



RELIGION & RACE

General Commission on Religion and Race

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

10 Ways to Become More Faithful than Post-Racial

In 2016, 58 percent of the Americans surveyed by the Pew Research Center said that the increasing racial, ethnic, and national diversity in the United States made it a better place in which to live. Following the 2008 presidential election, newscasters and regular people on the street began to describe America as post-racial because they assumed (or hoped) that the election of a Black man as President of the United States signaled an end to racial discrimination and prejudice. That sentiment was short-lived, however, as racial conflicts erupted and tensions began to rise following the killing of unarmed Black people in numerous cities around the country. The violence on the streets, coupled with the mass incarceration of men of color, the invalidation of sections of the Voting Rights Act, the challenges to Affirmative Action policies, and daily microaggressions convinced many critical thinking Americans that this country has attained neither racial equity nor equality.

MICROAGGRESSIONS: *a subtle but offensive comment or action directed at a non-dominant group that is often unintentional or unconsciously reinforces a stereotype: i.e., I don't see you as a Black woman, just a regular person.*

But if we're not actually *post-racial*, and it does no good to claim post-racial as an ideal we should live into, then what should we be doing?

Rather than striving to be *post-racial*, what if we worked to be More Faithful than Post-Racial?

Below are ten steps to help us persist in our struggle for racial equity. Read excerpts from church websites and click on the hyperlinks to learn how the selected faith communities are becoming more faithful than "*post-racial*."

1. Radiate Radical Love as Welcome.

In 21 years [St. John's Church](#) of Houston, Texas, has grown from 9 members to over 9,000 members and is one of the most culturally diverse congregations in the country. Pastor Rudy Rasmus says, "I will not be a part of an institution or religion that judges or marginalizes a person based on race, abilities, gender, orientation, identity or social status...But I will be a part of a Love Revolution that fights for the right of people everywhere to love and be loved by God."

Question: Does an open heart characterize your congregation?

2. Use Open Communication

The [Hot Metal Bridge Faith Community](#) in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, which is connected to both the Presbyterian Church USA and the United Methodist Church, gathers weekly for worship and to share together in Holy Communion. The leaders create opportunities for individuals, families, and groups to gather, meet, interact and learn from one another. Through that simple meal they meet God - and each other - in fresh ways. They also feed others and cross cultural boundaries.

Question: Are there geographic or demographic changes for which your church needs to prepare?

3. Provide Space for Questions/Doubt

[Good Shepherd Church](#) is a modern, evangelical United Methodist congregation in Charlotte, North Carolina, which invites all people into a living relationship with Jesus Christ. Started in 1991, the church of over 1900 people is known for its innovative worship, broad outreach (locally and internationally), and diverse population. Its Life-Group ministry encourages active fellowship and deep engagement in Bible study. Question: Would seekers and unchurched neighbors find open minds at your church?

4. Provide Community Ministry

The members of [Windsor Village](#) United Methodist Church refer to themselves as co-workers with God or Kingdom Builders. They serve the community of faith and those outside their doors with courage and selfless love. The Church's independently operated nonprofits and community development projects have positively impacted the social and economic landscape of central Southwest Houston, Texas. Question: Could unaffiliated residents find support for life challenges through your church? Bonus Question: Could the UMC find support for church challenges through ministry with unaffiliated residents?

5. Promote Radical Inclusion

Based in San Francisco, [Glide Memorial Church](#) is a radically inclusive, just and loving community mobilized to alleviate suffering and break the cycles of poverty and marginalization. GLIDE transformed a dwindling all-white congregation into a diverse and energetic community of the poor, the disenfranchised, the homeless, the addicted, the mentally ill, the newly immigrated, and the politically passionate. Question: What could be done to help your church become more diverse in presence and participation with persons of different backgrounds?

6. [Really] Live Like Everyone Is [Really] Created in the Image of God

Members of [Foundry United Methodist Church](#) in Washington, DC, hold deeply their commitment to help bring about a loving, just and accepting world. This inclusive, diverse congregation believes that the Holy Spirit dwells in all. They acknowledge their oneness with all of God's creation and invite gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons to share their faith, community life, and ministries. They welcome all people without regard to color, origin, age, economic status, or physical or mental condition. Question: Do your members recognize Jesus in people who look and/or live differently from themselves?

7. Work for Peace and Justice

The [Fellowship of Reconciliation](#), (FOR), works to strengthen movements for peace and justice; promotes relationships of accountability; and fosters a spirituality that spans faith traditions. FOR is a U.S. based branch of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation with affiliates in over 50 countries. Question: How does your congregation promote justice? Bonus Question: How does your congregation internally model the justice it seeks for others?

8. Practice Radical Sharing

[Koinonia Farms](#) is an international community that seeks to embody peacemaking, sustainability, and radical sharing. While honoring people of all backgrounds and faiths, they devote time to prayer, work, study, service and fellowship in an effort to demonstrate the way of Jesus as an alternative to materialism, consumerism, violence, and racism. Question: Is your church prepared to welcome marginalized persons into active participation in the life of your faith community? If not, what would it take to do so?

9. Demonstrate Interfaith Respect.

The [Tri-Faith Initiative](#) is an intentional, bridge-building project that has formed a multi-ethnic community of Jews, Christians, and Muslims who celebrate each other's "holy stories" as neighbors. By rejecting the language of bigotry and racism, the community fosters authentic relationships. Members grow stronger in their own faith while seeking to understand each other. Question: Is your congregation prepared to engage in multi-faith dialogue? How could multi-faith dialogues help your church understand paying attention to race without claiming a false post-racial status?

10. Transform the Soul, Mind, and Body

[The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples](#) founded in San Francisco in 1944 by Drs. Howard Thurman and Alfred Fisk, is an interfaith, interracial, intercultural community of seekers dedicated to personal empowerment and social transformation. Question: What can this space teach us about the relationship between spiritual renewal and the work of authentic and transformative racial justice? Why is soul, mind, and body important for racial justice?

This resource is written by Dr. Arthuree Wright

References

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