

# A Road Map to Seek God's Racial Justice

## **Background Vision 3. Seek God's Racial Justice**

We will identify and critique, confess and repent of the whiteness and racialized hierarchy that has been integrated into Brethren identity, and we will dismantle those barriers and structures that prevent us from becoming a community of all nations, all people, all languages living together in the presence of God.

## **Foreground Vision Initiative #6. Each in Our Own Language (Plan for Recognizing Injustice)**

By the July 2021 Board meeting, a task team composed of Board members (appointed by the Executive Committee) and Staff (appointed by the General Secretary) will have developed a road map/game plan (sequence of steps, resource requirements, and key specifications) for creating a curriculum resource (print? video?) to help congregations identify aspects of racial injustice that may be present in their contextual settings.

The task team embraced this assignment with enthusiasm, grateful for the Mission and Ministry Board's commitment to this bold vision. While the vision ultimately is directed to the whole church, we believe it is important for the board to begin this work within its own house, that is, among the members of the board and staff. This document refers most often to the board, since it owns and leads the process, but we recommend that staff participate as well.

The task of seeking God's racial justice is an ongoing one. It's about healing. But we are convinced that it's also about not harming. If we don't do race work, we are harming our neighbors.

For the road map, we turn to the verbs in the background vision. Those actions are useful steps in the process of seeking God's racial justice. Each step will inform the next.

**Identify:** Identifying whiteness and racialized hierarchy cannot be done only by white people and will require the assistance of people of color who are empowered to speak forthrightly. This information must be sought out specifically, outside the usual channels of communication. For example, a person of color could conduct a survey and interviews among other people of color who have served the denomination as staff, elected leaders, and members of committees. The goal would be a sensitive project to obtain candid information from people who previously may not have felt free to provide it—or simply have not been invited to. From this information, white people in leadership will begin to see barriers that previously were invisible.

As the process begins, it will be useful to provide a list of definitions, so that people have an understanding of terms such as “whiteness” and “racialized hierarchy.”

**Critique:** The information gathered needs to be received with great care, seriousness, and humility. The expectation is that the board will become equipped to critique itself—its history, structures, and practices.

**Confess and repent:** From that learning and examination, the board might engage in a formal process to engage in confession and repentance. This is a spiritual step that deserves adequate preparation and understanding.

**Dismantle:** Eventually, the board must move on from a posture of learning to actively dismantling the barriers and structures that inhibit and harm the church.

This four-step process will take time. It should be slow enough to be deliberate, but fast enough for steady progress. If the process is done well, the board and staff can model this race work for the rest of the church.

The assignment recommends creation of a curriculum resource for congregations. This may be an eventual result, but it should not be the single goal nor should it be rushed into existence before the board has grappled seriously with its own race work. A curriculum can be useful, but it's not a solution. However, an annotated list of resources can be offered immediately online, with updates made along the way. And the road map may eventually lead to a curriculum.

*After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count,  
from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages,  
standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white,  
with palm branches in their hands.*

—Revelation 7:9

Thomas Dowdy, Convener  
Heather Gentry Hartwell  
Wendy McFadden  
Roger Schrock  
Christina Singh

6/17/2021