

August 12, 2016

Dear NEJ BUMP, NEJ BMCR, NEJ-BLF, Joseph Daniels, Varlyna Wright, William Meekins, Lillian Smith, Denise Smartt Sears, Tracy Bass, Derrick Porter,

Thank you for your inquiry as to how the NEJ College of Bishops is beginning to address the Call to Action legislation passed at the 2016 NEJ Conference. At our first college meeting following the Conference on August 11 and 12, the College spent significant time discussing next steps.

The College agreed that we would begin to address our own racism by engaging an outside resource to lead the College through training in intercultural competency in 2017. This would be a foundational step toward more specific training and discussion within the college about racism, white privilege, white supremacy, oppression, and internalized oppression. We agreed that we would spend time in discussion and/or training in these areas in every College meeting within this quadrennium.

We committed to carrying out the Call to Action in our conference areas realizing that the work will need to be contextualized for each conference culture and situation. There will necessarily be a variety of ways, plans, and strategies used to respond to the Call to Action within the NEJ episcopal areas. To this end we began to identify resource groups and persons who we will turn to for help in this effort. GCORR, COSROW, OCUIR, Visions, CONAM, the Multi-ethnic Center, Conversation Projects, our United Methodist Schools, and a variety of individuals appear on the beginning of our resource list. We will continue to add to this list of resources for our use and for use in the conference areas we serve. We will have reports on progress and plans submitted to our annual conference sessions and will share them with the Jurisdiction. We will initiate conversation with the Jurisdictional secretary on how stories of response, ideas, and progress can be made available and be shared periodically with the entire NEJ area. We will work with the Vision Table to plan for and implement intercultural competency training among its members as a foundational training for future discussions and collaborative plans on addressing the Call to Action across the Jurisdiction. The College has organized a team to continue the work between college meetings and to work with other entities within the jurisdiction.

We will also encourage the Council of Bishops to also pursue an action plan in which the Council will confront its racism and initiate ongoing internal and external conversations on white privilege, white supremacy, oppression and internalized oppression. To that end we are writing a letter to the Council inviting them to join our College on this journey.

We expect that the Multi-Ethnic Center, Annual Conferences, as well as additional Jurisdictional and General Church teams, boards, agencies and leaders will contribute ideas and suggestions for resourcing and strategy as we move forward in collaborating in this work and ministry within the Jurisdiction. Additionally, we will explore our understanding of tribalism as understood by many of God's people whose family origin lies outside of the United States and explore our understanding of nations as understood by many of God's native persons whose family origin lies within the United States.

We seek your prayers and support as we begin to take steps to respond to what has now become a Jurisdictional Call to Action. We are thankful for those who initiated the call to this work.

Peace,

Sandra Steiner Ball
President of the NEJ College of Bishops