

Discipleship Ministries Committee

Summary of Possible Actions to Take Towards Racial Reconciliation

The following recommendations are meant to stimulate discussion among sessions as possible courses of action. Not each action will be applicable to each congregation. In all actions, we see the necessity of submitting first to the guidance and leadership of the Holy Spirit through prayer. Additionally, these recommendations require us to embrace discomfort to one degree or another. If we believe this is where the Lord Jesus is leading us as a presbytery and as churches, let us not draw back, but follow the Holy Spirit in welcoming all peoples to reconciliation with Christ and within his church.

Historical Actions

1. Where applicable, review your session's records through the civil rights era and see what actions and statements may have been put in the minutes. Consider rescinding any actions that in retrospect were wrong, and make such action known to the congregation.
2. If an African American congregation split from yours during segregation (or previously), consider what actions and sessional overtures could be pursued to merging the congregations or establishing regular fellowship.
3. If your local church is known in the community for having supported segregation, white supremacy, or organizations with those views, consider ways of publicly repudiating those ties and of building new bridges towards your community. This may require investigating how the community perceives your church.

Community Actions

1. Pastors and Elders can pursue relationships with African American (or other minority) churchmen in the community. Personal relationships are singularly the best way to begin pursuing reconciliation.
2. Depending on the community, pastors may engage themselves in the local ministers' association. In such alliances, pastors could make an effort to intentionally pursue and encourage African American ministers as well as making sure their voices and their congregations are represented in association efforts.
3. Consider swapping pulpits or hosting joint worship services with an African American minister or congregation with whom you have good relations and who is theologically orthodox. (Note that in the committee's experience, congregations find it far easier for a white man to stand in a black man's pulpit than vice versa.)
4. Consider planning practical mercy ministry and outreach events in minority communities around your church. Specific suggestions include Habitat for Humanity projects and CEF Good News Clubs.

Discipleship Actions

1. Consider ways in which mentors, leaders, and ministries can intentionally pursue African American men and women in the community and mentor them in the Doctrines of Grace.

Likewise, how could African American men and women in the congregation be equipped to mentor others, including white members of the congregation?

2. Consider ways in which your children's and youth ministries could more efficiently target minorities and plug young people and their families into relationships with church members that would build bridges and provide support.
3. Consider developing or honing an after-school tutoring program to intentionally benefit lower income or minority families.
4. If your church operates or has a close relationship to a Christian school, develop a scholarship program meant to benefit minority members of the community.
5. Consider ways the deacons could come alongside minority members of the community in matters of personal finances (*e.g.*, Financial Peace University), home maintenance, and other skills that can be passed along to improve the "outward estate" of the church's neighbors.

Leadership Actions

1. Consider what minority visitors from your church might conclude about leadership qualifications and where people of different ethnicities fit within your church based on your worship leadership, roll of officers, and church staff. What changes could be reasonably made to give a different public face to the make-up of your leadership team and staff?
2. If you have African American or other minority members in your church, consider ways to raise them up for leadership, office, or involve them in public worship as appropriate according to biblical qualifications and precepts.
3. Even if you don't have African American (or other minority) members in your church presently, consider pushing against the "white collar"/"blue collar" distinction that frequently distinguishes sessions and diaconates. Focusing on spiritual qualifications rather than socio-economic ability may prepare the way for minority church leadership in the future.

Worship Actions

1. Consider hosting a combined-choirs event with one of the African American churches in your community. Invite the community.
2. Consider preaching a series that explicitly addresses racial, economic, and social issues of our day from a Gospel-centered perspective. Less directly, consider preaching a series on the church and worship that challenges our natural, selfish preference for comfort over love for and consideration of others.
3. Consider the "feel" of your worship service and worship space to outsiders. Does it give the impression that everyone must be of a certain class, or already know what's going on, or have their lives together to worship with you? Put differently, does your worship make room or communicate welcome for poverty and "personal messiness"?
4. Consider which ways your musical instrumentation or musical selection might appeal to traditionally white or high-class preferences. What might be some musical instruments, song selections, or musical styles you could introduce to your congregation to lead it towards a more diverse (and thereby inclusive) cultural style?