]

In Acts 2, we are told of the story of Pentecost where the promised gift of Jesus, the Holy Spirit, was received by those gathered in the Upper Room. The story in Acts 2: 5 – 10 (NRSV) says:

> Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. **6** And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. **7** Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? **8** And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? **9** Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, **10** Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, **11** Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power.**12** All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?"

The gathering reveals the presence of many ethnic groups, with each declaring that they can hear and understand the proclamations of the Jesus community. Later in Acts 2: 41,

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[22] Ibid.

[23] Larry Hurtado, "Interactive Diversity: A Proposed Model of Christian Origins," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 64, no. 2 (October 2013). 452

it was noted that 3,000 persons were added to the Jesus movement. We can reasonably assume that this number of persons would have included the different language groups, cultures, and ethnicities that were spoken about in Acts 2:9-11. Willimon (1988) states that, "no nationality of dispersed Jews is excluded from the proclamation, as Luke's recall of the people's make clear."[24] As both Willimon (1988) and the text indicate, the diversity of persons entering the community all claimed Jewish affiliation. A second movement in relation to diversity occurred in Acts 10.

In Acts 10 and 11, Luke narrates the story of Peter and Cornelius, and seeks to recount the full admission of Gentiles into the Jesus community. The story, according to Willimon (1988), occurs in "seven scenes."[25] In 'scene 1' (10:1-8), we meet Cornelius, a Roman centurion living in Caesarea, whom Luke described as a "man who fears God." He has a vision in which he is instructed to send Joppa for a man named "Simon who is called Peter." In 'scene 2' (10: 9 – 16), we see the apostle Peter in Joppa also having a vision. In this vision, Peter is corrected by the Holy Spirit and instructed "What God has made clean; you must not call profane" (10:15). In 'scene 3' (10: 17 -24), the Spirit informed Peter of the messengers from Cornelius. He is not told why they have come to him, but he was instructed to go with them. Peter goes, accompanied by some of the believers from Joppa.

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[24] William H. Willimon, *Acts. (Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Preaching and Teaching).* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1988). 30

[25] Ibid.

When we come to 'scene 4' (10:25-33), Peter arrives at the home of Cornelius. When Peter asks why he was summoned, Cornelis recounts the vision he had. In 'scene 5' (10:34 – 43), Peter responds to what Cornelius has told him. He declares that ". . . God shows no partiality. . ." (10:34) and proceeds to preach to Cornelius and his family the gospel about Jesus. In 'scene 6', (10:44 – 48), those who hear Peter preaching receive the Holy Spirit. They are baptized by Peter. In 'scene 7' (11: 1-18), Peter reports the events in Joppa to the church in Jerusalem. As a result of his statements, the members of church in Jerusalem are initially silenced, but then say, "Then God has given even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life" (11:18). This is a turning point in the story of the fledgling church, as it marks the inclusion of the Gentile people into the church. Erwin (1995) concludes that the passage "stresses the inclusive and universal character of the church ."[26]

When interpreting this story, Wilson (2019) draws attention to the geographic details of the passage that deepen an appreciation for what is happening in Acts 10:1–11:8.[27] Caesarea was a Roman city with Jewish roots, but it was "marked by frequent tensions in Jew-Gentile relations."[28] Joppa is described as a stronghold for Jewish nationalists from the Hasmonean era and a "stubbornly insurgent city."[29] This makes the events that unfold, as described by Luke, even more remarkable. A lack of ethnic

[26] Ed Erwin, "Acts 10:34-43," *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible & Theology* 49, no. 2 (1995). 180
[27] Benjamin R Wilson, "Jew-Gentile Relations and the Geographic Movement of Acts 10: 1 - 11:18," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 80, no. 1 (2018). 81
[28] Ibid. 85
[29] Ibid. 87

harmony and deep discomfort between the Jewish community and the non-Jewish community lurks in the background.

Upon taking the socio-geographical realities into consideration, Wilson (2018) points out several surprises that occur in the passage. One is the surprises is that a man with the rank of Roman centurion living in Caesarea is a devotee of Judaism.[30] Another surprise is the potential dangers that surround emissaries from a Roman centurion in Caesarea when they come to Joppa to find Simon Peter, a Jew. Wilson (2018) notes:

> From the vantage point of a Roman representative, such as Cornelius, such an action could easily be perceived as a risky endeavor with the potential to upset the fragile peace of the region, since it might be viewed in Joppa as an act of unsolicited aggression.[31]

Ultimately, the Jewish Christian community's acceptance of the non-Jewish Christian mission comes out of this experience. Wilson (2018) concludes that the final statement of the church in Jerusalem shows an affirmation of the ethnic universality of their fellowship.[32]

The events described in Acts of the Apostles adds to the understanding of the church as a diverse community of people made up of different cultures, languages, and nationalities. The passage suggests that diversity should be welcomed by the church, rather than be avoided, as the Holy Spirit works with all of us.

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[30] Ibid. 90
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid. 96

Allen and Legge (2019) observe that The United Church of Canada proclaims ". . . an image of church being committed to all people as family of God in naming diversity as a blessing . . .."[33] This understanding of diversity as a blessing was reflected in the report "Intercultural Ministries: Living into Transformation" presented to the 41st General Council in 2012. The report concludes that "diversity is central to our faith, and central to what it means to be called to be the church."[34]

Love

Beyond failing to uphold the image of God within all humanity, racism also contradicts the basic Christian understanding of love. In our contemporary use of language, love is used in a multiplicity of ways. To avoid confusion, we must make a careful attempt to accurately define the word. Furthermore, the ubiquitous presence of this word in everyday parlance makes it easy to inaccurately assume its intended meaning. The Concise Oxford Dictionary reveals that love can be used either as a noun or a verb, offering no less than eight definitions of love when it is used as a noun. The first of these definitions is "an intense feeling of deep affection or fondness for a person, or thing: great liking."[35] When used as a verb, there are another four definitions

[33] Gail Allen and Marilyn Legge, "Ecclesiology: "Being the United Church of Canada"," in *The Theology of the United Church of Canada*, ed. Don Schweitzer, Michael Bourgeois, and Robert C Fennell (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2019). 191
[34] *Intercultural Ministries: Living into Transformation*. 148
[35] Oxford University, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford Unversity Press, 1990). 703

offered; the first being "feel love or deep fondness for."[36] Both of these definitions show love as being an emotion, albeit a very strong and powerful emotion.

In the New Revised Version of the Bible, the word love is said to be used at least 641 times. Jesus spoke frequently about love. The letters from Paul are among the earliest Christian writings in the Bible, and among these authentic Pauline epistles, in Galatians 5:14 and Romans 13:9, we find the apostle instructing the church to "love your neighbour as yourself," as a summation of the commandments. In these passages, Paul may well be quoting the ethical teachings from Leviticus 19:18b for the Jesus community to follow. In the first letter to the church in Corinth, the apostle speaks of love as the most "excellent" of spiritual gifts which every member should seek.[37] In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul seeks to address divisions in the church where rivalries may have arisen about spiritual gifts. By speaking about love in this way, Paul emphasizes that the church should put the attributes of love above anything else into practice.

In the Synoptic gospels, Jesus commands his disciples that they should love their neighbours as they love themselves (Mark 12:28-34; Matthew 22:34-40; Luke 10:25-28). In Mark and Matthew, these words of Jesus come in response to the question: What is the greatest commandment? In Luke's rendering of the story, it comes after the question: "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?"(Luke 10:25) Hiestermann and Steyn

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[36] Ibid.

[37] "But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way" (1 Corinthians 12:31, NRSV)

(2016) note that, in the accounts of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, "Jesus is asked somehow to summarize what is important."[38] In all versions, the love of neighbours is tied to the love of God. The passages suggest that loving your fellow human beings is as important as loving God.

In John 13, we find a situation where Jesus speaks of love in the context of a new commandment. Jesus says to his disciples: "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13: 34 & 35, NRSV)

In this passage, Jesus begins what would be described as his farewell speech or "Farewell Discourse" (John 13: 31 -16L33) to his disciples. Within the context of saying farewell, Jesus offers to his disciples a new commandment. The expectation is laid upon the disciples to love each other. The fulfillment of this requirement, as Jesus puts it, would be the proof of their allegiance to him, even in his absence.

This commandment to love is grounded in Jesus. It is in Jesus that we find a life of obedience and self-giving. The obedience of the commandment to follow the example of Jesus is a challenge for the disciples. Chang (2014) clarifies that this new commandment to love one another should not be limited to loving only those within the group of which one is a member. To love according to this passage is therefore a call to

[38] H. A. Hiestermann and G J Steyn, "The Command to Love the Neighbour in Paul and the Synoptics," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 37, no. 1 (2016).

imitate the example found in Jesus. The commandment to love "includes all human beings (friends-enemies) without making any distinction."[39]

A study of the Greek used in the New Testament reveals that, within Greek language, there are four distinct words that can be rendered in English as love. These words --*agape, philia, storge and eros* -- each highlight different characteristics of the concept of love. Traditionally, the word *agape* has been taken to be acme or supreme understanding of love within Christianity. *Agape* has been characterized as that which is understood to be the love that God displays, while *eros* has been understood as a "lower level' type of love, because of its association with passion and sexual pleasure. However, a careful reading of the New Testament reveals that this stratification of love may not have been completely understood by the New Testament writers. Indeed, there is a variety of ways in which the words for love were used in the New Testament, with no one word used exclusively to denote the Christian understanding of love.[40] Oord (2010) offers definitions of the Greek words. It is interesting to note that each of the definitions speak about "intentional sympathetic response to promote overall well-being." *Agape*, for example, is defined in terms of "intentional sympathetic response to promote overall well-being when confronted by that which generates ill-being."[41] Oord (2010) suggests that these are forms of love that may be operating together anytime love is to be found**,** with one or more taking dominance depending on the context.

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[39] William Chang, "The Love Commandment (John 13:34-35)," *Asian Journal of Theology* (October 2014).
[40] Thomas Jay Oord, *Defining Love: A Philosophical, Scientific and Theological Engagement* (Grand Rapids: Brazo Press, 2010). 36
[41] Ibid. 43

What stands out in the definitions of Oord (2010) is that love is not simply an emotion. His understanding of love is that which offers intentional response in the face of that which causes a less than desirable state of being. In this regard, “love can be understood as a channel of justice; if justice is understood to be fairness involved in promoting overall well-being".[42] Consequently, when we act to enable overall well-being (aka to love), we are, in fact, promoting justice and seeking to act against social ills that perpetuate inequality. In Oord’s theory, love and justice are in fact the two sides of the same coin.

Emilie Townes further expands our understanding of love and sees love as being action and not mere sentimentality. However, for Townes (2016), love also challenges that which devalues and dehumanizes, listens to the voice of the voiceless, seeks to dismantle systems of injustice, and acts in cooperation with others to enable our full humanity. Townes states that, “As we learn how to love the heart of others and ourselves, we also practice the formation of a divine/human community based on love and pointed towards justice where we develop concrete strategies to address the many forms of violence . . ..”

Townes (2016) sees love as enabling change in a world where people are devalued and dehumanized. Love works for the changing of systems and ways of thinking. In many respects, the love described here is harmonious, with the understanding offered by Oord (2010) that calls for intentional response to promote

[42] Ibid.

overall well-being[43] Change can occur in one of two ways; it can evolve over the course of time (evolutionary), or it can be by deliberate actions to enable change (revolutionary). The latter occurs where human action works towards change. Both Townes (2016) and Oord (2010) suggest that love is revolutionary in nature; it is intentional as it works for change, and it challenges that which devalues and dehumanizes. To love is to enable justice in the world, and therefore stands in stark contradiction to racism!

Central to this analysis is the understanding that Christian love does not allow Christians to merely be in indignant consternation or deep concern against racism. Love, as understood at the most basic level in the New Testament, demands action against that which would denigrate others. Christian action against racism is therefore properly understood as an action of love. Furthermore, if racism is understood as sin, then the only response open to the faith community is to act in love. This understanding of love, taking intentional action against that which is unjust, and even calling for social change, is clearly seen in the civil rights movement in the USA in the 1950's. In our contemporary society, the same understanding of love is found in the Black Lives Matter Movement.

In the faith statements of The United Church of Canada, love is spoken about and affirmed. In *A Song of Faith,* for example, we read that "Evil does not – cannot –

[43] Emilie M. Townes, "Meditations on Love and Violence," in *Love and Christian Ethics: Tradition, Theory and Society*, ed. Frederick V. Simmons with Brian C. Sorrels (Georgetown University Press, 2016). 311

undermine or overcome the love of God."[44] The song also speaks of the work of Jesus in terms of the gospel of love. "He preached and practiced unconditional love -- love of God, love of neighbour, love of friend, love of enemy -- and he commanded his followers to love one another as he had loved them."[45]

Hesed

The Biblical narrative also speaks about *hesed.* This word is translated to mean loyalty, mercy and steadfast love. However, the word may also be translated as meaning "loving kindness." Sakenfeld (2008) notes that *hesed* is generally used in the Hebrew scriptures in the context of a relationship "where one person is in significant need of help from the other, help that typically may go beyond the usual expectations of such a relationship"[46]

Ramon (2005) points out that *hesed* denotes the very epitome of the nature of the covenant between God and God's people.[47] At the same time, Ramon (2005) explains that within Jewish philosophy, 'hesed' extends beyond the terms of the covenant with God and enters the various ways in which peoples are called to live together. Ramon (2005) concludes that "a worldview posits loving-kindness as the

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[44] *The Manual*.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, "Khesed," in *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2008).
[47] Einat Ramon, "The Matriarchs and the Torah of Hesed (Loving-Kindness)," *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies and Gender issues* (2005). 155

foundation of the world and of Torah, bound up in the understanding of the spiritual encounter with God as finding expression in daily human conduct that is molded by consciousness of life in the shadow of the Divine."[48]

Hesed points to right relations between persons in the world, relationships based on respect, kindness, and love. This reflects the *hesed* that God displays to all humankind, and it is the lens through which we are to relate to each other. The understanding of right relations appears to be a fundamental aspect of the living in society. The opposite is also true, as the things that cause people to relate at a level lower than respect, kindness and love would be antithetical to an understanding of *hesed.* The concept of living in right relations must involve the reality of each person upholding the dignity of the other person as they relate to one another. It would also include the right for persons to express their authentic selves in the presence of others. This authentic self should include the expression of their racial identity, cultural expressions, and sexual orientation. Dialogue and interactions, as signs of respect and acceptance, may also be included in the understanding of *hesed.* In this concept, there is no space for one group to dominate over another group, believing that the dominated group is inherently inferior.

While the word *hesed* does not appear in *A Song of Faith,* the understanding of this word, as explained above, can be found in its words. The song describes what is

[48] Ibid. 159

understood as the "fullness of life," and it includes, in this description, a call for "communities living in righteousness and the articulation of meaning. "[49]

Social Justice

The words of *A Song of Faith* remind the church that it has been called to enable "the reconciliation of persons through justice."[50] Justice has to do with impartial arbitration, equitable treatment, or adherence to an ideal of what is right. It may also include "the nuance of focus on the highest values of a right relationship to God and to others."[51] Biblical writers hold up an understanding of God being the source of justice, and that an attribute of God is that God is just. Muis (2018) observes that the justice of God is often, in the Hebrew Scriptures, associated with God's mercy. He says, "In the Old Testament, the justice of God is inseparable from God's mercy, and God shows his mercy in many cases by acts of justice. In addition, the meaning of the Hebrew term for justice, *tsedaka*, is faithfulness to the community."[52] However, Muis (2018) holds the perspective that the justice of God should not be understood as an expression of love that is the essence of God. He suggests that the justice of God is a distinct attribute of God, and, as such, should be held up alongside the attributes of love and power. [53]

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[49] *The Manual*.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Harold V. Bennett, "Justice, Ot," in *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible I-Ma*, ed. Katharine Doob Sakenfield et al. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2008).
[52] Jan Muis, "The Justice of God," *Modern Theology* 34, no. 3 (July 2018). 358
[53] Ibid. 365

These attributes do not contradict each other, as they are united in God's self.[54] Consequently, it would not be possible to speak of an act of God as being just, but not loving, or that the power of God contradicts God's love or justice. In this light, it would suggest that, when we speak of the justice of God, we are speaking about the love and power of God at the same time.

The Hebrew word *'mispat'* is often used in the Hebrew scriptures to speak of justice. In the events seen in the book of Job, the word is utilized in relation to the judicial action between God and Job. In this story, *mispat* is also used to describe God's sovereignty and ruling power.[55] By the end of the book's drama, Job comes to realize "that the divinely ordained justice in the world is God's governance."[56] Moberly (2001) raises a similar point in an interpretation of Isaiah 5:16[57]. Moberly (2001) shows that there is a linking of righteousness with justice throughout the book of Isaiah.[58] He also notes that the prophetic literature suggests that because these "moral qualities characterize YHWH – Israel is to practice justice and righteousness because this is how YHWH acts."[59] Moberly (2001) makes the point that "YHWH's actions of justice and

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[54] Ibid.
[55] Sylvia Huberman Scholnick, "The Meaning of Mispat in the Book of Job," *Journal of Biblical Literature* (1982). 529
[56] Ibid.
[57] "But the LORD of hosts is exalted by justice and the Holy God shows himself holy by righteousness." (Isaiah 5:16, NRSV)
[58] R. W. K. Moberly, "Whose Justice? Which Righteousness? The Interpretation of Isaiah V 16," *Vetus Testamentum* (2001). 56
[59] Ibid. 63

righteousness may be seen precisely in the actions of justice and righteousness performed by those accountable to YHWH."[60]

Bennett (2008) reminds us that, for the Hebrew prophets, justice also extends to morality and to the socioeconomic issues of the day. He notes:

> Notions of about justice in the Psalter and in the classical prophets, then presuppose that oppression, or the perennial disadvantaging of a social subgroup, was a major feature of social relationships in the biblical communities. These texts often cite or list the widow, stranger, and orphan as oppressed or marginalized. . . The prophets defied oppression as the extraction of goods and services from a vulnerable individual or social grouping by a more powerful person or politico-economic subgroup.[61]

In denouncing unjust activities and relationships, the Hebrew prophets were reflecting on, if not embodying, the justice of God in their context, and living out what it means to worship God.

In the New Testament, Perkins (2008) explains that the word used for justice would often be translated as righteousness or uprightness.[62] He states that "Ordinarily in the New testament employs some variation of the love command rather than justice to refer to complete virtue. The obligation to the Law can be summarized as love of God and neighbour (Mark 12: 28-34; Matt 22:34-40; Luke 10:25-28)".[63]

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[60] Ibid.
[61] Bennett, "Justice, Ot," in *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible I-Ma*.
[62] Pheme Perkins, "Justice, Nt," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible I-Ma*, ed. Katharine Doob Sakenfield et al. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2008). 475
[63] Ibid.

Justice holds a central place in the theological perspective of The United Church of Canada. Fennell (2019) suggests that justice is one of the lenses used by the church to interpret scripture, and ultimately to do its theology.[64] In this regard, he observes that from "the beginning twenty-first centuries, the UCC has emphasized the need for social justice. Consequently, the denomination places a high value on interpretation that advances the cause of justice."[65] The theme of justice must hold a special place in any theological reflection, or theology, of interculturalism that is produced for, or within, the church.

Sin

> We surrender ourselves to sin,
> a disposition revealed in selfishness, cowardice, or apathy.
> Becoming bound and complacent
> in a web of false desires and wrong choices,
> we bring harm to ourselves and others
> This brokenness in human life and community
> is an outcome of sin.
> Sin is not only personal
> but accumulates
> to become habitual and systemic forms
> of injustice, violence, and hatred. (*A Song of Faith)*[66]

[64] Robert C. Fennell, "Scripture and Revelation in the United Church of Canada," in *The Theology of the United Church of Canada*, ed. Don Schwitzer, Michael Bourgeois, and Robert C Fennell (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2019). 67
[65] Ibid.
[66] *The Manual*.

Sin in the Judeo-Christian understanding is viewed as that which causes separation from God. In Hebrew scriptures, sin is often represented in one of three ways (*het, pesha* and *avah*). Of these three, two are noteworthy for this study. In Hebrew, *het* is the understanding of sin which indicates a failure of mutual relations or an offense that has occurred between persons (cf. Genesis31:36).[67] This concept of sin suggests taking unfair, or unjust, advantage of another. In doing so, the original nature of the relationship is questionable because of the unfair or unjust action. Yet, the Hebrew scriptures also speak of *pesha* which connotes a breaking of relationship. A third understanding of sin is seen in the word *avah* that describes the deliberate action of doing wrong. *Avah* is usually associated with deliberate sins that are more social and ethical.[68] The understanding from the Hebrew scriptures suggests that unjust or socially unethical actions or intentions cause separation from God, and that this is sin.

In the New Testament, the Greek word, that is usually translated as sin in English, is *hamartia.* Roberts (2014) notes that in the original, literal sense *hamartia* would be "translated as 'miss,' meaning to physically to miss something, to fall short or go astray of a goal or target."[69] Roberts (2014 indicates that the meaning of the word fell out of use and "the result that neither the Septuagint, nor the New Testament used the word in its literal sense."[70] He states that sin, as used in contemporary language, functions as a religious term, and this does necessarily reflect the ways in which

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[67] *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). 902
[68] Ibid.
[69] Erin Roberts, "Reconsidering Hamartia As "Sin" In 1 Corinthians," *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* (2014). 346
[70] Ibid.

hamartia is used in Greek literature or in the New Testament. He explains that a survey of some dictionaries and online sources will yield meanings such as "willful offense against God, God's will, or at least against the human moral codes modeled after God's will."[71] Roberts points out that, in our contemporary world, sin would be understood in terms of our actions in relation to God, or to what is understood to be the will of God.

Roberts (2014) reveals that the word *hamartia*, and its cognates, are used in a variety of ways in the writings of Paul and other New Testament authors, and that the use does not only align with an understanding of willful rebellion against God.[72] In 1 Corinthians, it was revealed that *hamartia* has been used to describe actions done in error, mistakes, and misdeeds done out of ignorance. It also included an understanding of human beings as "dusty, mortal, weak, and prone to clouded thinking that can lead to harmful behaviors and moral failures."[73] Roberts (2014) argues that the translation of *hamartia* as meaning sin is an imposition of modern translators' assumptions about the word. The varieties of meanings and understanding surrounding hamartia may, however, be pointing us to other ways of understanding sin. They would align with the previous interpretation of sin in the Hebrew scriptures.

McDougall (2006) offers a feminist perspective on the concept of sin. She draws on the work of Kathryn Tanner, who developed a perspective that "the divine and human freedom do not compete with one another, but it displays how dependency on

[71] Ibid. 343
[72] Ibid. 362
[73] Ibid.

this gift-giving God is the source of human empowerment."[74] McDougall (2006) develops an understanding of sin that is the "blockage or blindness to God's gifts."[75] Her perspective leads the reader to consider the consequences of sin. According to McDougall (2006), the consequence of sin would not be the action of divine judgement, but rather would be judgements we have brought upon ourselves.[76]

Sin, as explained above, is not only rebellion against God. It also includes the ethical actions, mistakes, and misdeeds done. McDougall's perspective seems to warrant the question, "What are the gifts of God?" While the response to this question may be varied depending on the context in which the question is asked, one might argue that we are gifts from God to each other. To block or reject this gift would create both ethical and social issues. If we accept that human beings are different in terms of gender, culture, experiences, and race, then to accept the gifts of God is to accept the totality of diversity in society. This is the foundation upon which interculturalism rests. Furthermore, accepting the gift should not be understood in terms of only acceptance of differences. It could be argued that the acceptance of the gifts of God is also to allow for interaction among different groups of people. Interaction would be seen as people living their true selves and learning from each other. To do otherwise may be considered to be sin.

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[74] Joy Ann McDougall, "Sin--No More? A Feminist Re-Visioning of a Christian Theology of Sin," *Anglican Theological Review* (2006). 222
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid.

A Look at Racism

While interculturalism is the focus for this paper, racism is the lens through which the effectiveness of the intercultural vision is assessed. Therefore, a discussion of racism is warranted. Rev. Dr. Karen Georgian Thompson, a minister of the United Church of Christ, USA, defines racism as "the intentional or unintentional use of power to isolate, separate, and exploit others. The use of power is based on a belief in superior racial origin, identity or supposed racial characteristics."[77] This definition makes it clear that racism is not simply an issue of racial prejudice or discrimination. Prejudice is understood to be the attitudes, thoughts, feelings, stereotypes, and generalizations that are used to prejudge another person, or group of persons.[78] Usually, prejudice that occurs is based on second hand experiences, or on little or no experience with the other person, or group. DiAngelo (2018) states that discrimination is "action based on prejudice." [79] While in many, if not all, instances the experiences of prejudice and discrimination cause hurt, they do not necessarily rise to the level of racism. Racism includes the additional step of using power to enable the prejudice that it promotes. This power appears in "legal, cultural, religious, educational, economic, political and military institutions of society."[80] Race is truly a social concept; there are no biological differences between persons with different skin colors. Any perceived differences have been debunked by science. The use of race as the determinant for the devaluation of a

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[77] *United against Racism - Churches for Change* (New York: Friendship Press, 2018). 7
[78] DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*. 18
[79] Ibid. 20
[80] *United against Racism - Churches for Change*.

group of people is therefore to start from a false narrative. To say that racism is a social construct does not mean that it lacks sway over the thinking and actions of people. Race continues to be a significant factor in social discourse, and it cannot easily be dismissed. Mensah (2010) raises the profound point that "many people really believe in the reality of race and, indeed, act accordingly, regardless of what the physical science evidence suggests."

As we begin this investigation, it is important that we make a clear differentiation between race and racism. The two words, while related, are not necessarily as directly linked as is commonly believed. Coates (2015) states that "race is the child of racism, not the father"[81] While the word racism came into common use in the 1930's because of the theories of the Nazis in Germany, the ideology existed long before that time. Kendi (2016) shows that examples of the ideology of racism can be found as early as 1453, when the book *The Chronicles of the Discovery and Conquest of Guinea* sought to defend African slave trade on the grounds that the taking of Africans into slavery was a missionary action.[82] From that time, the need to exploit the labor of Blacks led to the ideologies that upheld the inferiority of the Black person and this supported continuation of the enslavement of Black people. The continued diet of these ideologies would ultimately lead to the widespread belief that there was something wrong with Black people. Kendi (2016) also asserts that these ideologies have led to the

[81] Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me* (New York: Spiegel & Gran, 2015).
[82] Ibram X. Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racists Ideas in America* (New York: Nation Books, 2016).

oppression of Black people.[83] The need to keep the Black person subjugated led to the ideologies that there was something different, and inferior, about the Black person compared to the White person.

Racism originated as an ideology that has become institutionalized within society. It is supported by social norms and values, and it is part of the socialization process for all individuals. Racism takes on different forms in society. It may be expressed by individuals in their day-to- day activities, or it may be systemic as seen in ways that society operates and in the functioning of various societal institutions. It is also "reinforced through social penalties when someone questions the ideology and through the limited availability of alternative ideas."[84] Racism may be overtly expressed in words and actions, or it may be subtle, and covert, as seen in microaggressions[85].

Yet, it must also be acknowledged that racism is not a static ideology and has adapted to the realities of contemporary society. The term 'new racism" was coined by Martin Baker (1983), who describes it as a form of racism that is highly sophisticated"[86] and that may not be seen in society today, as it was in the past. DiAngelo (2018) describes the 'new racism' as a way "to capture the ways in which racism has adapted over time so that modern norms, policies and practices result in similar racial outcomes as those of the past, while not appearing to be explicitly racist."[87] DiAngelo (2018) offers

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[83] Ibid.
[84] DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*. 21
[85] Microaggression may be described as the subtle actions or words directed towards a particular group of people that seek to uphold prejudice and discrimination.
[86] Mensah, *Black Canadians: History, Experience, Social Conditions*. 17
[87] DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*. 38

three expressions of the new racism: 1) Colour-Blind Racism, which is an attempt to ignore race and racial awareness without dealing with the issues underlying racism, or the meanings of race for society. We see colour-blind racism in statements such as "When I see you, I do not see you as a Black person." 2) Aversive Racism which seeks to rationalize the presence of racism in society and, on the surface, offering euphemisms to disguise racist ideas. In assertive racism there is the "holding (of) deep racial disdain that surfaces in daily discourse, although not being able to admit it, because the disdain conflicts with our self-image and professed beliefs."[88] 3) Cultural Racism which "insists that we hide our racism from people of colour and deny it among ourselves, but not that we actually challenge it."[89] Mensah (2010) notes that, in the Canadian context, there is a fourth form of 'new racism' that he describes as 'democratic racism.' In democratic racism, the democratic and egalitarian principles of society co-exist with racist ideology, and neither contradicts the other.[90] Democratic racism is seen when legislation is enacted to protect minority races against racism, and is also used to protect and support those who would spout racist narratives.

Racism, by definition, seeks to subjugate and dominate persons in certain racial categories by persons in a different racial category. In the case of racism against Black people, it is Black people who are dominated, and it is White people who constitute the dominating race. This domination is upheld by social power, including legislation, norms, and values. It is a system that claims the inherent inequality and value of persons within

[88] Ibid. 45
[89] Ibid. 50
[90] Mensah, *Black Canadians: History, Experience, Social Conditions*. 17

society. For this reason, an apparent dissonance occurs when we reflect upon racism through the prism of the Judeo-Christian religion. Fredrickson (2015) states:

> If equality is the norm in the spiritual or temporal realms (or in both at the same time), and there are groups of people within the society who are despised or disparaged that the upholders of the norms feel compelled to make them exceptions to the promise or realization of equality, they can be denied the prospect of equal status only if they allegedly possess some extraordinary deficiency that makes them less than fully human.[91]

If there is indeed an "extraordinary deficiency" among a subset of humans, the presence of racism therefore poses a question in the teaching of the Christian religion.

Pulling the Themes Together

The report outlining the vision of an intercultural church in 2012 described an Intercultural church as having the following features: Welcoming, Relational, Adaptive, Justice-seeking, Intentional and Missional.[92] The report notes that these characteristics were theological touchstones. Allen and Legge (2019), in the newly published "The Theology of The United Church of Canada", see the need for the development of a theology for intercultural ministries in the Canadian context.[93] The 2012 report,

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[91] Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History*. 12
[92] *Intercultural Ministries: Living into Transformation*. 143
[93] Allen and Legge, "Ecclesiology: "Being the United Church of Canada"," in *The Theology of the United Church of Canada*. 193.

however, concludes that there was no need to develop new intercultural theology/theologies as "the theological basis for becoming an intercultural church was already written and affirmed by the church in earlier statements of faith."[94] One of these earlier statements of faith was the *Song of Faith,* recognized at the 41st General Council in 2012 to be one of the doctrines of the church that was subordinate to scriptures.[95] Consequently, the theological discussions in this chapter were not an attempt to offer a new theology for interculturalism. Instead, the aim was to highlight some of the theological issues that are involved in the movement towards interculturalism.

The work that led to the United Church of Canada's articulation of a Vision for an Intercultural Church began at least 50 years ago, as the church was seeking to respond to the cultural diversity in society. This anti-racism work is part of the history that led to the church's 2012 Vision. The movement against racism should not be considered as a separate movement within the church. The theological themes that are highlighted by interculturalism are also seen in the anti-racism stance of the church.

At the 37th General Council of The United Church of Canada held in 2000, a policy statement on anti-racism was accepted. The statement was "based on the belief that all humans are sacred, whatever their culture, race or religion and that God is found in our common diversity."[96] The report described racism as sin, and it affirmed the church's

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[94] *Intercultural Ministries: Living into Transformation*. 151
[95] *The Manual*. 17
[96] *"That All May Be One", Policy Statement on Anti-Racism*. 1

work against racism. At the same time, the report acknowledged that, while much work had been done, the church had not done enough.[97] One of the stated aims of this 2000 document was to enable congregations to develop tools to combat racism within their own context.

In the theological groundings offered in that policy document, two main points were raised. Under the heading of "What does the Bible say?'", the document highlighted the teachings of the image of God, diversity, love, and sin. These issues were also reflected in the 2012 Vision of Interculturalism report. The 2000 report was the foundation for the 2012 work of becoming an Intercultural church. Taken together, the documents paint a picture of a church that Allen and Legge (2019) describe as "recognizing and encouraging social difference that is a source of injustice for those who are the victims of white-settler colonialism and racism so that all are involved in resisting and transforming the practices and assumptions that reproduce racism."[98] The various theological themes create a foundation for the work of engaging social injustice through the interactions of the various culture groupings in society, and for "transforming the practices and assumptions that reproduce racism." The picture that emerges is one of a church seeking to be anti-racist and intercultural, and one that affirms the image of God in all persons, embraces diversity, intentionally shows love, seeks for right relationships, works for justice, and renounces sin.

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[97] Ibid. 8

[98] Allen and Legge, "Ecclesiology: "Being the United Church of Canada"," in *The Theology of the United Church of Canada*. 192

Summary

In this chapter, I have drawn attention to six biblical and theological themes that arise out of a consideration of interculturalism. In doing so, I have referenced the words of the UCC's *A Song of Faith.* The faith statements of the church were offered in the 2012 policy as the theology of interculturalism for the church. By linking the themes highlighting the words of *A Song of Faith*, a faith statement of the church, I have sought to discuss the theologies of interculturalism of The United Church of Canada.

I have also shown that these themes can also be used to form the foundation for a stance against racism. This chapter provides further confirmation that the work of interculturalism is part of the mission and witness of the church in Canadian society. I also demonstrate that, by looking through a theological lens, interculturalism can be a tool to respond to racism in the society. Will interculturalism address the issue of racism in the context of The United Church of Canada? The response to this question would, in large measure, depend on how interculturalism is implemented in the church. This lies at the very heart of the reason for this project. This issue will be considered in my next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

THE RESEARCH

The research was done in two parts, interviews and surveys. The first part consisted of interviews with six (6) Black clergy persons in The United Church of Canada (UCC) to discover their experiences of racism in the church. The interviews were conducted via the online Zoom platform. The second part of the research sought to discover the views of White church members about racism and the intercultural vision of the UCC. This phase of research consisted of a short survey, with a total of forty-five participants from three (3) congregations that are being led by White ministers.

All participants signed and returned the Informed Consent Form. All questionnaires were completed in total anonymity. In order to maintain the confidentiality of the persons interviewed, each was assigned a pseudonym based on the characters from the 1970's sitcom 'Good Times' about a Black family living in the projects in Chicago. The assigned pseudonyms were Florida, Willona, Thelma, J.J, James, and Michael.

The Interviews

Participants in the interviews were selected from an informal network within The United Church of Canada called the Black Clergy Gathering[1] of the United Church of Canada (UCC). This group is recognized by the General Council Office of the church. In making the selection, care was exercised to ensure that the participants represent:

- A mixture of male and female clergy
- A mixture of Canadian born, Caribbean born, and African born persons
- A mixture of persons who candidated for ministry from within The United Church of Canada, as well as some who were admitted into the Order of Ministry of The United Church of Canada from other denominations.

The selection of participants within the above criteria was done as randomly as possible. Interviews were conducted in December of 2018.

In the presentation of the interviews, I have attempted to quote the words of the interviewees without comment. However, at points in the interview, I asked questions to help to clarify issues that were raised. Some of these questions are included in this report to help in understanding the responses. Where this occurs, my questions are bracketed and in italic font. Beyond this, I have added no analysis nor

[1] The Black Ministers Gathering is a national gathering of Black ministers of The United Church of Canada which occurs every three years for fellowship, inspiration and support.

interpretation of the words of the interviewees. The analysis of the interviews will be presented in Chapter 5.

Racism is to be understood as the discrimination experienced by a particular race because of the power and influence of a dominant race, our day to day experience.

Question #1

In the church can you think of experiences which you would describe as racist? If you have, can you describe one or more of these experiences and say why you considered it as racism?

J.J [2]

Yes, I have experienced racism in the church based on your definition. One experience was when I was conducting a funeral. The son of the deceased delivered the eulogy. During the eulogy, he indicated that his father would not have wanted a black minister. I was not sure if it was meant maliciously, but it felt malicious. People laughed uncomfortably but, as minister, I should not be noticed, unless I screwed up. No one should have noticed me but suddenly I become the center of attention because I am Black.

Another occasion happened in the not too distant past when I was a youth minister. I had formed a worship band of all ages that met once per week. The ages in

[2] All interviews were confidential; the names of interviewees are withheld by mutual agreement. The names used for interviewees in this project are pseudonyms.

the band were between 12 – 17 years old. Some of the young people left guitar strings around, and another left a coffee cup beside his instrument. I had come back to church that evening to ensure that all preparations for Sunday were done. There was a Cub Scout meeting going on in the hall. A man from the church came to my office and asked me to come with him to see something. I was always afraid of this person as he seemed to have much controversy surrounding him and he seemed to have poor social skills. When we got to the sanctuary, he points out the strings and coffee cup. I asked him if there was something, I could help him with. He then turns beet red and shouted out at me, "Clean it up!" His voice suggested to me that I was not safe in that situation and I had a 'fight or fright' experience. So, I started to turn away and he spun me around by my shoulders and exclaimed, "When I tell you to do something you do it!" In that moment all I could think about was the words "nigger, nigger." I left, went to my office and locked myself into it. I called the Ministry and Personnel Committee[3] chairperson and the ordained minister, but neither one answered their phone. After some time, I tentatively peeked out and exited my office. As I tried to sneak out, I saw no one initially. The choir was assembling, and then I saw him sitting across the way. He shouted at me "You get the hell out of here." I went over to him, but he continued shouting at me. I responded that he does not speak to me that way. He then told me that "We pay your salary." I responded that he does not speak to me that way. The

[3] The Ministry and Personnel Committee is the body in each pastoral charge/congregation which has responsibility for the oversight of all paid and accountable staff, including ministry personnel. They are also responsible for overseeing the relationship between the staff and the congregation. Each pastoral charge/congregation is required to appoint such a committee.

man then said that he would report me to the minister. I kept repeating that he does not speak to me that way. One member of the choir then asked that we take our conversation elsewhere. I responded that unfortunately we could not because this person has a history of treating persons like this, and I would not stand for it any longer. I eventually left and, when I was outside, I felt liberated I know that it was a stretching of the truth to say that he treated everyone that way, but it was the type of thing you say to get yourself out of situations like that. He did not report me to the minister, but I did inform the minister about what happened the next morning. The minister told me that I should report it to the Ministry and Personnel Committee, but nothing came of it. They just basically said to the man that he should not do that. However, I was sufficiently threatened by the experience and felt physically uncomfortable. When nothing happened as a result of it, it gave me a message that I was not sufficiently valued by the organization. I do not think that type of thing happened to any other employee in that church. I was being treated differently.

About 13 years ago, I applied for a job at a church. It was not specifically a United Church of Canada (UCC) church, but it was a summer church operated by UCC people. I was applying to do the children's ministry. I got a second interview and got the job. I was later to discover from one of my references that they were told by the person from the church that when I walked into the place for the interview, they were surprised to see a Black person applying for the job. I always thought it peculiar that this had to be named in a reference chat.

This current church where I am has recently been reviewed by the Presbytery.[4] As we were going through the process in the church, a fellow employee, at the time I did not know very well, sent me two joke emails about "why Tyrone cannot get a job." In the emails Tyrone is the custodian but you are led to believe in the joke that Tyrone is somehow misunderstood to be a doctor and, as the doctor, he causes the patient's death. The punch line was 'how could you believe that the Black person could be the doctor.' The person who sent the emails had considerable power in the church. The person who sent the emails thought it was a joke, but I did not know the person all that well and so I did not know what to make of the emails. The emails caused me alarm and concern.

The story about the joke email was told to the reviewer. However, the reviewer said that they saw no racism in it. The person who came as my support person to the review was a White person and my support person greatly disagreed with the reviewer. Yes, I believe my race was part of the reason for the review. Unfortunately, I do not have the evidence to prove it. I wonder how many Black or Asian clergy go through reviews in the church. We probably do not take this type of data.

My experience of the process has led me to believe what James Forbes, former minister of the Riverside Church said -- that when he walks his "black ass into a room" he was making a statement. When a Black person walks into a room, there is a

[4] A Review is a process to investigate a serious concern raised about either a ministry personnel or a pastoral charge/congregation. The process is initiated by the Presbytery and may result in disciplinary actions on either pastoral charge or ministry personnel or both.

difference. Some of the comments on the review included statements of persons saying that they felt that I would fit better into a large center such as Toronto. A statement like that tells me that the church is saying it does not know how to deal with Black people. It is an indictment on the church as it says that you are not like us. Yet the church says that this is not racism. When there is in the church this example of microaggressions[5], then there is racism.

The UCC has said since 2006 that it wants to live into being an Intercultural church and yet you *[the UCC]* cannot listen to these people, and say this type of behavior must stop. Yet the church will use its bureaucratic processes to allow microaggressions and racist comments to continue. We are condoning racism.

At General Council 42 in Corner Brook, Newfoundland, the Black ministers present gathered together for lunch as they had not seen each other for a while.[6] It was not an exclusive gathering. People, such as a former Moderator, came up and spoke with us and made jokes with us and sat with us. Later I understand that there were rumors and a feeling that this gathering should not have happened. I was not there when the matter was dealt with on the floor of the General Council but got a text message from a Black youth who asked if I heard what happened. It was, however, delightful to hear from White colleagues that there was nothing wrong with the Black

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[5] D W Sue et al., "Racial Microaggressions as Instigators to Difficult Dialogues on Race: Implications for Student Affairs Educators and Students," *Journal of Student College Personnel*, no. 26 (2007).defines microaggressions as "daily verbal, behavioral and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial, gender, sexual-orientation, and religious slights and insults to the target person or group."

[6] The General Council is the highest decision-making body of The United Church of Canada. It meets every three years to make decisions about denominational policies.

ministers meeting together. But the fact that there were concerns about the Black ministers gathering is concerning and that we do not see the parallels across the racial line.

If we are to be an Intercultural church, then there should have been someone in a General Council setting who would be able to say that we want the people around the table to know what we have come to know in the studies about race, ethnicity, and ideas of culture and race. There should have been someone who would have been able to invite persons who feel uncomfortable to come and explore how we can understand the cultural landscape. Unfortunately, this is not always available outside of the marginalized persons in the church. I do not get the feeling that White people care.

Thelma

I think there is a general culture of White privilege which itself is a form of racism. There are many surface examples of peoples living in White culture and not being able to open to 'the other' and this shows itself in microaggressions and other subtle ways. Systemic racism, which is also White privilege, is very pervasive. It would be difficult to put these into one story as there are many examples. At one point I was in a church and there was a special offering for Hurricane Katrina, and one person came up to me to say that they saw the pictures of the people affected and asked if I had any relatives or friends affected by the hurricane. The person was very sincere though. Once at a nursing home service a lady came to me, and she took great effort to come to me to

tell me that I sang too loud, and that I was pleasant for my kind of people. She thought this was complimentary. At one of the first congregations I worked with, the people constantly confused me for the secretary, sexton, the caretaker but never for the minister. This was even though my picture was on the wall with the title minister. Yet the people could not, would not, or refused to see this especially if they were from outside of the church.

On the systemic racism level, the fact of who or what people think are acceptable lines and unacceptable lines and the hoops that people would have go through for ordination must be considered. Some would not name it as racism and call it other things, but they are part of the White culture majority. If I had been a White female, then I would be ordained now. It is really subtle checks and balances that occurred. My class mates and colleagues who I am in ministry with did not have the same experiences I had. No one ever questioned the reason why and no one would. I would not wish for them any experience other that what they had, but I am highly aware that their experiences were different, and what their Education and Students Committees and Supervisors would consider a placement and qualifying for internship was different for me.

One classmate, a White female, in her internship was allowed by the minister to go home for Christmas to be with her family. She did not have to be in the pastorate for Christmas, but it was a different experience for me. She passed her internship with good grades, and I had to do two years of supervised ministry in full time ministry without any concerns or actions for me. My colleagues did not have to do much to pass their

internship whereas I had to do much more. Our experiences were not comparable. They have been able to advance far easier that I had.

As a black person, I must do more to prove myself. I do not think anyone would challenge my skills and competency. However, they would not want me to shine like other students. Like most Black women, I must be twice as qualified to get equal treatment in the church. In the church, there are ways we can affirm and there are ways that we can put in place checks and balances to put people in their place. More people have tried to put me in my place than they have sought to affirm.

Microaggressions are very prevalent and they are not checked. This is not language that churches often use. Lots of church folk would never consider themselves as racist, so that kind of clouded language of checking your biases and seeing how far you can get with someone usually comes up when you are dealing with microaggressions and micro-invalidation. It is quite prevalent in the church. It is prevalent in the White liberal mind set. Other people will not necessarily be so; they will just tell you as they see it. In the White liberal facade, there is a softening of what is said but that does not mean it is not there.

(*How do we enable dialogue if we must first prove racism?*) We need to name when one is wrong. The fear of labelling something as bad or the desire to qualify something as not so bad does not negate the fact that a statement is hurtful and wrong. Clearly, naming of the sin of racism and how it seeps in and looks is a first step. We cannot have any meaningful conversation with anyone about aggression without saying

that you are the aggressor, micro or macro you are still the aggressor. I cannot make you feel guilty! You can go and think about your response, but I am not responsible for your feelings. If we are to have honest dialogue, then we need to tell people this.

Michael

Someone asked me if I have ever experienced overt racism in Canada. The Canadian experience is funny; the experience is very nuanced because very rarely would you experience overt racism. My experiences are ambiguous, so I would often go home and wonder if what I experienced was racism. Constantly wondering if there was a misunderstanding of language, communication, or culture. It occurs with many things, sometimes even with silence. But after reflecting, I am often able to conclude that it was racism.

This year, one of the members of the pastoral charge died. However, the husband refused to have me conduct the funeral on the grounds that I had not visited his wife. I had visited her at least four times. I may not have visited him. I found myself defending myself. He claims that he does not remember me visiting him. I asked him to remember the time I came with chocolates, or the time I was at his house helping your wife to hold her food and to take her medication. These were things that I would not have normally done when visiting. I also remember that I had gone to visit the lady to give her the life time award of the UCW. The husband, however, asked for a retired White minister to lead the service. Although this minister suggested that I participate in

the service, I declined as it was clear that the family did not want me there. I remember this experience vividly and the memory hurts. The Board and Ministry and Personnel Committee knew what was happening, and only shrugged it off by saying that the husband was going through a difficult time. They excused his behavior and did nothing.

I remember before I arrived at the pastoral charge, I had come for a site visit to see the church building. At that time, I was introduced to some of the members. One of them I had given a name based on the initial interaction. She was not a regular member and she had a problem that caused her to go to the hospital many times for the year. When I had taken up the appointment, I met that member at different times and in different circumstances. I heard that she was in hospital and so I went to visit. However, when I arrived at her room, there were two other women with her. She claimed that she did not know me. I called her by the name I had given to her when I first arrived in the pastoral charge, however, she still claimed that she did not know me. I left and pretended to go to another room as, by this time, I was completely embarrassed. While I was at the hospital, another member of the church arrived and so she went with me to visit this person. This time the other women visiting in the room when I first came had gone. This time, however, the member claims that she had not recognized me when I initially came. I left and felt very bad because I was rejected by a member. I wondered if my colour was a reason for the sudden loss of memory.

Florida

I came to this country in 1972 with a letter of transfer from my former denomination. It took me a long time find a church. I went to many United Churches and offered them my skills, and no one even cared to listen or return a call. This went on for a while until I found a community church made up predominantly of United Church members who wanted something different. I stayed there for many years until I had a call to ministry and then I knew I had to return to the UCC.

This time it went well because the congregation was diverse, and they had a Caribbean minister. I went through candidacy and upon ordination I did not have any problems. I was placed in my settlement charge[7] in Nova Scotia. I came back to Ontario on a call to a pastoral charge. One day, when I was at the church, a group had rented the church for something and they had spilt something. The people, who had rented the facilities, came to me to say that they have spilled something and told me to come and mop it up. I told them I am sorry that was not part of my job description, and I will show them where the buckets are kept. It was strange because 'minister' was written on the door.

On another occasion, we were trying to work with the national church to be diverse. There were other groups such as the Asian women's group which felt that Black women were overpowering them. There was a gathering called "Sounding the Bamboo

[7] Settlement was the process in the UCC where the church would have assigned a candidate for ministry to a pastoral charge at the end of theological training. This would be the first appointment for the candidate as they began full time ministry. This appointment was called the settlement charge. The process has now been discontinued.

Conference" and so more Black women got involved in the leadership. The Asian women did not like this. One of my former professors, an Asian woman, was involved in the planning. When the evaluations came in and the concern about Black women was clearly voiced, I asked her if she felt that way. She said to me that Black women were really overbearing. They stopped asking me to be part of anything after that. At that time, I believe I was really the only Black woman active in ordained ministry in the UCC. I believe that two other women had been ordained. The second woman to be ordained had taken the racism so inwardly that she walked away. The first woman to be ordained had passed away or retired. However, I was black-listed at the national level, because of my professor, but I went along doing my work.

Eventually I started with another woman the "Journeys of Black People." We got funding to help Black people to become empowered in the church. There were fragments of Black people in the church, but they were not getting active in the church. This program was to bring empowerment to black people and to get them to understand the UCC polity and policy. This continued until they stopped funding it and started funding the Black Clergy Gathering.

I had a hard time getting another call after my first call in Ontario. I was doing supply at a three-point charge and then I did the training for Interim ministry. When I did my second interim appointment in southwest Ontario, on one occasion the church doorbell rang. The secretary had already gone, so I went to the door and there was this man looking for the minister. He was looking for help. I told him I was the minister, and his immediate response was one of shock. He turned red in the face. He asked since

when did the UCC have black people in ministry. I was lost for words. He left and said he did not need my help. I understand that he went to the neighboring Presbyterian church. There he told the minister that he could not believe that the UCC had a black woman as their minister. The Presbyterian minister refused to offer him help because of his disrespect to his colleague in the UCC.

I also remember in the early 1990s at the end of the UN Decade for Women, I was part of the planning for the conference to end the decade in Canada. It was done under the auspices of the United Nations. At the conference I and a Presbyterian colleague were doing a workshop on "Black Spirituality." In this workshop, we discussed the worst atrocity of human being – African slavery. The same professor attacked us and said that the enslavement of Black people was not the worst atrocity as Asian women faced atrocities during the Second World War and during the Korean War. Other people began singing when she was speaking, and this caused the workshop to come back into order.

Racism is very much alive in the UCC and it does not only come from the laity or people on the street. It also comes from the leadership. I have been fighting that we cannot move into being an intercultural church until we deal with the legacy of racism. It has come to the point where I have determined that I will not do it anymore. The legacy of racism must be dealt it intentionally. It requires intentionally doing something and acknowledging that the church was involved in racism and was involved actively in slavery and the transportation of Africans into enslavement. Until that happens, we will continue to have racism in the church. Until all the countries of Europe and the

Americas deal with it and some form of reparation has occurred, (it does not have to be monetary), then it will continue.

James

The most seminal and enduring situation was when my father was about to be re-ordained in the UCC as he came from Barbados and had to redo theological training. This was a few months after my brother and I were attacked, and they killed my brother. As a family, we were in trauma and grieving. My father had been doing pulpit supply and asked Presbytery for compassionate leave from rules of being sent away to another Pastoral Charge, as this would mean splitting up the family. An officer of the Presbytery said to my father said that under no circumstances would this be allowed, and he had to go. After some exchange between the officer and my father, the officer said, “No! Just take your four little monkeys and go where we send you!” I recall my father sharing this experience with grief, and it caused great hardship for my family. Here was an officer of the church using racial epithets to describe my family. It was interesting that the very next year there was a similar situation with a White family, and in that case the theological student was allowed to complete his studies, and he was allowed to stay.

In my own experience, I had racial epithets launched at me by people in the church. When I was settled in my settlement charge, there were several people who stopped coming because they did not like that a Black minister was in that church. When my father had applied to a pastoral charge, he did not get the job. He was,

however, told years later by someone on the Search Committee that although he was the best qualified for the job, he did not get it because he was Black.

I have observed the experience of racism as I was chair of the Racial Justice Advisory Committee for six years. In that committee, we hosted various events to allow people to share their stories. We heard from many, that they were told to be satisfied with what they have here. When suggestions were made to diversify things such as potluck suppers, they were told that this is what we do here, and your food is not welcomed. I was able to hear stories from persons of African descent of being the objects of various racial epithets and made to feel unwelcomed. Many were dismayed by the comments and noted a reluctance in the church to diversify.

Willona

That is a difficult question to answer because, as Canadian born Black, I have been conditioned to ignore the racism in the room. Partly it is because of survival as if we focus on it, we will be constantly depressed. But also, if we focus on it, it will help those who will benefit from the racism in the room if you are comatose.

I have been in situations where a congregant will ask me, while I am in a counseling situation with them, where my coloring comes from? In those situations, I try to understand how is this question helpful to the counseling that is occurring? Or I am at the hospital and I am there to pastor to a member and instead of asking about life, or some deep question like that, I am asked about my color. This usually happens with an

older white person. Then they want to know if I got a sun burn. So instead of a deep conversation we have this surface conversation about melanin.

The other situation is when I am asked where I am from. So, when congregation members ask me where I am from, they fail to recognize that they have 'othered' me. By asking this question, they are assuming that I am not from here, and further that I do not belong here; I must be from somewhere else. If I say that I am from Montreal, I see the disappointment on their face. It is just like the old person in the hospital asking about my coloring. I would prefer things to be up front and overt. I would prefer someone asking me why are you Black?

I am a first generation Canadian and I worry about my second-generation children. For, if my answer about Montreal does not suffice, very soon the next question will be about my parents and as soon as they do that then the conversation will turn to Jamaica. Interestingly, that is where the conversation will stay. But I too want to know where I am from. However, they stop the conversation in Jamaica. I would like to know about where my ancestors are from, what cultures I have lost, etc. So, we are not really having a conversation about where I am from when I am asked that question. They do not want to know that I am a lost child of slavery. People do not want to ask about that. I would like someone to go back into my history and find out what country I am from. Where you are from culturally helps if you want to talk about language and how I work within my culture. They may ask about my food, but that is because they like my food. They may ask about music and then they mention Bob Marley as if he is the only musician from the Caribbean.

The other reality is around my hair. I have locks and, as people become too familiar with me too quickly, they want to touch my hair. Or, as they get to know me, they are surprised that the hair is mine. They have preconceived ideas around hair which is false. On one occasion someone pulled my hair at a funeral, and they pulled it so hard that it hurt. I wonder if they thought that the hair was not mine. There was a certain level of dehumanization that was involved in this, which is why I called it racism. They pulled back my hair so hard that my head was bounced backwards. It was not curiosity -- it was more of a physical assault. If they considered me as a human being, they would not have done that. I am sure there are other day-to-day instances, but I hardly notice because, as I said, I have been conditioned to ignore them.

Within the UCC I have been asked to be on all sorts of committees, even those that I have deliberately not applied to be on. I think the church is trying to fulfill this thing about representation. People see me, and my name is recognized. They know I will call you out and I will be gentle about it. But there will be people at the table who are wondering why I am here, and sometimes I feel the tokenism that has caused me to be at the table. For example, I was at a meeting and was speaking about a topic. The phrasing of the topic used in the church is different from that which I was familiar with from my education background. The people in the meeting stopped me, mid-sentence, to correct me on the phrase. I had to ask them if they understood what I was saying and to point out to them that by their insistence on stopping me, mid-sentence, this was an example of White privilege. I live with the experience where people who are White,

especially men, believe that they must teach me something. As a Black woman this happens often to me.

It is about dealing with microaggression in the society, the subtle and nuanced aggression that causes us to think about what has happened. This happens often within Church and life. When I enter a room, there seems to be a change that happens. Sometimes it is for the positive. Sometimes I feel that I must be responsible for people's comfort in the room. So, we do not have honest dialogue because I am trying to make sure people are comfortable. We will never have honest dialogue until we (Black people) are seen as people. Racism is a false construct; we are all people. I just have more melanin than others and my body reacts differently in the sun. If lower based animals respond better to differences, then we have a problem. At some point we will have to step back and recognize that we are all the same. Until we do that, then it is all unreal.

Question # 2:

How have your experiences in the church affected your family?

Thelma

It is tiring. It is tiring and annoying. In terms of my circle of friends, it is all-inclusive. You spend too much time with predominantly White people. This is because the church is predominantly White. This means that you can, not intentionally, become more removed from your roots and culture and the reality checks of how people are

really seeing you and the reality of the world outside of this bubble. In the beginning, it was all-encompassing being around this sort of fakeness, and it seeped out into all areas of life. Then this led to fatigue from non-white friends. Church life is all-encompassing.

My family is not part of the church. They would come to the big events, but the church being predominantly White, it was not appealing for them to come to church. Their involvement in church life became less because they felt less comfortable and they did not want to put on a front when they came to church. As a minister you must wear a professional 'mask' to face church, but my family does not have to do so. If I went home to tell my mother about some of the things that happened, her response would be to retaliate. So, she does not want to come if she must be fake. They see people hurting someone they love, and they want to put these people in their place. So, there is a clear divide between the two.

In some areas, it was able to be more blurred. This was so in one appointment where the Sunday School was made up mostly of racialized persons and this enabled a different dynamic.

Does this mean that the Black minister must wear an extra thick mask than our white colleagues? Yes, this may be true if we are racialized. Because of racism, there is need to ensure that, in your actions, you fight against certain stereotypes. As a Black woman, I must fight against the stereotype of the "mad Black woman" and so everything I do seems to be seen through this lens. So I am told that I am loud, or that I am too aggressive. It might not be true in the slightest, but, as soon as they have that

stereotype in their minds, they feel justified in doing and saying things. There is a layer of self-preservation in fighting against stereotypes that we are taught to have. I try to be preventative in not playing into those stereotypes and the downside is that I hold much inside. How do you have honest dialogue if you have to keep things inside? You cannot have honest dialogue if there is not a safe space. But honest dialogue is the language of the majority. There is the creating of real dialogue, but the one who has power must give it up or the power balance must shift if there is to be real dialogue. Unless we can create a platform where it does not become “he said, and I said,” then it will not be an equal playing field.

J.J

Other than one of my sisters and a brother, I do not share any of these experiences with my family. One of my nieces attends my church and was recently made a member of the church. I, therefore, am careful not to share the negative things too widely. Only two of my siblings know about my experience of racism in the church. I hold their confidences and they hold mine. I have tried to figure this stuff out on my own and I have had to figure out ways to hold it in so that it does not become a stumbling block to others. I try not to have my church demonized to my family. My family knows virtually nothing apart from those who I hold in confidence. My sister does not like what she sees, and it bugs her, but she does not share it with others. She is very

professional, and she knows who and, who not, to share this with. In some ways, I am protecting the church.

Willona

My children also have had their hair pulled. People are very interested in their hair, so they dig they fingers in their hair. There it is again, this whole thing of dealing with the person around you as a person. When I am around my White colleagues and I ask about their children, they speak about them in terms of colour. When they ask me, and, if I speak about one of my children being lighter in complexion than the other, the people seem affronted. This is me, the mother, speaking about my children. Then it means that you have a problem with colour. But Black people are comfortable in the colour of their skin and are accustomed with different shades.

I have also noted that my daughter has grown in her self-confidence but is viewed as being arrogant. She is told that she is being loud, but she was not loud. She is seen as being 'too big' for herself. People are surprised that she speaks so well and that she can read well or play a musical instrument. But I wonder if they fail to realize that she is in the public education system and I would hope that all children who pass through this system are able to read and speak well. Also, she has had six years of music classes and so I would hope that I am getting value for my money. The problem is that these statements are said repeatedly and with some frequency. I then begin to wonder

what are they really saying, and is it really being directed to me because I am black? This is racism by 'othering' me.

Michael

The experience of the lady in the hospital has hurt my wife greatly. It makes us very cautious and makes us wonder who to trust in the congregation. The people who smile at you in the church can be the same people who will discriminate against you outside of the church. (*How do you deal with that*?) In that case, we did not do much save lament about it in the house.

Racism in Canada is textured, often more covert than overt. You must second guess yourself a lot. Might be better to be called a "nigger "outright as then you know what you are dealing with. But by second guessing are we now making the problem our own and taking on the problem?

In the community, it is often that when I enter a store or restaurant the people will stop and stare at me. It is something that takes much time to get accustomed to. Recently, I received a call inviting me to attend a meeting of the municipality as the minister of the congregation. I indicated that I would be late for the meeting. It was a meeting of people from various municipal officers and community leaders and I knew no one there. When I came in, there were some fifteen White persons at the table. As I entered, the meeting stopped and an awkward silence was present. I got the feeling that, as persons stared at me, they were waiting for me to leave. I was asked to

introduce myself and, only when I said I was the United Church minister, did persons begin to relax.

Florida

I come from a family that is politically aware and active. I was fortunate to be born into that type of a family. Even though on both sides of my family I have great grandparents who were Europeans, we were made aware of where we came from. My family has been very aware, and they passed that legacy onto us. We were aware that the lighter the complexion of your skin the more poised you were to achieve.

James

My birth family had experienced great trauma as my father was sent to another church, and my sister and I were enrolled in another place away from the family. The family was split up when I was at an early age for me, and this caused great consternation for us.

Personally, I had the trauma of persons calling me certain names. Having to explain to my children the nature of discrimination and racism and helping them to navigate their school system. The leadership required to do this takes a toll. You constantly must explain, describe, and encourage them to offer just and loving responses, and not to allow bitterness to set in.

(*In relation to what happened with your father, was there any support offered from the church?)* We had no formal or structured support from the church. Some parishioners offered support. The people asked for my father to stay, but presbytery did not change its position. No support came from presbytery or higher courts.

As a Black male in the church, there can be a discrimination that comes because you are at the intersection of gender and race. Yes, through name calling and, in the assumptions made when you go to a gathering. I was at a gathering and, as people came in, they thought I was the janitor and wanted me to clean up something in one of the rooms. However, by and large, the experience in the church has been 'middling' to positive. But the experiences stay in your mind. It became very clear to my colleagues the differences in my experience as against theirs when we had a workshop at presbytery. Several questions were asked and, if you did not fit into the question, you had to take a step backward for each question. At the end of the workshop, I was the person furthest back in the room. Many people were shocked and there was overwhelming support as they did not know that this was my reality.

Question # 3

Why do you think more Black people are not attending The United Church of Canada?

J.J

As much as we say we welcome everyone, we do not welcome ideas, principles, and people who are not like us in the UCC. A part of me wanted to say that I do not see a difference between the Republican Party of the USA and the UCC. Even though we claim the opposite things in values to them, in reality and in practice we do not it. We claim that we love diversity, but only diversity in the white populace is accepted. We do not like diversity outside of whiteness. There are wider things happening in our culture, some of the other things are issues like sexual diversity. But so long as it is with White people, we accept it. The reality is that the greater percentage of trans-people who are killed are people of colour. My issue is our communities do not seem to know this.

White people do not know how to listen, and they have not learnt to listen since Christopher Columbus planted his flag near Haiti or the Dominican Republic. We have not learnt to live with the tension of people doing things differently to what we do in the UCC. There are lots of areas of life which makes us different; how someone preaches, what they say as a confession, how they understand how music should be led in worship. That we should have church wars over music seems childish. In life, we have ways of negotiating who has access to the radio to listen to what we prefer, but in the church we get intolerant.

There is something that is probably connected to colonialism which is happening in the church. There is the story of the Presbyterian minister, Charles Jones, in the 1830s or 50s who wrote a book called “Catechism for Coloured People”. One story is where he

goes to preach to a group of Black enslaved people. His text was “wives obey your husband.” At the end of his sermon the people said to him that “our bibles do not say that scripture.” He wrote in his journal later that he was surprised that the people said that they did not care if they did not hear him preach again. Those black people who were saying this to him were pointing to the arc of scripture which decries slavery. But the dominant culture was affirming slavery. A similar thing is occurring in the UCC, where white people call the shots. How many Black Moderators have we had of the 43 Moderators? One! We have had one Indigenous and one Chinese Moderator. But all the other forty Moderators have been White. I do not think that anyone has offered to candidate for the post. But you see, people come from those cultures where it is not polite to put yourself forward and will not automatically offer themselves for this office. In North America, we will pad our resumes but in other cultures this would be considered as rude and not done. We have not tapped into what is happening, we put out a call for nomination and we believe that all persons from all cultures will want to put forward their names. We forget that in some cultures it is inappropriate to put yourself forward and call attention to yourself. If we are not willing to create processes to deal with that, then how can we claim to be intercultural.

Florida

One of the reasons is that many Black immigrants do not know where to find the Methodist church; some of them may find the Presbyterian church. Many who were

Moravians or Congregationalist do not know where to find their roots when they come to Canada

Another reason is that several people from the diaspora are very homophobic and, when they hear that the UCC is open to all people regardless of sexual orientation, they stay away. We have become known as the Gay church, or the homosexual church. I have family members who do not come to the UCC. When they come to my home, I ask them not to speak about religion. They do not see me as even being Christian because I am part of the UCC. It is one of the biggest problems. Many of the diaspora have family members who are gay and are hiding away in downtown Toronto. I recently had to speak with someone who has a gay family member, but refuses to speak with that family member. Some will not have those types of conversations.

Thelma

First, we do not see ourselves represented and, secondly, I do not believe that the UCC has shown that it cares about Black people. If I was not in the UCC, I probably would not go to the UCC. If there were more options in Canada, I would probably go elsewhere. The UCC refused to say that Black Lives Matter, when it had the chance to do so, and this was the straw that broke the camel's back, a turning point for me. It should not need a committee for us to do this.

You know after the shooting at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, South Carolina, USA, in 2015, I found that I could not go to a UCC church as I knew in my

heart of hearts it would be ignored by the UCC churches. I went to an AME church instead. How can you be with me if you have no understanding of what I am going through, or you cannot grieve with me in my time of grief? Because of the visibility of anti-Black racism and the church's lack of response to it, what I had thought for a long time was confirmed. The theology is right, the social justice approach is right but when it comes to direct action, it is not there. There are things happening at the national church level, but this is from individuals who have the passion for it. It seems like it is too much of an uphill battle in the wider church, and that is a problem.

I think before we spoke about interculturalism we spoke about racism, but we have found ways to evade it. You can have a discussion on interculturalism, and it also can be a discussion about antiracism. They go together and are not mutually exclusive. The intercultural reality helps to highlight that we all have work to do, even within ethno-specific groups. If the understanding of culture is on race, then the focus is far too narrow. If our understanding is that narrow, then there is a lot of work to be done. If anything, it should help us to be aware of intersectionality and how ageism, ableism, transphobia, biphobia and homophobia intersect with race as well. We would be able to have a deeper understanding of the intersectionality of power. It could be that people in power do not want to talk about power, as this may be taking away their power. What we need is to see more diversity in the places of power.

How can we become a more caring church? If we care enough to get hurt, to feel someone's pain, and care enough to be told that we are wrong. We like to think that we are welcoming, and it is all a matter of perspective; if I really had a friend and they were

hurting and if I wanted to help them, I would find out what they needed, not to simply do what I wanted. If I wanted to be there for my friend, I would find out what they wanted me to do. That is what it means to be a friend. As a church, how can we be better disciples of Jesus and friends to each other? We can only live out this welcome when we are to welcome the other person's needs. It means going beyond being polite and getting to know the other. It means understanding the cultural differences and what cultures will accept. I remember meeting someone from another culture who was sad. When I asked why the person was sad, he told me that when people asked him how he was doing, and he started to respond the people would walk away from him. I had to explain to the person that in this culture asking how you are is short hand for saying hello. Once he realized this, it made it easier for him. Could it be that we have substituted politeness for being welcome? There is a surface and then there is the real work. Welcome must be a willingness to go the extra mile to show the extent of how we are a caring community.

Michael

Two reasons – the experience of coming to a White church and you see very few other Black people. The second reason is the experience of the church from which you came is different in worship styles and other things.

It is a White church and it is visibly a White church and often you experience the awkward silence which is embarrassing. The opposite is that there is an experience -- an

extreme exuberance that they are seeing a Black person in the church. We are not yet at the place in society where the colour line does not matter. To reach that place -- it is a very idealized place. I would want colour lines to mean something, but in a very natural way. In the Black community, there are colour lines as we have different shades of black. These shades mean nothing, and they were respected and celebrated. Here, however, the colour line is more of an issue which divides us. When we celebrate ourselves, I would want persons to see my colour, not necessarily to be exuberant but natural about it; see my colour but also to see the truth about me.

James

From personal observation, and from the testimony of others, there is a general lack of hospitality and an unwillingness to change and accommodate opinions from people of African descent. There is an unwillingness to accommodate cultural expressions of faith and worship. Things are, however, beginning to change for the better. But, over the past ten to fifteen years, they are finding more acceptance in the evangelical churches where they are more open to diversity and there is a willingness to try different types and forms of worship. Other denominations seem less intractable to suggestions for inclusions. Several people say that ,when they go to the UCC, they see little racial diversity and even fewer black people. They may come from their homeland with a protestant tradition, but they find that they will gravitate to other denominations here because of a lack of welcome.

(*What do you mean by a lack of welcome*?) In broad term, when they arrive, they see lack of diversity. In the initial contact, the UCC people are either glad to see you there or you are ignored. When suggestions for style of worship are made -- the inclusion of percussions in worship, the use of choruses, or suggesting changes in liturgy, they are all met with resistance.

There seem to be assumptions made about those who are coming without getting to know them or having dialogue with them. There is need to move beyond stereotypes. Assumptions are made about the lived experiences of people. We assume that, because they come from traditional protestant transitions and beliefs, there are similarities not knowing that different expressions of faith are included in the practice of faith in the person's homeland. It is the assumption that everything is the same as what is happening here. However, I believe that the UCC churches have been trying to be more just and are trying to be more welcoming.

At all levels of church, there needs to be representation. In 2009, we made the move to be an intercultural denomination. One of the decisions was that, at General Council meetings and other gatherings, there would be regular anti-racism training, a critical reflection to identify the blind spots where assumptions have been made. This has not happened as concertedly as it should. There needs to be more representation on national committees and on various levels of governance. The lived experiences that can alter, transform, and change the structures and would make the experiences of others accessible and welcoming to those who want to participate, but in the ways that do not conform to what are the structures that are present. Structurally, systemically,

and also relationally and liturgically, we are becoming better at welcoming different ways. For instance, look at the current settlement of people from Africa and the Caribbean, they are finding places in very rural places where they are facing shunning, racism, and hostility without any support. This also makes it difficult for people of African descent to be part of the system.

Willona

Because it is boring. If a Black person goes church shopping and goes to a Pentecostal church where much is happening, they would not choose to come to the UCC where everything is prescribed and cannot be more than 1 hour in worship. We lack spirit. You can give a good sermon and that is great, but everything else is unattractive. You go to another, you find more people who look like you and they want to talk about real things.

It is interesting that most of the people who came into the UCC were from a Methodist background and yet, when immigrants come here, they find that the services are unattractive. It is strange that the UCC comes predominantly from the Methodists and Congregationalists – Evangelical churches, and yet the church has taken on more of the Presbyterian style. We have not been clear about what we believe and, if the worship is not attractive, then it will not be welcoming to the immigrant.

When my mother came to Canada, she joined a UCC church because there were three pews of Black people in the church. They provided community for her, were able

to criticize, gossip, and agitate for change in the church. Many of our UCC churches do not have so many Black people in the church. In my church, I am the only Black person in the church. You may attract a Black person or two, but they will not stay. I try to jazz up the services within the one hour or ninety minutes given to me. I do not know how many churches are having prayer meetings and Bible studies, things that will attract Black people. Black people are not wanting to join a church to go to church business meetings. We are more interested in growing our spirituality and to hear about Jesus Christ. That we have a group in the UCC that has to say that we believe in Jesus Christ, it means that not all UCC churches are making that emphasis. The entire issue with Gretta Vosper[8] is a turn off to the Black immigrant coming to Canada. It says that it may not be a church for them. It is strange that it is in the Toronto Conference, where most Black persons in Canada live, the issue with Gretta Vosper occurred. This sent its own message to Black people. But the Toronto Conference does not see us and do not care about us. So, the reality is that many Black people are in Toronto, but are not part of the United Church in the Toronto Conference

[8] Rev. Gretta Vosper is an ordained minister of The UCC who has publicly declared that he is an atheist.

Question # 4

Do you think that the church takes seriously the experiences of Black ministers in the church? Why do you feel this way?

Willona

No! They do not! As along as being Black is 'the other', they do not take our experiences seriously. Look at the last General Council. They acknowledged and were mindful of the Indigenous people through the Calls to the Church[9]. Notice that the Moderator who was elected was the opposite of everything we hold as important – he was straight, White and male. We seem to have fallen back on our default setting. Notice also that most Black ministers are in the rural places, where many ministers of the UCC do not want to go. If you placed the ministers, who are in urban settings in the center of the room and those who are in rural settings move away from the center, you will realize that it is predominantly white people in the center and Black people on the periphery. It could be that the average member does not know what Black people go through. To believe that is to wonder if they are in a box, or they do not watch TV. The average member is more knowledgeable than we give them credit for. It could be that people are willfully ignorant and privileged because it does not have to "do with me and so I do not notice it." In that case, we can say I did not know. Then we jump from that issue to something that we can handle better. There are several persons who will tell

[9] The Call to The Church were proposals made to the General Council from the Indigenous members of the UCC. These proposals set forward a new relationship between the Indigenous peoples and The United Church of Canada.

me that their daughter married ‘a colored’ person. In those instances, I will say to them no she did not. For if you are spending time with your son in law, you would not continue to call him colored.

Too often when we raise issues of racism, we are told that people feel sorry to hear what we are saying. They have failed to realize that my feelings have nothing to do with the issue. It is not a matter of feelings, there was a fact of something that happened. It is not based on my feeling; the situation is wrong and it should be noted as wrong. To make it into an emotional issue, then you have weakened the issue that the Black person has raised, and it can be easily dismissed. Consequently, as Black people we do not show our emotions. Instead of saying that they are sorry, it should be to say that the issue is racist.

Florida

I do not know much about the current leadership as I have withdrawn myself from many things. I have worked with past leadership, but I do not think they took seriously the plight of Black people. There was a lone minister who fought against racism in the church until he just gave up. He is currently disheartened. We have had clergy bringing their concerns to the fore, but where it goes no one knows. We have had studies upon studies done on racism, but nothing is done with the work. No change has occurred.

I would like to see, given what the first Black Moderator went through, more change. I knew him, and I could see the sadness in his eyes given all that he did for the church. It has been over 30 years since and nothing concrete has happened since that time. What do we need, I do not know! I have come to that place where I have given up. We, Black ministers, are seen by some as being trouble makers.

Thelma

I do not think they do, for if they did, the church would have to change. If you do not think that you are racist, how can you invalidate persons to save face? I have not experienced persons taking this seriously. Lot of lip service, patronizing, and hoping that people will stop talking about it occurs. We allow people to feel that they are heard, and we do not necessarily sit and listen.

(*What needs to be changed?*) Leadership needs to be changed. In order to be a just and diverse church, then we need to have leadership that reflects this. We need to move from theory to lived experiences. Human Resource policies are needed where racialized persons are looked for in search process and interviewed in fair ways. Not just using western tools or by judging using the best resume in western standard. Other standards would include competency, skills set, willingness to learn new things. Not always getting insiders for the job. Leadership reflects the people that we want to become. When that happens, we grow and change. This will not happen by luck. it happens when we are intentional about changing and ensuring that there is diversity.

When we have diversity at every level, we can have more honest discussion and it is not theoretical as you are speaking about the lived reality.

Michael

I was hoping that probably it would have changed after General Council 43, but generally there has been no change. Your talk at the General Council has brought the matter to consciousness in the wider church. Until that time, persons had underestimated it. I do not think that the issues of Black persons are a big issue for the church and, therefore, our issues are not taken seriously. We have been talking among ourselves as Black ministers, but it has not been taken seriously otherwise. The discussion about being an intercultural church has been theoretical. It is almost as though it was a "feel good" thing in the church by calling ourselves an intercultural church. We have prided ourselves on being an Intercultural church, but it is something that is on paper. It is either not lived in the congregation or congregations have not taken it seriously.

If a Black minister is looking for a call and has been looking for a call for two years, or more, no one would probably have seen this as odd, and to many it would suggest that he was not working hard enough to find a job. We would say that as a church, we do not discriminate, so race could not be a problem. Intercultural in this case is a salve to calm the feelings of the White church, to feel that they are doing something. We can open the doors so wide that it makes people fearful to come in. At

times, a house can be so wide open that it proves to be unwelcoming. The United Church says it is welcoming and yet, when you come into it, you are not feeling the welcome; the welcome is in the books, but it is nowhere else.

I can determine what intercultural means and I can define it, but I may not live in the understanding of interculturalism. At times, it seems that interculturalism is something that "others" do. The "others" do this in order to be accepted by us. I wonder if, by placing together so many things under the banner of interculturalism, we are seeking to silence them. Interculturalism has become another aspect of our 'othering' of people, and it could become another club in the church for those who are not in the dominant group. It is that so long as Black ministers keep their place and try not to move beyond where we are and simply colour the church, then people would be good with us.

James

I do not think they take it seriously enough. We have been trying in many ways and circumstances to advocate for more just and more full inclusion. It means giving up privilege for the national church, and it means that there must be an ongoing shift in perspective on what constitutes full inclusion and what constitute anti-racism blind spots that may exist in the structures and the ways policies are delivered. I salute the church for convening such events as 'An Awkward Conversation' in Edmonton, Alberta, in 2017. Some conferences are trying to engage the issues, but the conversation needs to go on. We need to help those who experience racism to know that they have some

solidarity, that incidences can be reported, and the faults in terms of the structures be recognized and challenged.

J.J

I do believe that the UCC pays lip service to Black minister and only lip service! I do not say this lightly as I feel as though I am undermining the work of many significant Black leaders working at the General Council Office. In terms of structure, infrastructure, and ecclesiology, this is a White structure run by White people. We continue to hear from Black ministers, especially those coming from outside of Canada, saying that people complain about how they talk and other things. You have ministers like me being constantly asked where you are from. No one does anything about it and, when concerns are raised ,it is brushed off. My example about the emails, for example, and when I said it was not appropriate, I am told that there was nothing wrong with them and they were not racist. When you speak up, it is not to get people in trouble. You do it because you want it to stop, but it is ignored. We have a church that does not care that racism is a form of bullying. We have administrators who do not seem to care that their ministry personnel are being bullied simply because of their complexion, or they come from a place where their first language is not English. I go to the Black Ministers Gathering and we tell the same stories repeatedly. Our church writes the policy documents about racism and how to deal with it, but when you bring forward an issue nothing happens. I am convinced that the church does not care.

The frustration will end either by my leaving the UCC, or the UCC as an organization invests time, resources, and money into what it means to be diverse and experiences some of the social awkwardness that occurs when you try to put together different cultures to work together. This includes overcoming the language barriers. We need to live in the discomfort as we try to bridge the cultural and racial divide. We need to move beyond simply saying that the church is a safe space, because in many ways it is no longer a safe space and this is especially not a safe space for Black people.

All of this does not synchronize with our vision of becoming an Intercultural church. It does not, but it could. The White church needs to find a way of not being so anxious about the church not being White. It is another way of saying that White people do not need to make all the decisions and, if someone does something different to the way you have done it, it will not be the end of the world.

We are, after all, trying to celebrate what God is doing in the world with human beings. The Bible is filled with intercultural experiences which are positive (e.g. Jesus and Syrophoenician woman). The witnessing of these may have caused people to be uncomfortable, but we have heard the stories so often that we do not realize that initially people were shocked by them. We have watered down the good news until it has no potency any more for us today.

I have had White people sending me emails about experiences of racism and each time we end, they ask the question, “How do we fix this?” We must be willing to allow people to be themselves. We try to create a professional ministry in the UCC, but

this is based on a White perspective. When I am criticized about my preaching style, for example, it should be noted that my style does not come from the White community. I do not know how to fix it, but people need to know how to get along and give up power. The marginal voices in our church need to have greater voice. The model of Jesus is the model of humility. Cornel West said that the role of social action is to let suffering speak. We must allow the marginalized people to speak. I have had people who have come from other cultures, who have come to Canada believing that they have come to something better, and what they are experiencing is worse than where they came from. They are facing unkindness and 'dirt' thrown in their face, because people claim that they cannot understand the way they speak. I say to myself, I thought we had the day of Pentecost already where we could understand each other, but apparently we have not.

Question # 5

If asked to describe how it feels to be a Black person in the ministry of The United Church of Canada, what would be your story?

J.J

Marginalized, frustrated, demoralized! At the same time feeling powerful because I never knew my skin colour could have caused such a powerful response from others. Vulnerable, surprised, and angry at times because these truths remain self-evident within the United Church of Canada.

Thelma

It is a little annoying, frustrating, and tiring. It feels at times that the church has taken my best energies. I love the church and I am grateful for the experiences I have had, and I am growing into my best self despite the church. It is not that the church is helping me to become and learning who I am; the church has been formational, but not in the ways it thinks it has. If I had gone to a Black church, I would have different strengths and different weaknesses. Ultimately, we learn from the journey we are on, and so I am not begrudging anything. But I am not saying that the church was the cheerleader on the journey. I do love the people that I have met on the journey and the wisdom, joy, and support I have received. But I know, in hindsight, the ways that I have been played and used by the church. But all these have helped me to grow into the person I am now. I am grateful for everything I have learnt, both good and bad. I have learnt about racism in a different way by working in the church than I would have in other places. This has led me to be less hopeful. Less hopeful because of how little we have moved on the topic. We have good intentions and my expectations were lofty, but I see people outside of the church living out the gospel more fully than in the church. It is not a competition, but there is a real unwillingness and hesitation in the church to address the beast of racism and to be accountable for the ways that the church has helped to create the beast. People may be afraid to acknowledge how ingrained and how much the church is responsible for how we understand racism today. Canada has a narrative which we try to uphold to the detriment of others. There is risk to broach the topic of racism because we are afraid to confront the ugly beast of racism.

Michael

I am glad that I am a Black minister and to be part of this dialogue. I take it as a God given gift to be part of this discussion. This generation is more open to the reality of racism. At times, it is a torturing experience and you wonder how much longer you can highlight these issues and say to the church – we are here! It is easy to give into despair. It is easy to give in to the feeling of acceptance of everything and focus on the work in front of you.

Trail blazers in the church are moving the issue of being an intercultural church from the books to the pews. If we can do that, then this would be the greatest achievement of our generation. This discussion of making clear the experiences of Black ministers and to talk about our experiences is a sign of hope.

However, sometimes I get tired of the experience of not understanding my accent. What do I do in this situation? There is a failure to understand that we all have accents and it seems that the accents of the persons from Europe are acceptable. After a presbytery oversight visit to a church where the minister was of African descent, it yielded complaints about the accent of the minister. However, in the same presbytery, an oversight visit to a Korean minister yielded no complaints about that minister's accent. The Korean accent seems to be acceptable as the stereotyping is that Koreans are smart and people would take the time to listen to them and make the effort to understand their accent. However, the African is thought be inarticulate and so very

little time is wanting to be spent on trying to understand them. So, no matter how smart you are, people will be willing to spend little or no time to understand us.

You get tired because you encounter often, and repeatedly, emotional battles and the attitudes of prejudice. The frequency of the nuanced racism can become another tiring experience. The other day, an elderly female member of the church called me and asked me to come to see her. I went to see her. I went, and she complained about everything that makes it hard for her to come to church. She complained about not singing the old hymns and asked, “Why can’t a White woman just enjoy her own church, she has to give in to everything. Why can’t a White woman can’t just be a White woman in church?’

Florida

My beginning in the UCC was a struggle, but my experience during candidacy was great. I have seen many students of many races have trouble. However, I had a supporting congregation. Upon being called into the Order of Ministry, there have been many bumps and roadblocks along the way. Until I became involved in Interim ministry, and I have been highly recommended as an Interim minister, I would not have had many options. My heart hurts when I see that we have not made any in-roads with those who are different. I long to see where those who are different, those who are Black, are embraced in the church. It is not the policies of the church. It is in the congregations where the work needs to occur. I have sat on many Search Committees where they

declined the persons based on the person's accent. I had to stop them to say that a person's accent cannot be used as a reason not to employ them. I do not know how we will make congregations to become more embracing of persons. We must get to grassroots of the church before change can occur. The majority are good people. Just last year, I had been on a Search Committee where they said that the person's accent will not be able to be understood by the older members. When they realize that the person's accent cannot be used, then they will seek to use other things. It is not only Black ministers who are feeling this problem, as I know of a colleague who is of South Asian descent who is struggling badly out there. Until the walls that have divided are broken down, then true change will not be seen.

James

It is a varied story. At times, I have had tremendous support from colleagues of varied ethnic backgrounds. One of things I am troubled by is that sometimes I am treated as a token. There may be a need for a Black person on a committee and, instead of thinking who can offer critical thinking and contribution, any Black person is selected. I give thanks for being able to serve overseas and, through my service, we have been able to partner with overseas partners. There are other experiences where there are snide remarks made because people feel I am there because they need a minority person. This denies the contribution I can make. It has been a varied experience. Great

opportunities and encouragement; and I have also had suspicious and undermining experiences.

There was tokenism when there were attempts to have greater diverse representation on committees. I was asked to be on a Task Force as they wanted great diversity, but when a critical and well considered constructive comment is put forward in that context, somehow it becomes sidelined. It is like they needed a particular constitution for the Task Force, but you are not made to feel that you are a full participant in the process. But this has inspired me to help people to reflect from the perspective of theology and the values of the UCC. I have been able to leverage theology to help people to examine an issue. I believe in encounter and not giving up, although pain may be present. I have focused my attention on the local community to minister in the public square, to work with the police, to work on anti-racism with the City Hall, to work with gangs, unemployment, and to work with immigrant groups.

It is very hard for any institution to change systemic traditions and really be transformed. To be an intercultural church requires radical transformation. It truly means that we are willing to give and take in our understanding of how we live together. There cannot be a normative culture that other cultures try to live into, or make tweaks to live into it. At the same time, there must be a critical mass of diversity. The reality of welcome of diversity can only be birthed by having a certain number of people from different races, as there is in the congregations many people of European descent, and a few others. In this situation, it is very difficult to shift the balance or to

make change. That is why it is difficult for others to come to the church and feel part of the church. A critical mass must be met if there is to be that seismic shift.

What is needed is not something new. We need only point to biblical references to show that this is not something new. The Bible shows God's desire to shock us out of normative cultures. In the book of Amos, for example, the prophet shocks the people by speaking that God has taken not only the people out of Egypt, but has done the same for the Ethiopians and Arameans. God performs exodus for others. In Acts, the leadership of the church in Antioch are a mixed group with persons from a variety of cultures. We have become, as a church, more hegemonic in terms of some cultural groups.

Willona

My story is very different from those who came from another country. This is my country; this is my home. I do not see myself as a Black minister in the UCC. Others see me as such. If the UCC has space for someone who believes in God, I will remain. My question is, 'Is there still that space? And can I work within that space and do what God has called me to do?' I am reminded daily that I am Black. When I wake up in the morning, I am me. Every day is Black history day for me. When I am called to go to a committee because I am Black, I know it is tokenism. I must be careful to discern what I will be a part of, or contribute to. I write and think differently, and it comes in the ways I express myself. What I have a problem with is when we miss the mark on why we are

here. We are all God's children and made in God's image. God's image is diverse and more robust than we can imagine. We are called to do certain things with our spiritual gifts. I am concerned that people are hung up on skin colour. Call upon me if you think I have the gifts to do it, and not because you need a random Black person.

Unfortunately, a lot of Black people are looking for an expiration date in the church. This is so because we do not feel welcomed in the church, and there is no welcoming space for us. We are here almost as an act of protest. Too often we are made to feel that we do not belong. It seems that we do not belong anywhere because so often there is a concern that we are in that space.

Congregations' Survey

The survey was conducted with three congregations in three provinces (Prince Edward Island, Ontario, and British Columbia). Congregations were labelled A, B and C in the analysis of the data. The sample sizes were to have been fifteen members from each congregation. However, Church 'A' returned fifteen questionnaires, Church 'B' returned sixteen questionnaires and Church 'C' returned thirteen. The total sample size was therefore forty-four persons. Congregations were selected because they were led by White ministers, and the samples were made up only of White members. The ministers were asked to ensure that the samples had a mixture of

- sexes

- ages
- education levels (as far as is known to the minister)
- levels of participation in the work of the congregation
- length of regular attendance at the congregation.

While it would have been ideal for participants to be selected randomly, it is acknowledged that, given the realities of congregation life, a truly random selection may not be possible. Questionnaires were administered in December 2018, and all respondents signed and returned the Informed Consent Forms before they completed the questionnaire.

The purpose of this survey was to gauge the impact of the intercultural vision on congregation life, and the extent of racism and possible microaggressions in congregations. Ultimately, the intention was to compare the responses from the congregations with the gleanings from the interviews with Black ministers.

Question # 1: How many Black persons regularly attend your congregation?

Responses revealed that there were Black persons who were members of the congregations. However, from the data presented, the number of Black persons in each congregation were either small or has infrequent attendance, as responses indicate that either there was no Black member attending, or the number of persons was between 1 – 10 persons.

Question # 2: Approximately how many Black persons live in the community where your church is located?

The data suggests that there were Black people residing in the communities where the congregations were located. However, the data also suggests that the numbers of Black residents in these communities were either small or were largely ignored by respondents. Most responses indicated that there were "not many" Black residents. Some responses indicated that there were "several" residents. In only one church, there a response that indicted that there were "many" Black residents in the community.

Question #3: How often have there been discussions about racism and racial justice in your congregation?

Responses suggested that discussions about racism and racial justice had occurred in the congregations. However, the frequency of such discussions differed among the congregations. In none of the congregations was there a minority of responses that had indicated that discussions occurred either four times per year or monthly.

In church 'A' the data suggests that these discussions were not infrequent, see figure 1. Most responses indicated that the discussions were not often. However, 13

percent of responses indicated that these discussions occurred twice per year, and 20 percent of responses said that the discussions occurred four times per year.

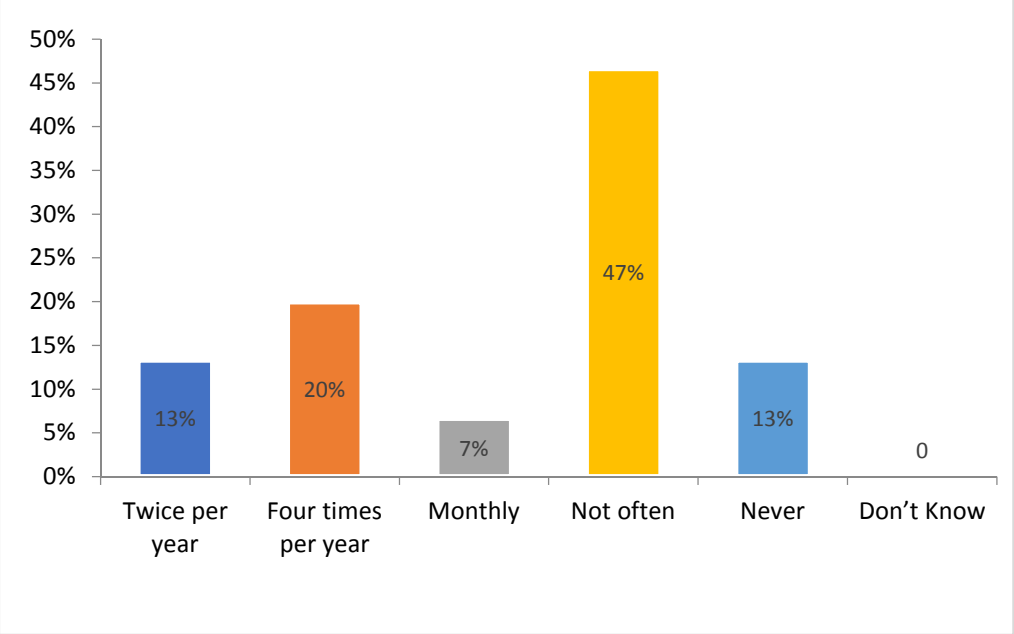

Figure 1. Responses of Church 'A' to question #3

With church 'B" the responses suggested that the discussions may be infrequent, see figure 2. The majority (53 percent) indicated that these discussions did not occur often. None indicated that the discussions occurred quarterly, although 20% indicated a monthly, and 20% indicated twice per year.

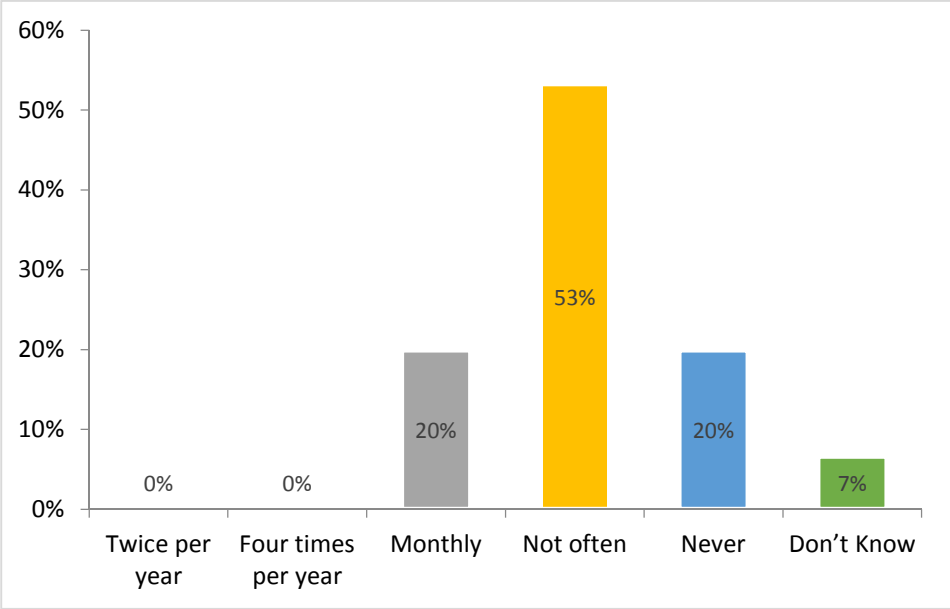

Figure 2. Responses of Church 'B' to question # 3.

In Church 'C' the data suggests that the topic was discussed with some regularity, see figure 3. There was tie (31%) between responses that indicated not often and four times per year. A total of 17% indicated that the discussions never occurred, while 23% indicated that the discussion occurred monthly.

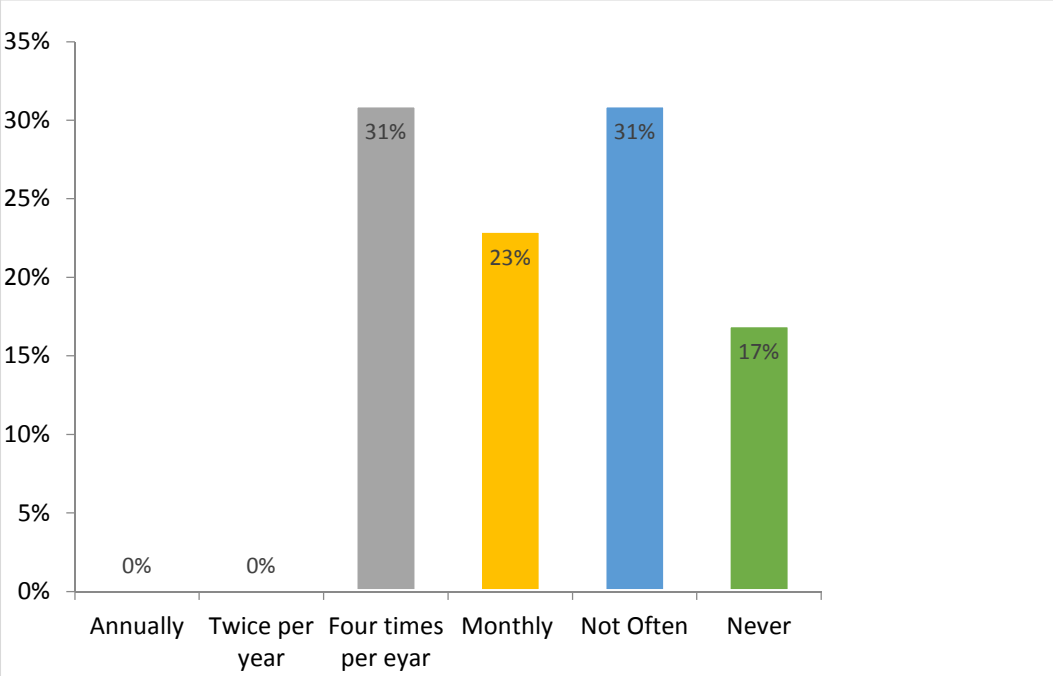

Figure 3. Responses of Church 'C' to question # 3.

Question # 4: If your congregation must search for a new minister, please indicate your comfort level for the type of minister to be selected. Please rate your comfort level between 1 -6, where 1 would be the most comfortable and 6 would be the least comfortable.

Many persons who responded to this question indicated that their main and primary concern was that their minister should have a liberal theological perspective. The question did not define the term liberal theology, and so it is possible that persons may be making different interpretations to this "What is liberal theology?". In many cases, the only response received was to minister with a liberal theology. However,

persons also indicated their degree of comfort with the other options. The ranking of comfort for the three congregations and the overall view are seen in table 1.

Table 1. Responses of churches to question # 4

	Ranking of Comfort			
	CHURCH 'A'	CHURCH 'B'	CHURCH 'C'	OVERALL
A White person born in Canada	2	2	1	**2**
A person with an accent	5	6	5	**5**
An Indigenous person	5	5	3	**4**
A person with liberal theology	1	1	2	**1**
A Black person	4	3	3	**3**
A White person born outside of Canada	3	4	4	**3**

The data suggests that there is a greater degree of comfort with White persons (either born in or outside of Canada) as compared with a Black or an Indigenous person. Overall the comfort level with a Black person being selected as the minister was the same as that for a White person born outside of Canada. When analyzed by churches, it is noted that a Black person ranked below a White person born outside of Canada in Church 'A.' The reverse was seen in Church 'B' and Church 'C.'

The lowest level of comfort was noted with persons who have an accent. This is noteworthy for, while all persons have an accent, it points directly to those who are born outside of Canada, or are French Canadians. Given that there is a high degree of comfort already noted with White people, the challenge of persons with accents would seem to point to those who are racialized. Low comfort levels were noted with both Indigenous persons and Black persons. It is interesting that a greater comfort was noted with Black people as compared to Indigenous people.

Question #5: How would you describe an Intercultural Church?

There were a variety of responses offered for this question. To analyze the responses, it was necessary to create categories into which the responses could be grouped. To this end, responses were sorted into the following groups: 1) No response given, 2) Responses suggested interculturalism was more than being tolerant, 3) Responses that defined intercultural mainly in terms of welcome and acceptance, and 4) Responses that suggested that interculturalism included learning among cultures. Interculturalism is best understood in terms of cultures learning together and creating a new culture of diversity that is different from the dominant culture. Of the groupings, option “D’ would be the most preferred of the options.

In Church ‘A’, most responses (50%) were Group C, while 19% of responses fell into Group 4, see figure 4. Most responses in Church ‘A’ suggest that multicultural is the same as intercultural.

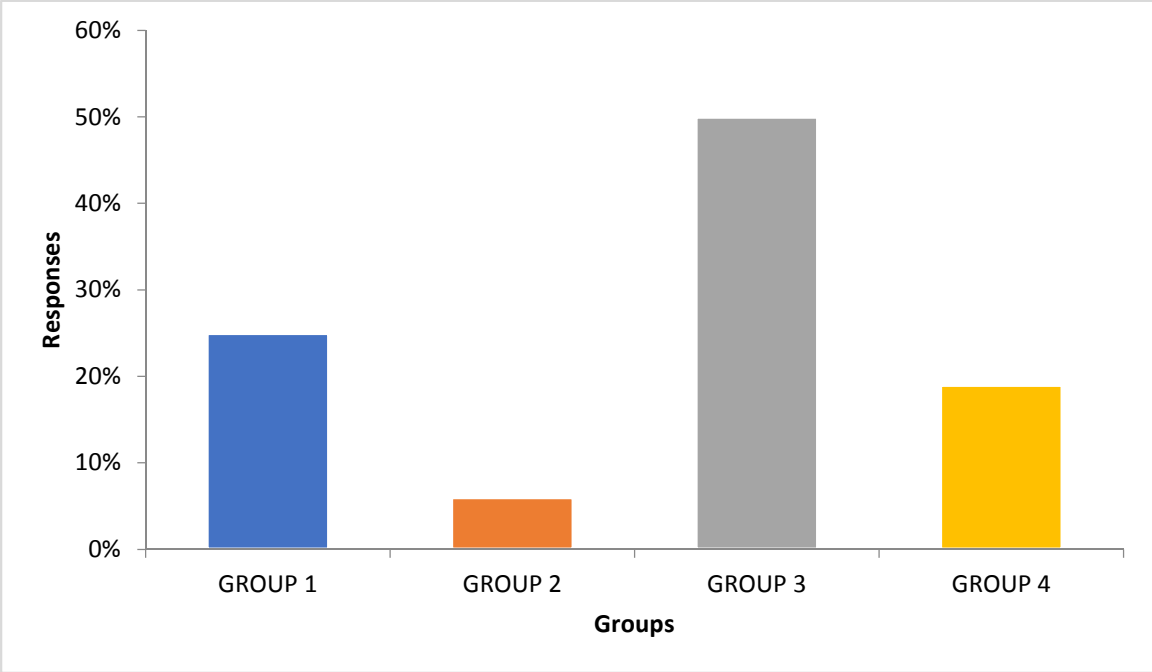

Figure 4. Definitions of an Intercultural Church offered by Church 'A'.

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Of the persons who defined intercultural in terms of cultures learning from each other (i.e. Group 4), responses included:

- “One that attempts to include and connect a variety of cultures through its worship, activities, music, committees, and staffing”
- “A church where all races can feel welcome and able to teach each other about our cultures – education is the key.”

In Church ‘B, a similar trend was observed. Most responses (57%) were categorized into Group 3, see figure 5. Again, the main definition offered here was that of multiculturalism and not of interculturalism. In this church, 22% of responses were categorized as Group 4.

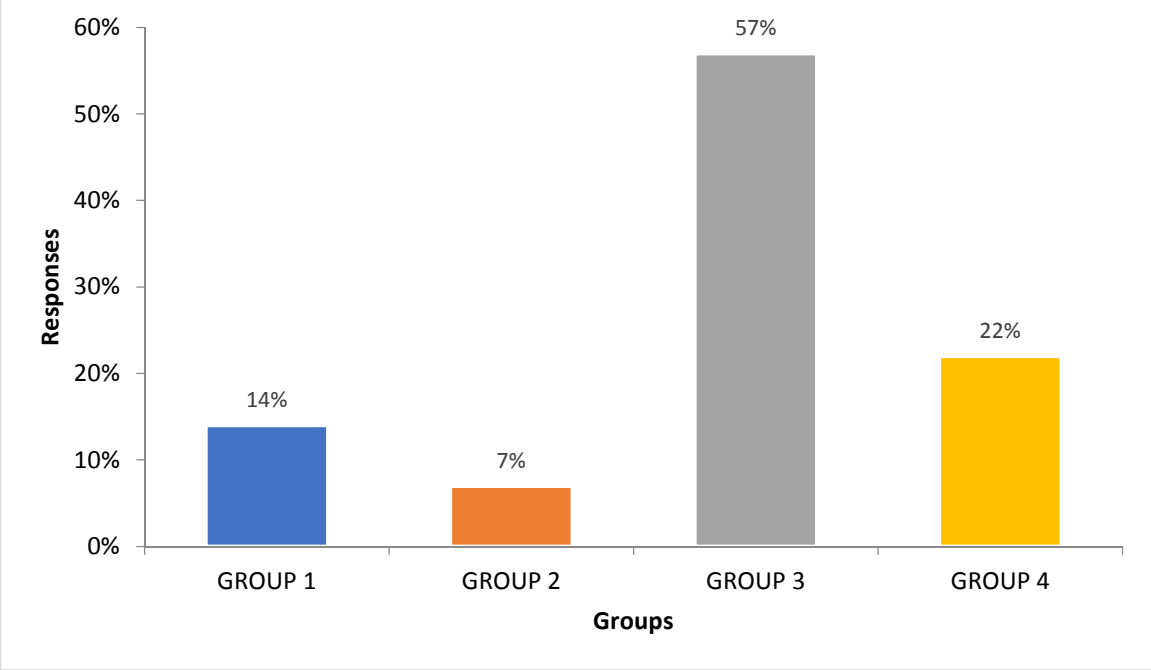

Figure 5. Definitions of an Intercultural Church offered by Church 'B'.

Examples of responses offered in Group 4 included:

- “One where people from a variety of cultural origins work and worship and learn from each other.”
- “A dynamic, creative, cross-sectional community comprised of a variety of worship, praise, and cultural styles uplifting God.”

In Church 'C' there were only two groups represented, see figure 6. There were no responses that suggested that interculturalism was more than being tolerant (Group 2), and no response suggested interculturalism involved learning about cultures (Group 4). As with the other churches involved in the survey, most responses suggested that interculturalism (77%) was only about acceptance and welcome.

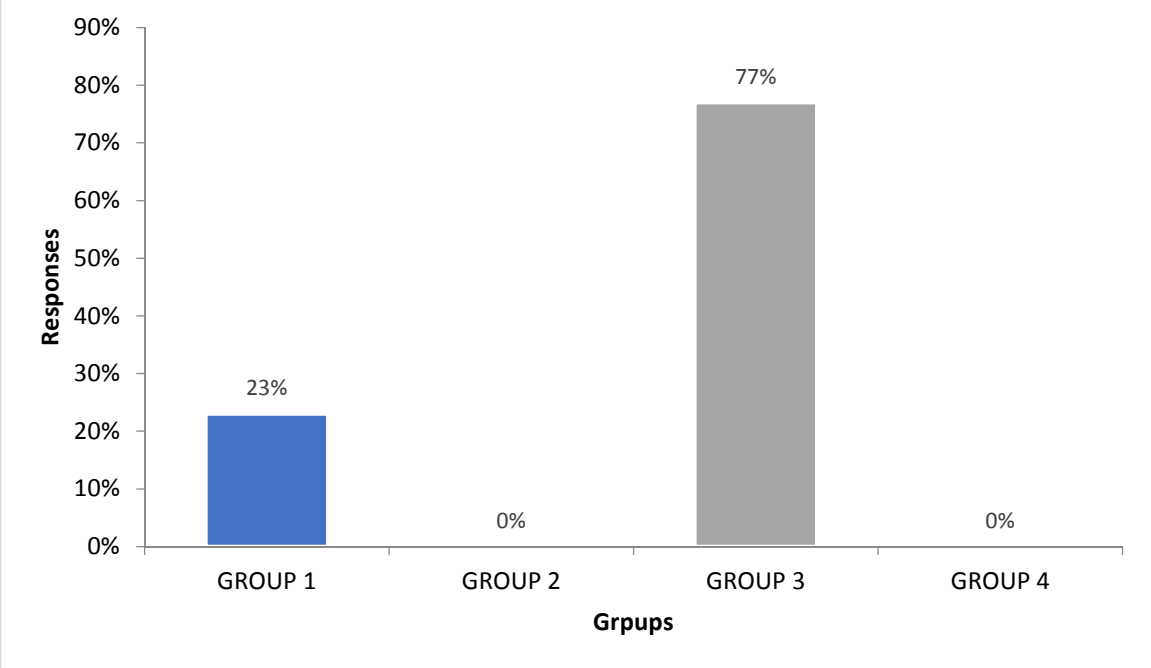

Figure 6. Definitions of an Intercultural Church offered by Church 'C'.

The responses suggest that there is some conflation between the understandings of multiculturalism and interculturalism the churches, see figure 7. At the same time, the number of persons who indicated that they have either "no response" or stated that they "did not know" also suggests that more work may need to be done in helping congregations to understand the meaning of interculturalism.

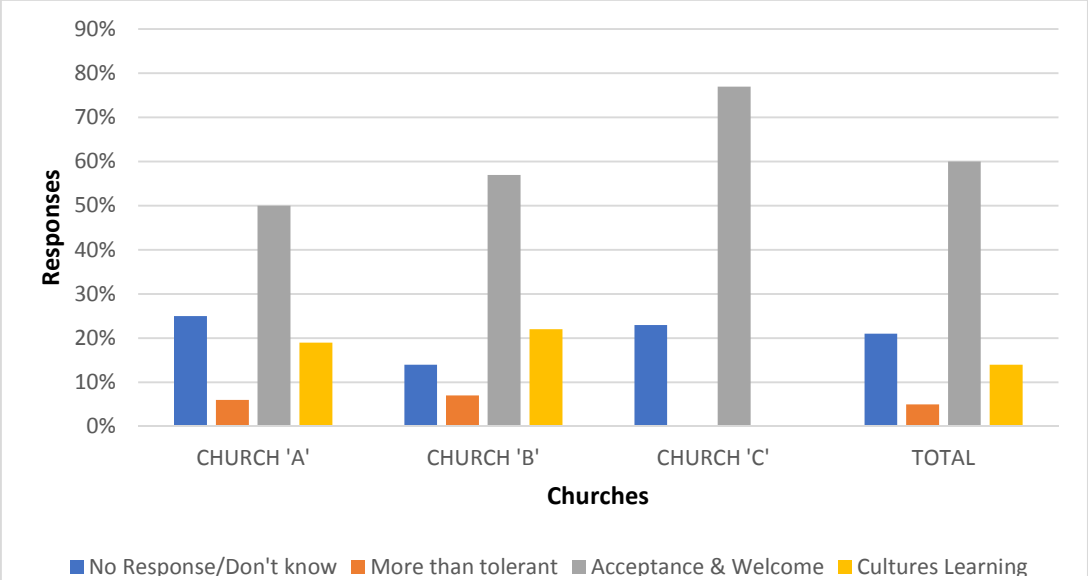

Figure 7. Definitions from all churches of an Intercultural Church.

Question #6: Have you experienced any of the following in your church or community?

This question sought to test the experiences of discrimination or prejudice by respondents. Most responses indicated that they have not had experiences of prejudice or discrimination.

Responses offered noted that members had had experiences of a lack of courtesy being shown to them in the community or at a restaurant, see figure 8. Very few persons indicated that they were treated as though they were dishonest. Furthermore, very few experienced name calling and insults, or were treated discourteously because of an accent.

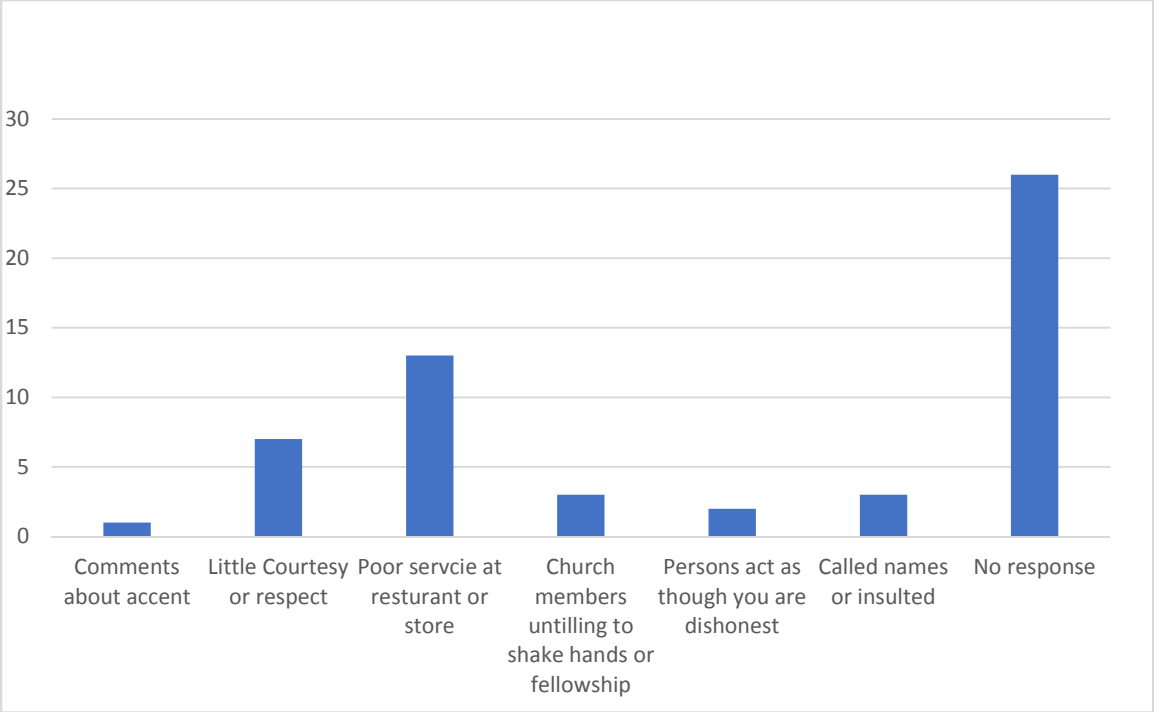

Figure 8. Responses from all churches to question # 6 (experiences of prejudice or discrimination).

The responses suggest that the majority have not experienced the type of microaggressions that are associated with discrimination and prejudice. It could be argued that unpleasant experiences could be as a result of poor customer service.

Question # 7: What would be the best understanding of intercultural in the definitions given below

The purpose of this question was to test the understanding of interculturalism in the congregation. In part, the question was seeking to discover what the understanding was at the congregational level. It is interesting that most responses indicated an

understanding of intercultural to be “cultures sharing and learning from each other.” This definition was in fact the best of the definitions offered. See figure 9 for the responses offered by participants.

Some suggested that to be intercultural was about cultures co-existing with each other. This definition would have been good if the discussion was about being a multicultural church. The fact that this was the main distractor for the respondents suggests that there may not be a completely clear understanding of interculturalism among all members. The responses indicate that there is some understanding of the theory of being an intercultural church. These responses should be viewed along with the responses offered in Question #5. When taken together, it could be that the

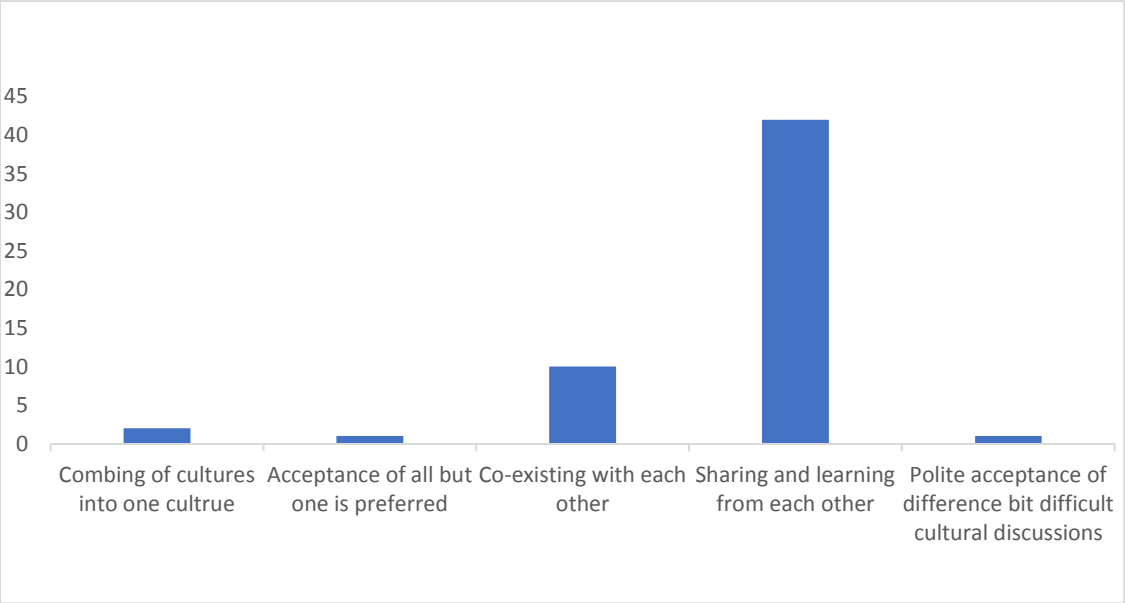

Figure 9. Responses of all churches to question # 7.

alternatives offered in Question #7 provided respondents with a stimulus for them to select the option of sharing and learning from each other. The response was, therefore, the best of the options available in the mind of most of the respondents.

Question # 8: How willing do you feel your congregation would be to Call/Appoint the following type of ministers. Please rate your congregation's willingness between 1 – 8, where 1 would be most willing and 8 would be the least willing.

Table 2. Responses of churches to question # 8

	CHURCH'S WILLINGNESS TO CALL/APPOINT MINISTERS			
	CHURCH 'A'	**CHRUCH'B'**	**CHURCH 'C'**	**TOTAL**
A minister of Korean background	7	8	7	**8**
A minister who is a bilingual French speaker	2	4	2	**2**
A minister who is from South/West Asia	8	7	8	**7**
A minister who is a White Canadian	1	1	1	**1**
A minister who is an Indigenous person	6	3	3	**4**
A minister from the Caribbean or Africa	5	6	6	**6**
A minister who is from Europe	4	5	5	**3**
A minister who is from Australia	3	2	4	**5**

Table 2 shows the response ranking of individual churches and the overall ranking for question # 8. Generally, the responses suggest that the congregations would prefer calling, or appointing, a White Canadian person. This was indicated as the highest-ranking option in all three congregations. Overall, a bilingual French speaker was ranked next in order. It was noted that a minister from the Caribbean or Africa was ranked lower than a minister from Europe or from Australia in the overall ranking. This suggests that something apart from the cost of relocation is at play in the determination of the ranking. It was also noted that the three lowest types of ministers that congregations would be willing to call, or appoint, were from the Caribbean/Africa, South-West Asia, or from a Korean background.

When the responses from this question are compared with the responses from Question # 4, it suggests that the presence of an accent is may well be a determinant in this process. Another determinant here may also be culture and race.

Question #9: How do you feel the Vision of The United Church of Canada becoming an Intercultural church is affecting the life of your congregation?

Various responses were received. Responses were therefore categorized into four groups, 1) No Response, 2) There was some effect on the congregation, 3) Not sure, and 4) Not much effect. When grouped in this manner, 40% of the responses indicated that the intercultural vision did not have much effect on the life of the congregation. Another 31% of the responses were not sure if the vision had any effect on the congregation.

Taken together this illustrates that 71% of the responses were either not sure, or did not believe, that the vision of becoming an intercultural church had any impact on their congregations. The responses included:

- “Denominational policies do not ‘trickle down’ and are very dependent on clergy to make something ‘their’ issue. As someone very active in the wider church, I think the policy is hard to see in action there . . .”
- “It will make some people look at their biases. Some do not even realize it is there.”
- “I did not know that there was a vision”
- “Little or no effect so far.”
- ‘No change. Cultural influences we experience in everyday life are stronger than our religious experiences.”
- “I sincerely hope that they would embrace it, but admittedly our congregation has not had much exposure to ministers of other cultures.”

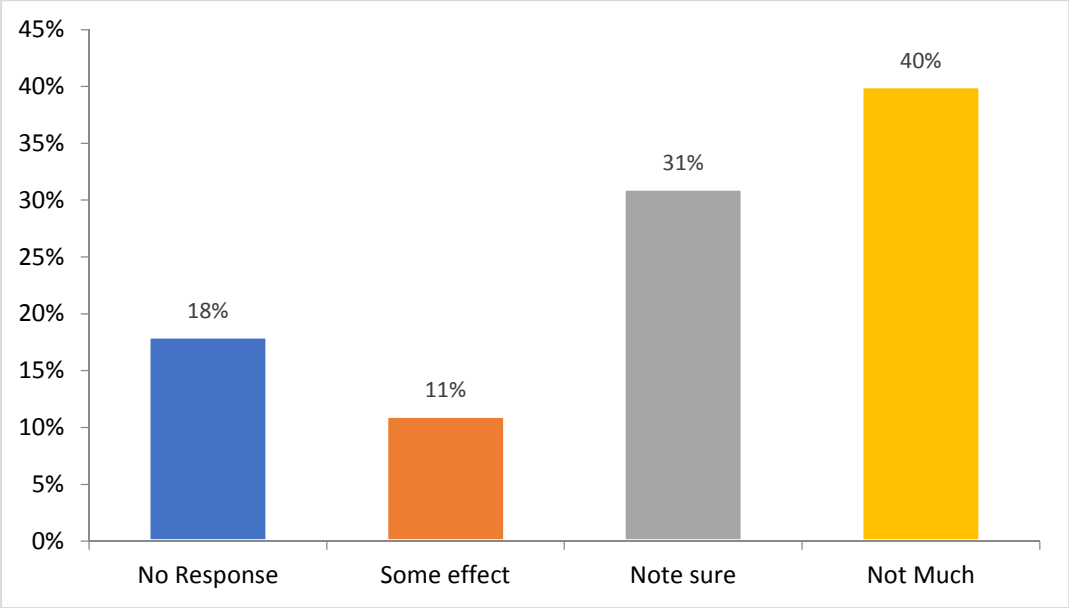

Figure 10. Responses of churches to question #9 indicating the effect of Intercultural vision on congregations.

In the case of one of the churches surveyed, it was clear from the responses that there was a conflation of being an intercultural church and becoming an Affirming Church in the UCC. The latter relates to a congregation becoming intentionally inclusive of all persons irrespective of sexual orientation or gender identity. Responses from this church included the following:

- "Very few care, but one member has left."
- "Most of the members of my congregation are older. I feel that it would be harder for these individuals to accept the vision of an intercultural church."
- "It is becoming more liberal and accepting."

Question # 10: Would you have concerns if a Black person became your minister?

According to 100 % of the responses, there would be no concerns if a Black person became the minister of their congregation. Taken on its own, this response could suggest that congregations were open and willing to accept a Black person as their minister. However, the response to this question seems to stand in conflict with the responses received in Questions # 4 and # 8.

In question #8, there was a clear preference given to a White person and overall a Black minister was among the last three options. It could be that the question standing in isolation to any other option belies an issue of race and has caused respondents to respond with a defensive mindset, so as not to be considered racist. It could also be suggested that persons are willing to accept a Black minister if no other options are given. This, however, does not suggest an implicit acceptance of Black ministers.

Question # 11: How prevalent do you feel anti-Black racism is in Canada today?

Generally, most respondents (38%) indicated that there was some degree of anti-Black racism in Canada. A total of 36% of respondents indicated that they were unsure about the prevalence of anti-Black racism in Canada. Only 2% of responses said that anti-Black racism was not prevalent in Canada. It is noteworthy that 24% of responses suggested a prevalence of anti-Black racism. No response indicated a feeling that anti-Black racism was very prevalent in Canada.

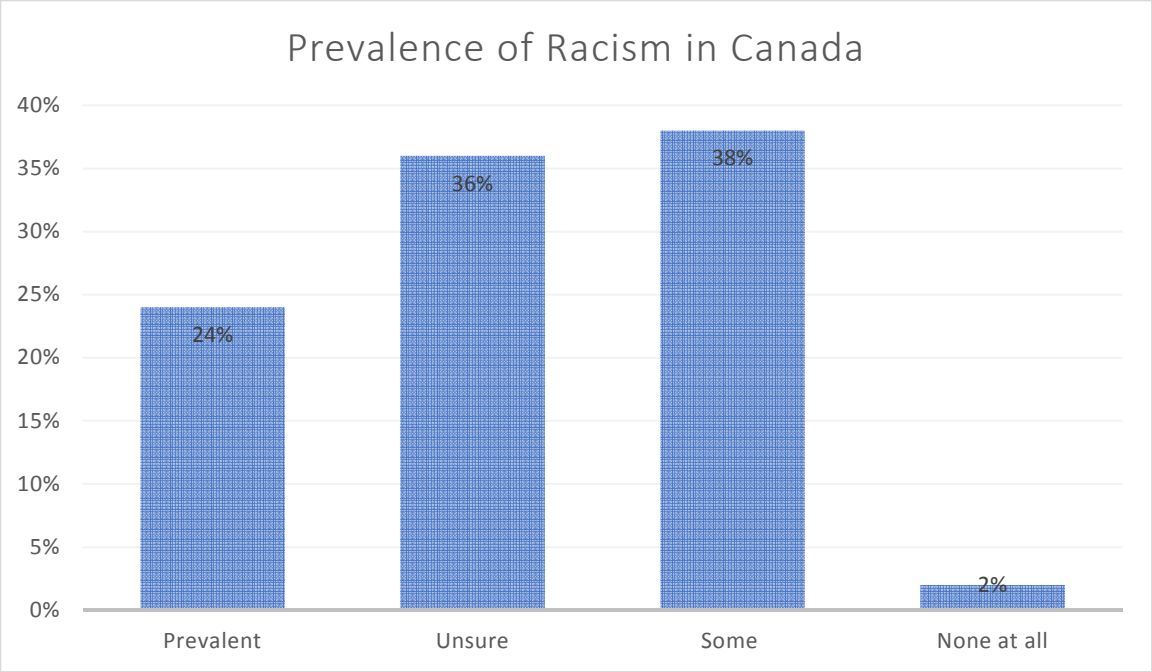

Figure 11. Responses from churches to question # 11 about the prevalence of anti-Black racism in Canada.

If you feel it is prevalent please explain why you say so.

Some responses indicated that racism was present in the larger cities in Canada and pointed out that these respondents live in a small town where most persons were White. The implication of this seems to be that, for racism to occur, there must be more than one race present. Other comments suggest that it is present in other parts of the country, but not in their neighborhood.

Other comments have highlighted that racism, at times, may be a subtle, but real experience in society:

- “Even in Canada there is a deep systemic racism. It is rarely acknowledged, and most are embarrassed by it, but Blacks still are profiled and have some difficulty with employment.”
- “Living in a small island city I find there is racism – “hidden” --at least from me -- we have to learn about each other.”
- “Canadians are too polite to name this as a real issue. Often deflected as a US issue – which is true, yet not to the point of being rare here. More subversive in Canada – less in your face, unless you are on the receiving end. We don’t know our own Canadian history of racism beyond residential schools.”

Some comments point to the issues faced by Black people in society and how these issues have been highlighted through the news media:

- “if you are a Black male under 40, you <u>will</u> be targeted by police – right or wrong – without provocation.”
- “Listening to CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation): Exposes all the degrees of racism in Canada.”
- “Black people are treated differently by police, are more often imprisoned, more opt to live in poverty.”

Question #12: How prevalent do you feel anti-Black racism is in The United Church of Canada today?

Most responses (67 %) indicated that they were unsure if anti-Black racism was prevalent in The United Church of Canada. Of the responses received, 14 % indicated that there was "some" prevalence in the church. The same number of responses (14%) was given to "none at all". Only 5% of responses indicated that they felt that anti-Black racism was prevalent in the church.

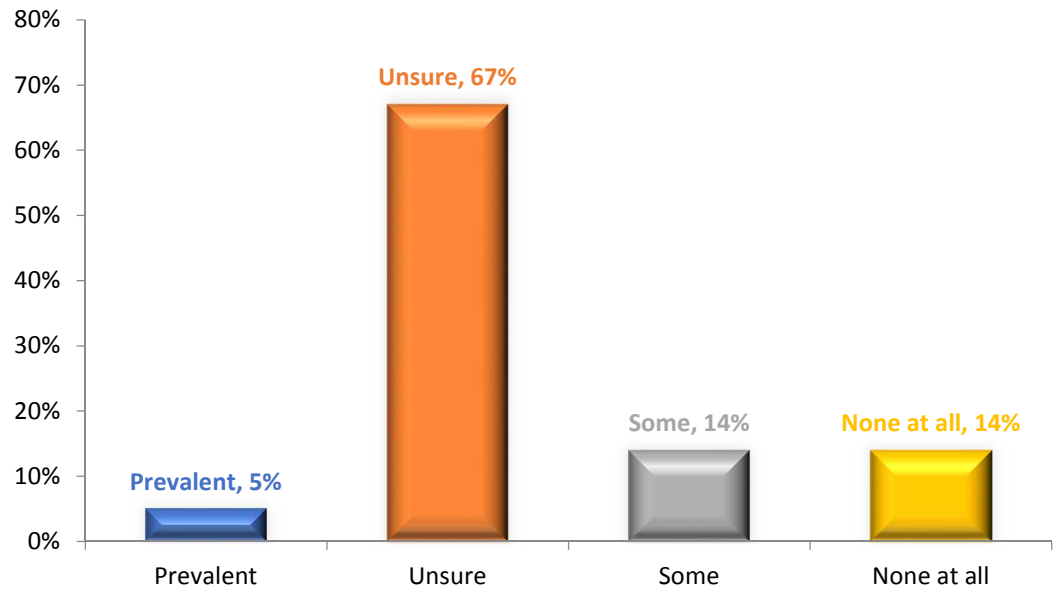

Figure 12. Responses of churches to question # 12 about the prevalence of anti-Black racism in The United Church of Canada.

The data suggests that persons either do not know about the experiences of racism, or the reality of these experiences have been minimized and pushed aside. Both could be the reality within the church. However, between July and November 2018,

much venting of the issue of racism in The United Church of Canada has been done in various ways. These include discussions at the General Council, social media posts, and articles in the church sponsored magazine (The Observer). It is questionable that the topic has not been heard of by members across the church.

If you feel it is prevalent please explain why you say so.

Only eight persons made responses to this part of the question. Responses included:

- "Our Black clergy are rarely acknowledged and do find it difficult to find churches willing to hire them. They are asked to mask their 'blackness' and find few people like themselves in positions of power within the church."
- "Too many stories to ignore. Dismissal of actions in the name of being 'aware' of the context, i.e. rural Canada. Unwillingness to own our own institutional racism as we'll apologize for "your experience" yet won't simply apologize for being racist/institutional or otherwise. Lack of corporate will to address both the adaptive challenge and source real technical solutions."
- "I have no idea."
- "I would have hoped 'none at all,' but I understand former Moderator Wilbur Howard was personally exposed to some (which makes me embarrassed and ashamed. He was an amazing person when he led our national church, and I treasure a collection of some of his most profound sayings)."

- “I’m not aware of any anti-Back racism in my own community, but it would be an issue in communities where there is a larger Black presence.”
- “It would depend upon the make-up of the community. And again, if the community, schooling, shared experiences, and employment of that community was largely white – then despite being “church”, elements of separation, distance, unawareness, and suspicion, rather than inclusion would still tend to exist, being woven into the very fabric of church, community and personal lives.”
- “I think open expression of anti-Black racism would not be tolerated. I hope I am correct, but there has been little opportunity to test my belief.”
- “I can only speak for our church. I have no contact with any others.”

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

Data and information gleaned in the previous chapter will now be analyzed considering the aims of the project. It is important to remind my readers from the onset, that the sample size of interviewees and questionnaire respondents was small. According to the statistical law of large numbers, the smaller the sample size, the more difficult it is to make accurate predictions of a whole population. Consequently, it is problematic to make accurate and conclusive deductions about the church as a whole, using a small data set. This, however, does not limit the ability of data to enable observations and tentative conclusions.

In this chapter I am using three questions to guide the presentation of the analysis and conclusions. Initially I will submit what was heard from the interviews. This will be introduced under the banner of the question, "What was heard?" Having presented what was shared during the interviews, I will next seek to answer the question, "What was discovered?" In this second question I will bring the responses from the questionnaire into dialogue with the gleanings from the interviews. Finally, I will answer the question, "What is being learnt?" Here, I will make tentative conclusions from the research based on the aim that undergirds this project. The focus

question has been, “what has been the effect of being an intercultural church as it affects anti Black racism, White privilege and White entitlement in the United Church of Canada?” It is with this intention that the last question of this chapter (What is being learnt?) is posed in the continuous tense. This is done acknowledging that the church is a living organization, and learning is an active part of what a living organization does. In so doing, I am acknowledging that as the church learns, it will grow and change considering the realities it faces. It also acknowledges that the church has not yet reached its idealized state of being; there is much more work that needs to be done if it is to truly to reflect the gospel it preaches. If the church is incapable of learning, then the church is either dying or is already dead.

What was Heard?

Experiences of racism

All interviewees indicated that racism is present in the UCC and that they have all experienced racism in the church. Drawing on the examples offered, the interviews indicated that the experience of racism came from both church membership and church leadership. It is interesting to note, that while the church has developed strong anti-racism policies, respondents reported that as far as they know, “nothing is being done” when incidents of racism are reported to the authorities of the church. Given that no corrective action resulted from the reporting of racism, there is an underlying feeling

that there is a lack of trust for the church to care for them. It also suggests that there is a certain level of powerlessness on the part of the church to change or challenge situations where racism is present. Reponses disclosed that Black ministers were the recipients of cultural and institutional racism, as well as a subtle, covert form of racism, which often causes them to second guess their experiences. Many indicated that the most prevalent expression of racism was the subtle and covert form of expression. This is an expressed example of microaggression. Sue, et al., (2007) defines microaggression as "the brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative, racial, gender, sexual orientation and religious slights and insults to the target person or group."[1] This experience of microaggressions makes racism difficult to identify or pinpoint. In the face of subtle racism, it is easy for authorities to ignore the reports of racism as it is far more difficult to prove. However, the long-term response of those who face this type of racism will be a healthy mistrust of the dominant group. Sue (2010) notes that among the cognitive effects of microaggressive stress are hyper-vigilance and skepticism.[2] The interviews revealed that Black ministers live with feelings of suspicion and an absence of trust. The picture is one of strained or uneasy relationships as Black ministers are unsure of who to trust in the congregations.

A point of interest is the intersection of race with gender. Female interviewees implied that because they were female, there is a greater need for them to prove

[1] Sue et al., "Racial Microaggressions as Instigators to Difficult Dialogues on Race: Implications for Student Affairs Educators and Students."
[2] Derald Wing Sue, *Microaggressions in Everyday Life* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 2010). 103

themselves in the institution. The responses suggest that they have experienced paternalism as well as racism in the church. In two instances, female interviewees stated that they had to deal with the issue of racial gender stereotyping (e.g. the loud Black woman) which caused them to mask their true feelings in order to continue their work. This means that the Black female ministers often feel themselves judged by both church members and leadership even before they speak or act. This of course tends to prevent any authentic dialogue from occurring.

The general feeling of Black ministers being made to feel that they do not belong in the church or being made to feel that they are not part of the church (i.e. 'othering') was very pronounced. At the same time, the accent of a person was also identified as a cause of tension between ministers coming from overseas and their congregations. This concern was especially pronounced when considering ministers from Africa and the Caribbean. Reddie (2008) defines being 'othered' as a Black person "is to have one's experiences, history and ongoing reality ignored, disparaged and ridiculed."[3] While speaking from the context of being a Black person in Britain, the description Reddie offers also aptly describes the experiences of the interviewees. To be 'othered' is to be made invisible. It is to be made aware that you do not belong to the group and you are only tolerated because you perform a function for the group. This 'othering' is seen in the experiences of being stared at and having your suggestions initially acknowledged, but ultimately ignored. To be 'othered' is to be constantly reminded: "this is not the way

[3] Anthony G. Reddie, *Working against the Grain: Re-Imaginig Black Theology in the 21st Century* (London: Equinox Publishing Ltd., 2008). 139

we do things here." When one's accent is used as a bludgeon to criticize the ministry of the minister of the church, it is to be 'othered.' Ultimately, those who are 'othered' will either leave the church or diminished the need for much interaction with the wider group. The results of the interview highlight all too clearly this reality.

Interviews also revealed that the families of Black ministers also share in the experience of racism. This often causes family members to feel alienated from the church or suspicious of church members. In some cases, the minister will seek to protect the members of his/her family from the negative experiences they face in the church. This further increases the stress on the minister as he/she must now function as a bridge between two realities -- that of his/her home and that of the church.

A clear impression was given, that there was an absence of support or care offered by the organized church for either the minister and/or their family, when they experienced racism. It could be argued that the presence of support, by and from the church, is dependent on the church being aware of the need for support. Yet, in the face of the suspicion and skepticism created by microaggressions and feelings of being 'othered,' Black clergy and their family may well have low trust towards the church. This lack of trust, in turn, creates a conspiracy of silence and a sort of "don't ask/don't tell" situation between the minister, his/her family, and the officers of the church who may very well be able to assist. What often occurs is a thinly veiled veneer of politeness, which may be interpreted as being normal. At the same time, it bespeaks a degree of White privilege on the part of the church. White privilege is demonstrated by the

inability of the church officers to see beyond the assumed White normality that exists, to see the needs, hurts and suffering of the disenfranchised in their midst.

The responses regarding the intercultural vision of the church were mixed. While none rejected the intercultural vision, concern was raised about its ability to have any effect on the reality of racism in the church. For some, the vision is only words on paper, which will be ineffective in dealing with the current realities faced by Black ministers. For others, the vision needs more time for its true effect to be felt in the church. None openly rejected the need for the vision or the wisdom in having the vision. The interviews highlight the fact that the response to racism needs to be more intentional, along with being intercultural. If the church seeks to fulfill the vision, parallel intentional efforts must be made to address the issues of racism as it affected Black people. Realizing the intercultural vision alone will not be enough to end racism in the church.

Black People attending the UCC

The interviews generally imply the feeling that Black people are not attracted to The United Church of Canada in its present state, for a variety of reasons. The general feeling is that The United Church of Canada is a White people church, made up of White people and primarily ministering to the needs of White people. The reality that there are few Black people attending the church further compounds this feeling.

The interviews revealed a general feeling that Black people have the impression that the church, while willing to welcome them, was not willing to accommodate their

experiences, skills and cultural expressions. This infers that while Black people are welcome to attend, they may not be made to feel that they belong, as no space is created for their cultural expressions in worship. This creates a "Catch-22" experience: the low number of Black people attending is a disincentive for more Black people being attracted to the church. But the attracting of more Black people will not be possible because the number of Black people attending the church is low.

One interview suggested that the open acceptance of homosexuality by The United Church of Canada[4] could be a deterrent to immigrants from Africa and the Caribbean joining the church, as anecdotally, there are high levels of homophobia in these countries. In a *Times M*agazine article of April 12, 2006, entitled "*The Most Homophobic Place on Earth?"* author Tim Padgett documented the reality of hostility towards gays in Jamaica. The writer drew attention to the reality that a culture of intolerance and violence was often the status quo when dealing with LGBTQ2A+ persons and that this was bolstered by homophobic utterances in popular music.[5] This may well confirm that the cultural issues around sexuality are a significant factor when immigrants from the Caribbean and Africa come to Canada and are looking for a church to attend. More research is needed around the intersection of race, gender, sexual orientation and faith in order to offer insights and recommendations for a way forward.

[4] In 1988 the 32rd General Council agreed that sexual orientation would not be a reason to hinder persons from membership in the church and that sexual orientation would not be a reason to deny persons to entry into the ordained and commissioned ministry of the church.
[5] Tim Padgett, "The Most Homophobic Place on Earth?," *TIme*, April 12, 2006.

The interviews also suggest that the church has shown little care for the concerns and issues faced by Black people. The inference here is that the church has not done enough to identify with Black people, and this has only confirmed the impression that the church is a White church. Views were also expressed that Black people are not seeing themselves sufficiently represented in the leadership of the church. This absence of representation has not afforded the church the benefit of the lived experiences of Black people in determining policy and ministry.

The UCC and the concerns of Black People

Interview findings reveal a consensus of opinions that The United Church of Canada, as a denomination, is not very solicitous regarding the challenges faced by Black people. The interviews indicate that the initial response of the church is always an emotional one, but in the long run, no appreciable difference occurs. It is the absence of long-term corrective actions that has led to compounding of a feeling that the church does not care about the issues faced. In other words, there is a need for the church to move beyond an emotional response if real change is to occur.

Interviewees also felt that there was a clear absence of care on the part of the leadership of the church regarding the issues faced by Black people. The accusation was made that the issues facing Black people had been studied, ignored or filed away, indicating that racism continues to exist in the operation of the congregation. UCC polity places the call of ministers largely in the hands of the congregation meaning Black

ministers are placed in vulnerable positions and often bullied by their congregations. Further it was noted that in the presence of racism the structures of the church to discipline ministers might also be used to enforce already existing racism. Notably one interviewee felt that the church is not a safe place for Black people. While the comment was made explicitly in only one interview, there was an underlying thread of commonality throughout all the interviews that suggested the same sentiment.

Being a Black minister in the UCC

The views expressed were, for the most part, not positive. Sentiments such as marginalized, frustrated and demoralized were repeatedly expressed. The interviews clearly demonstrate that the UCC has good intentions against eliminating racism within its walls, but beyond that, nothing more. This, I believe, is the reason for a feeling of hopelessness that exists among the study's participants. Among the sentiments expressed was the feeling that Black ministers in the UCC were looking for an expiration date. This would suggest that the staying power of the Black minister in the UCC is not as strong as it may need to be. This also points to the result of persistent 'othering' of Black ministers; being made to the feel that they are not part of the church. While the above sentiments were made, it was clear that participants felt some degree of loyalty to the UCC. Statements such as "it is my church" were heard. This highlights a conflict of the desire to be part of the church, the experiences of racism and the angst against the

apparent inactivity of the church. This conflict may be what was expressed as hopelessness.

What was Discovered?

Interculturalism

While the interviews noted the reality of the intercultural vision, the responses from the congregations left in doubt the effect of the intercultural vision on the ministry and witness of the congregations. The responses of the questionnaire raised the issue of how much the congregations (or grassroots of the church) knew about the vision to be an intercultural church. Part of the issue here, could well be, that the questionnaires showed an apparent confusion as to what intercultural means. There was no consistency of responses to the questions which sought to ascertain the knowledge of the congregations about the definition of intercultural. It should be noted that without a stimulus of possible responses, and left to their own knowledge, the responses from congregations tended to be a description of multiculturalism rather than interculturalism. Sadly, in one church, there was apparent conflation between being an affirming church and being an intercultural church.

Interculturalism has two main “pillars”; 1) promotion of contact between different persons of different cultural backgrounds, 2) the promotion of contact

primarily at the micro-levels.[6] Additionally, Zapata-Barrero (2018) suggests that there may well be a third pillar of interculturalism "to create a culture of diversity" (and not simply a diversity of cultures).[7] These combined pillars indicate that interculturalism should have 1) context, 2) content and 3) outcome. The context of interculturalism is primarily at the micro-level or the places where people meet and interact. This differs from multiculturalism, which is understood to be occurring with larger groupings of people. In interculturalism, the content is the experiences where different cultures learn from and about each other. Therefore, the content of interculturalism goes beyond the simple tacit acknowledgement of different cultures present in a particular location. The outcome of interculturalism is the creation of a new culture of diversity; it is a moving away from the dominant culture that may be present to the creation of this new culture of diversity based on what has been learned from the various cultures that are present. In the creation of a culture of diversity it is envisioned that racism would not have a place. Given this understanding, the responses from both questionnaires and interviews suggest that at present, the process of interculturalism is not yet fully present at the micro-level of the congregations.

In 2018, the Permanent Committee on Programs for Mission and Ministry of the UCC appointed a Steering Group to evaluate the vision for an Intercultural Church and develop a strategic plan for the way forward. As part of the evaluation process, a survey was commissioned "to give the people of the church an opportunity to describe their

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[6] Tariq Modood, "Interculturalism: Not a New Policy Paradigm," *Comparative Migration Studies* (2018). 2
[7] Richard Zapata-Barrero, "Rejoinder: Multiculturalism and Interculturalism: Alongside Not Separate," *Comparative Migration Studies* (2018). 7

experiences of and attitudes toward the church's commitment to becoming intercultural."[8] The survey occurred between January and March 2019. Responses were received from 704 persons, which included members and ministry personnel of The United Church of Canada. The summary of the report of the survey results was called a cautionary tale in 'three acts,'[9] which stated the following:

> Act One: People across the church enthusiastically support The United Church of Canada's intercultural commitment.
>
> Act Two: Locally, people report that they are on their way to becoming an intercultural community. They feel they are participating in the intercultural journey and express openness to intercultural initiatives.
>
> Act Three: Things take a turn for the worse upon exploring the realm of personal perspectives and experiences. Lip service is sometimes paid to the intercultural church, many are not comfortable with "difference," discrimination exists, and feeling "safe" in the church is not always a given for marginalized people.[10]

The findings of this survey are in many respects consistent with the results collected from my research done with congregations. The results confirm that there is a lack of understanding interculturalism at the micro-level of the congregation. The survey confirms the issues of discrimination and a lack of safety felt by the marginalized persons of the church (which includes Black people). The reality is that intercultural effectiveness is limited unless interculturalism is enabled at the micro-levels of the church. These results, as does the research conducted by me, indicate that more work

[8] Jane Armstrong Research and Associates, Intercultural Ministries Survey 2019. (Toronto, The United Church of Canada, 2019). Used with the permission of The United Church of Canada
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.

must be focused at the what is happening at the local church levels as it is here people are primarily having their personal interactions within the church.

Racism

The responses from the congregations and from the interviews give the impression that there are "two United Churches of Canada." Interview responses stand in stark contrast to those of the congregations. The ministers indicated emphatically that there was racism in the life of the UCC, while most responses from the congregations indicated uncertainty that racism was prevalent in the church.

Congregational responses may well reflect their understanding and perception of who is a racist. DiAngelo (2018) says that the common image of racists for many White people is that of "bad people."[11] It is this depiction, which is rejected by persons when they are called racist. In addition to the rejection of any association with that image, there is the national narrative of Canada which Hogarth and Fletcher (2018) describe as the myth of Canada; "a racially benevolent and tolerant state."[12] A combination of these two understandings could lead to a state of being unsure as it relates to the prevalence of racism; as this would be an acceptance of racism in the congregation. Consequently, racism may well be present in the church but is not seen by the members of the church in the dominant culture.

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[11] DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*. 3

[12] Hogarth and Fletcher, *A Space for Race: Decoding Racism, Multiculturalism, and Post Colonialism in the Quest for Belonging in Canada and Beyond*. 68

The difference between what was said in the interviews and through the questionnaires about the presence of racism in the UCC belies the presence of aversive racism. Aversive racism is that form of racism that 'exists under the surface of consciousness because it conflicts with consciously held beliefs of racial equality and justice."[13] If viewed through the lens of the aversive racism, then the apparent contradiction of the presence of racism in a progressive church with an intercultural vision can be understood.

As noted in the interviews the racism encountered in the UCC was subtle. This is often a form of microaggression. As noted in the interviews, microaggressions were persistent and have left a definite impression upon the ministers. As Sue (2010) notes, often the perpetrators of microaggressions are overtly ignorant of what they are doing and would plead innocence if confronted.[14] With this in mind it is understandable therefore for the response of congregations to note that they are unsure of racism within the church.

The absence of much interaction with Black people by the White persons who have completed the questionnaires could also be a reason for the apparent 'ignorance about racism.' This suggests that many White members do not know about the experiences of racism faced by Black people in Canada. It also gives the impression that there may be ways of interacting at the congregation level, (which has been accepted as the norm,) but may well be discriminatory to persons from minority races. The absence

[13] DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*. 13
[14] Sue, *Microaggressions in Everyday Life*. 5

of personal experience with people of colour or the experiences of Black people, cannot absolve White persons from knowing about racism. To argue that it does, in some ways is another example of aversive racism.

White Supremacy

Glaude (2016) notes that White supremacy is "the belief that white people are valued more than nonwhite people."[15] This belief is pervasive and is felt in all aspects of society. It upholds the belief that whiteness is the ideal for society. Robin DiAngelo (2018) points out that White supremacy is never acknowledged in society and secondly, that because of it, the consideration of race cannot be ignored when looking at sociopolitical systems.[16] The presence of white supremacy in the church, means that Whiteness has been the norm for life within the church. This means, that things which are not within the dominant White culture are either ignored or not accepted.

The presence of White supremacy seen in the questionnaire responses indicated a clear preference for a White minister; preferably one who does not have an accent. To some extent the feelings of not being valued as expressed by the interviews, corresponds to the preference for ministers as expressed by congregations. Congregations have clearly indicated their preference for a minister with a liberal theological perspective: who also happens to be White. When presented with a variety

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[15] Eddie J Glaude Jr., *Democracy in Black: How Race Still Enslaves the American Soul* (New York: Crown Publishing Group, 2016).30

[16] DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*. 29

of options, congregations placed the ministers from Black or Asian background as the least preferred. The issue of costs of relocating the minister did not seem to be an impediment for selection as a minister from Australia was preferred over a minister from the Caribbean or Africa. While making these preferences, congregations were also unanimous in stating that they would have no problems with a Black minister being their minister. Congregations did not realize that this may be the presence of the subtle type of racism which was referenced in the interviews.

It was interesting that responses to the questionnaire suggested that persons with an accent are least preferred as ministers. The premise is that some accents are harder to understand and with an aging congregation this difficulty is increased. Unfortunately, many members did not realize that this is a manifestation of racism. The accent of an individual is a vocal expression of culture and is intimately associated with the race and nationality of individuals. Consequently, social convention, associates a certain way of speaking with persons from Korea or a Black person from southern USA. This form of discrimination is also a manifestation of the privilege of the dominant culture. The dominant culture is here assuming that all persons should sound like them and no effort should be made for those who sound different. It also ignores the fact that persons in the dominant culture also have accents and those not in the dominant culture are making the effort to understand what is being spoken to them.

What is Being Learnt?

What has been the effect of being an intercultural church as it affects anti Black racism, White privilege and White entitlement in the United Church of Canada? The decision to become an intercultural church sets forth a vision for the future of the church. It does not describe the present state of the church but a hoped-for future. This future will not become reality by means of wishful thinking, but only through deliberate, hard work. The desired outcome is for a community of faith that is more just and more in keeping with the gospel that is preached.

At no point in this study was the vision of becoming an intercultural church called into question. The issue was whether the movement towards realizing this vision is also including the intentional movements against racism within the church. The study never called into question the wisdom of this vision for a church in the Canadian context. The study affirmed the need for this vision.

My research does, however, highlighted a weakness in the process towards the realization of the vision. Interculturalism, by definition, is that which occurs primarily at the micro level, at the places where people meet and live. The main context for interculturalism in the church should be at the local congregation level. It is in the congregation that people will meet and live out, in large measure, the meaning of their Christian witness and ministry in the church. It is at this grassroots level that people gather weekly for nurture, motivation and empowerment to live out the meaning of

their faith. It is at this level that cultures must learn from each other, and more importantly, a new culture of diversity is conceived and given birth. One weakness discovered, is that the vision has either not been fully understood or has not trickled down to the congregation. More attention must be given to enable congregations to grasp the full understanding of interculturalism if the vision is to be realized in the UCC.

Shepherd (2019) notes that the issue of "congregational reticence" was also present in the 1980's surrounding the movements towards reconciliation with the Indigenous peoples of Canada.[17] "While the leadership at General Council, Conferences, and Presbyteries was moving into lament and confession for the harm that the church caused to First Nations, most congregations were more hesitant."[18] This research highlights the reality that the hesitant ethos of the congregations may also be present in the issues of interculturalism generally, and anti-racism specifically. Shepherd (2019) looking towards the future notes, "Instead of congregations asking how they can "help" others, they need to explore how they might enter into relationship with others and be open to being transformed themselves in the very act of partnership."[19] Without calling the word, intercultural, Shepherd (2019) has made a strong recommendation for interculturalism to be found at the local church/congregation levels of the church.

While this weakness has been identified the problem now is, how to get this done. The United Church of Canada was born out of a union between the Methodists,

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[17] Shepherd, "The United Church's Mission Work within Canada and Its Impact on Indigenous and Ethnic Minority Communities," in *The Theology of the United Church of Canada*. 302
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid. 304

Congregationalists and the majority of Presbyterians in Canada. From the onset the church implicitly held together the tension of the authority of the local congregation and the authority of church hierarchical structures (e.g. Presbytery, Conference and General Council). The former relates to the congregationalist heritage, and the latter relates to the Methodist and Presbyterian heritage. Given this tension the UCC is reluctant to mandate programs on its local churches. The adoption of the vision for an intercultural church was not mandated through programs that congregations had to follow. Indeed, the initial roll out of the vision was weak on congregational actions. While a great deal of work has already been done in the church for interculturalism, this has not fully reached or engaged the attentions of many congregations. If the vision of becoming an intercultural church is to be the future of the UCC then congregations must be encouraged to embrace the vision intentionally.

In 2008 the church developed and published a resource for helping congregations to be aware of the issues of racism. The publication was entitled, *"Ending Racial Harassment."* The document provided much useful information that is still relevant and covers the issue of racism from a variety of perspectives. However, the document was published before the enunciation of the intercultural vision and is dated in some respects. The need to develop a new resource is vitally needed to further strengthen the ministry of the congregations.

Given this apparent weakness, the real threat of racism for Black ministers in The United Church of Canada is disparaging. If measures are not put in place to intentionally address the issues of racism in the congregations, it then means that Black ministers and

other racialized ministers, are placed in extremely vulnerable positions. In the current system it is the congregation that 1) determines who will receive a call or appoint to the local church, 2) oversees the work of the minister and 3) it is to the Ministry and Personnel committee of the congregations that complaints about the minister from congregants will initially be addressed. If there is no appreciation of the issues of racism at the congregational level, or the appropriate checks and balances put in place, then Black and racialized ministers will continue to be racially trespassed.

Reddie (2003) speaks of a 'theology of good intention', which he describes as "a way of responding to situations of injustice, in which the perpetrator fails to take full responsibility for the actions. It is a way of responding to the oppressed and powerless, by refusing to take the experiences or perspectives of these people seriously."[20] The manifestation of this theology of good intention is that an apology is given when a person is called out for racism and it is expected that the apology is sufficient to solve the issues raised. The unfortunate reality is that the situations often continue, and further apologies will be given. The problem with this theology of good intention is that it places the responsibility of opposition squarely upon the shoulders of the person who has been the object of racism as they are encouraged to accept the apology and move on. To continue to speak up about racism makes the speaker the problem.

The results of the research show that more than just an apology is needed from the church for incidents of racism faced by Black minister (and Black persons in general).

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[20] Anthony G. Reddie, *Nobodies to Somebodies: Practical Theology for Education and Liberation* (Peterborough, UK: Epworth Press, 2003). 154

What is necessary are policies and intentional actions which will seek to protect those who are vulnerable in the face of racism. The development of a clear policy of what is to occur when issues of racism are reported to congregational authorities will be a step in the right direction.

The church must continue to intentionally address the issues of racism through education and awareness campaigns. Awareness events for lay leadership from mostly White congregations will allow them to become aware of the issues faced by Black and racialized ministers. The study suggests that education about interculturalism alone will not necessarily address the issues of racism. A dual track of awareness about racism and interculturalism may be necessary. Training, should at minimum, be available to 1) the Ministry and Personnel Committees of congregations and 2) all persons who are regularly involved in Pastoral Relations in the church. Enabling continued awareness of racism among these groups of persons is another way to move beyond the theology of good intentions.

If racism is understood as a form of stress on the mental health of persons, then it must be understood that those who face racism are under considerable stress. The implication is therefore that Black clergy face not only the usual pressures of ministry, but these are compounded by the presence of racism. Sue (2010) notes that "the cumulative impact of stressors diminishes the quality of life; lowers life satisfaction, happiness and self-esteem."[21] Concern must therefore be given about the mental

[21] Sue, *Microaggressions in Everyday Life*. 100

wellbeing and health of Black and other racialized ministers in The United Church of Canada. In the current structures this intentional concern would fall under the responsibility of the Regional Councils for "encouraging and supporting ministry personnel towards health, joy and excellence in ministry practice."[22] Regional Councils should be encouraged to see the need of providing mental health care for all ministers, and in particular racialized ministers, is more than good intentions – it is an urgent need. As such this should be a priority and the necessary resources of the church applied to this.

On January 1, 2019, The United Church of Canada changed its organizational structure. However, in the changes made, there was no wholesale change in the racial composition of the staff leadership of the national office. Greater effort must be made to diversify the leadership of the church. Currently there are only two persons listed in the leadership of the national staff who are racialized, and only one is Black. In the lead up to the organizational changes, the Permanent Committee Programmes for Mission and Ministry recommended to the March 2018 meeting of the General Council Executive the following:

> Therefore, as The United Church of Canada moves to hire staff for regional councils, we offer the following advice:
>
> 1) The position of Executive Minister is a new job for a new day. It is not simply a replacement for the old Executive Secretary position and has new and different responsibilities and focus. Therefore, these new positions should be advertised widely and have an open application process which includes, but also looks beyond the current cohort of Executive Secretaries. The possibility of paying

[22] *The Manual*. 38

> severance to current employees should not be a determining factor in the hiring process.
>
> 2) The United Church has made strong commitments to becoming an intercultural church. The hiring of Executive Ministers is an opportunity to have regional staff who reflect the diversity of the church. We urge the remit team to ensure diversity in the final hiring of the Executive Ministers, both in those being hired and those doing the hiring.
>
> 3) All program staff should have gifts and skills for doing transformative church redevelopment. This includes the ability to develop networks, organizational skills, curation skills, entrepreneurial approach, ability to work from home, collaborative style.
>
> In the hiring processes, we strongly call upon a diversity of minority voices, and historically underrepresented groups, as outlined in recommendations 1, 2, and 3. [23]

Given these recommendations, the General Council Executive had the opportunity to make the type of radical changes, which could have made dramatic changes to the diversity profile of the leadership of the church. It is unfortunate that the Executive declined to accept this recommendation. Fundamentally, the racial profile of the paid staff leadership remains mostly White.

While some changes have been made in the composition of the General Council Executive to reflect more of the intercultural reality of the church, this has not occurred in other areas of the church's life. To date, there has been only one Black Moderator of the UCC and all General Secretaries (the chief staff administrator of the church) have been white people. The effort to diversity the leadership of the church will enable the

[23] The United Church of Canada, "Meeting Resources - General Council Execute Meeting March 3-4,2018," *United Church Commons* (2018), accessed February 21.

lived experiences of racialized people to be reflected in the decisions of the church. It will also effectively challenge the current White supremacy of the church's culture.

To state, therefore, that The United Church of Canada is a racist organization is neither to condemn, nor to judge it negatively. It is simply to acknowledge that the church is part of a society that is racist. To overcome its racist heritage, the church must intentionally address the issues of racism that are evident within it. Part of this intentional work must include the work to realize the vision to become an intercultural church. The effort to realize the intercultural vision must be the intentional and done in tandem with action to address the presence of racism in the church. Throughout this study I have noted the reality of racism in Canada and within The United Church of Canada. It is evident that more work must be done at all levels of the church, to end the scourge of racism. As the church institutes these changes, work must be undertaken to repair the damage done in the relationship between the church and the Black ministers working within the church. At the same time focus must be given to ensuring that the expressions of interculturalism are enabled at the congregational levels.

Evaluation

While conducting the research for this project a committee of laypersons from the Fort Saskatchewan Community of Faith of The United Church of Canada journeyed

with me as my Local Advisory Committee. This group is a requirement of Drew University for the candidates for the Doctor of Ministry degree. The following is part of the evaluation of the Local Advisory Committee for this project.

> Not many of us knew, recognized or imagined at the beginning of this journey, the depth and breadth of Paul's doctoral project or how far reaching it would really be.
>
> Many worship services have been directly related to his project. Paul has been raising awareness/contextualizing/teaching and sharing learnings from his research & interviews which coincided with Black history month -- a beautiful segue into discoveries through interviews & surveys.
>
> "This is Canadian History…" helps to contextualize the thesis -- it's not just "history from some other part of the world/country"
>
> Personal and congregational growth is evident, as we have seen an increased confidence and conviction in Paul's preaching and teaching -- "fear replaced by truth supported by the gospel."
>
> Paul covered a lot of ground and brought up a lot of "taboo" conversations as a result of his research and lived experiences. (i.e. admitting racism/ageism/sexism exists and is alive in our denomination/congregation.) Paul had the courage to speak his truth at all levels of the church/courts in spite of what the response might be. Paul continues to recognize and welcome the marginalized. Promotes mental health awareness and acceptance, has increased congregational mission and outreach opportunities (locally and nationally), is moving our Congregation forward to become an affirming congregation and recognizes the difference between being a multicultural community of faith and an intercultural community of faith -- where ALL are welcomed, and none are left behind. In our minds, each of these findings/learnings/teachings has simply focused the spotlight on the social gospel. Paul has had the courage to name it, claim it and call us out, as a congregation, into action. [24]

It is, therefore, with hope and faith that this project is put forward. It hoped that this project will become one more way to encourage a further raising of awareness

[24] (Site Visit report of Local Advisory Committee, February 27, 2019)

about interculturalism at the congregational level as we seek to become an intercultural church.

APPENDIX 1

CONGREGATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Greetings,

I am conducting a study about the Intercultural Vision of The United Church of Canada and the presence of anti- Black racism in the church. The purpose of this study is to find out what is the effect being an intercultural church on the experiences for Black clergypersons within The United Church of Canada. Put another way has the declaration that The United Church of Canada to become an intercultural church led to a reduction of racism against Black people within the church. The project will also seek to look at the issues that may still needing to be dealt with by the church as it affects the elimination of racism within its walls.

You may assist me with this important work by answering the questions below. The questionnaire should not take you more than 10 minutes to complete

If you do not wish to participate, please return the form without any markings on it.

While I would appreciate your completing all questions, if you have any personal concerns about responding to any of these questions please pass over it. Your response is completely anonymous; **please do not put your name on the form when you return it.** All I am asking for is your honest response.

When you have completed the questionnaire please place it in the envelope attached. Please seal the envelope and return it to the person who gave it to you. By doing this you are ensuring the complete confidentiality and anonymity of your responses. If you have any questions about this questionnaire, please contact my supervisor Dr. Susan Kendall at skendall@drew.edu.

Thank you.

1. How many Black persons regularly attend your congregation?

   None ☐ 1-10 ☐ 11-20 ☐ 21-30 ☐ over 30 ☐

2. Approximately how many Black persons live in the community where your church is located?

   None ☐ Not many ☐ Several ☐ Many ☐

   Majority ☐

3. How often have there been discussions about racism and racial justice in your congregation

   Annually ☐ Twice per year ☐ Four times per year ☐

   Monthly ☐ Not often ☐ Never ☐

4. If your congregation must search for a new minister, please indicate your comfort level for the type of minister to be selected. Please rate your comfort level between 1 -6, where 1 would be the most comfortable and six would be the least comfortable.

   A White person born in Canada ___

   A person with an accent ___

   An Indigenous person ___

   A person with liberal theology ___

   A Black person ___

   A White person born outside of Canada ___

5. How would you describe an Intercultural Church?

6. Have you experienced any of the following in your church or community?

   ☐ Negative comments about your accent

   ☐ Persons treating you with little courtesy or respect

   ☐ Receiving poor service at a restaurant or store

   ☐ Members of the church unwilling to shake your hand or fellowship with you

   ☐ Persons in the church act as though they are afraid of you

   ☐ Persons act as though you are dishonest

☐ You have been called names or were insulted because of who you are.

7. What would be the best understanding of intercultural in the definitions given below:

   ☐ Combining of cultures into one culture

   ☐ Acceptance of all cultures, although one culture is understood as preferred

   ☐ Cultures co-existing with each other

   ☐ Cultures sharing and learning from each other

   ☐ Polite acceptance of differences but no discussion of difficult cultural questions.

8. How willing do you feel your congregation would be to Call/Appoint the following type of ministers. Please rate your congregation's willingness between 1 – 8, where 1 would be most willing and 8 would be the least willing.

   A minister of Korean background ___

   A minister who is a bilingual French speaker ___

   A minister who from South/West Asia ___

   A minister who is a White Canadian ___

   A minister who is an Indigenous person ___

   A minister from the Caribbean or Africa ___

   A minister who is from Europe ___

   A minister who is from Australia ___

9. How do you feel the Vision of The United Church of Canada becoming an Intercultural church is affecting the life of your congregation?

10. Would you have concerns if a Black person became your minister?

    ☐ Yes ☐ No

    If "Yes" what concerns would they be?

11. How prevalent do you feel anti-Black racism is in Canada today?

    Very Prevalent ☐ Prevalent ☐ Unsure ☐ Some ☐ None at all ☐

    If you feel it is prevalent please explain why you say so.

12. How prevalent do you feel anti-Black racism is in The United Church of Canada today?

    Very Prevalent ☐ Prevalent ☐ Unsure ☐ Some ☐ None at all ☐

    If you feel it is prevalent please explain why you say so.

Thank you!

APPENDIX 2

Interview Questions

1. *Racism is to be understood as the discrimination experienced by a particular race because of the power and influence of a dominant race.*

   In your day to day experience in the church can you think of experiences which you would describe as racist? If you have can you describe one or more of these experiences and say why you considered it as racism?

2. How have your experiences in the church affected your family?

3. Why do you think more Black people are not attending The United Church of Canada?

4. Do you think that the church takes seriously the experiences of Black ministers in the church? Why do you feel this way?

5. If asked to describe how it feels to be Black person in the ministry of The United Church of Canada, what would be your story?

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