

**UNITARIAN CHURCH OF LINCOLN**  
**Task Force for Dismantling White Supremacy**  
**Executive Summary of Survey Work**

Overview: In an effort to ascertain the level of knowledge and commitment of our staff and members regarding the imperative of dismantling white supremacy, survey work was undertaken in January and February 2021. The initial audit of staff and lay leaders helped to establish a baseline for where we currently stand with regard to meeting the imperative and made clear the significant level of support for continued work in dismantling white supremacy. The congregational survey shows significant awareness of the presence of white supremacy culture and motivation to undertake the work of dismantling it personally and collectively, both within and beyond our church community.

**RESULTS OF STAFF AND LAY LEADER AUDIT (N=44)**

**Readiness** The task force wanted to learn the extent to which our church staff and leadership was ready and able to begin this work.

Language: Our data suggests that while there is significant comfort (70%) with our use of the phrase “white supremacy culture”, for a few the phrase remains a barrier. Both findings matter.

Readiness to apply learning to the work of the church: About a third of respondents (34%) have already begun to “apply what they know about dismantling white supremacy culture to the work of the church”. More (39%) are uncertain how to begin that work. Regardless, most (64%) are eager to learn more.

Most welcome the initiative: Given the choice of indicating whether they “welcome” our church’s work of dismantling white supremacy, fully 80% of respondents said yes. One respondent said no. The remainder checked neither box (either they feel neutral or chose not to respond for other reasons).

More tools may be needed for staff to do the work: 41% of respondents felt they had the needed tools to do this work. The remainder were unsure (45%) or definitely felt (14%) they needed more tools.

**Consensus Decision-Making** Movement away from hierarchical decision-making models that favor those with special training is something we already have underway.

Program Council provides for consensus decision-making: Just over 60%

registered positive feelings about the opportunity for consensus decision-making. However, comments suggest that there is still a tendency for the procedures of the program council to favor long-time members who are nearly all white.

Congregational meeting policy provides well for consensus decision-making:

Close to 80% registered positive feelings about congregational meeting policy, something we have changed fairly recently. We see this as a very good sign.

Board meeting function via consensus uncertain:

Half of respondents gave a neutral response when asked about the use of consensus decision-making. Many indicated they had never attended a board meeting. One commenter used the descriptor “remote” to characterize the board. Several commenters mentioned the whiteness of the board and domination of a few voices.

**Barriers to Dismantling White Supremacy** We asked staff and lay leaders what they perceived as upholding white supremacy culture in the church. All but three respondents offered a comment. They fell into the following categories:

6 don't know

6 power hoarding/"always done it this way"

10 too many white people and poor/limited interaction with Black community

12 lack of understanding/awareness of the problem

3 pervasive societal problem that we can't escape

4 ill-informed attempts to be “nice white people”, resting on our laurels

**Additional findings**

Land acknowledgement is important: Fewer respondents reported feeling neutral about this than any other question. Over 80% felt it was at least somewhat important and over 60% felt it was quite or extremely important to more regularly acknowledge the land our church is built on as having belonged to Native Americans.

Personnel policies may/may not reflect interest in a diverse workforce: Many indicated in written comments that they had no knowledge of those policies. For those who did feel qualified to comment, 14% felt there was little interest in a diverse workforce reflected in our personnel policies and 30% felt there was quite a lot reflected.

## CONGREGATIONAL SURVEY (N=156)

### CONCLUSIONS

Responses to the congregational survey suggest the following insights related to each of the four goals stated in the written purpose of the survey.

- 1. How do members and friends perceive and acknowledge the effects of white privilege and white supremacy culture in our church and broader community?**
  - a. Within our church
    - i. Survey respondents perceive UCL as a White church.
    - ii. More than one-third (37%) of respondents acknowledged first-hand experience with microaggressions toward historically marginalized populations at church.
    - iii. Church culture is welcoming to white people.
    - iv. White privilege and supremacy exhibited within UCL is in some significant part unconscious and unexamined.
  - b. Community
    - i. Over 90% of our respondents view white privilege and white supremacy culture at least moderately represented in Lincoln. Over 50% see it as highly or very highly represented in Lincoln.
  
- 2. What is the level of interest/willingness/likeliness of members and friends to engage in the work of dismantling white supremacy as it may exist in our church and broader community?**
  - a. Within our church
    - i. Survey respondents are interested in education and training at church and likely to attend.
    - ii. Survey respondents see the staff as very willing to engage in the work of dismantling white supremacy as it exists in our church.
    - iii. Survey respondents see a need for individuals to do internal work to examine unconscious attitudes and biases.
    - iv. Survey respondents are hopeful that the membership would be willing to engage in the work of dismantling white supremacy as it exists in our church.
    - v. All activities listed on the survey (teach-ins, book and film discussions, etc) were indicated as helpful in understanding what is or needs to be done.
  - b. Community
    - i. Survey respondents are interested in partnering with other groups and organizations--specifically those with BIPOC membership--to support efforts in the community, but not to lead those efforts.
    - ii. Survey respondents see a willingness for external action (church and community) to dismantle white supremacy.

**3. What are priority action areas in our church and community?**

- a. Within our church
  - i. Engage in education and training.
  - ii. Foster dialogue with our Share the Plate partners to collaborate around diversity, equity, and inclusion.
  - iii. Survey respondents want outreach and messaging to be the means of becoming a visibly welcoming place for BIPOC.
- b. Community
  - i. Foster dialogue with government and civic groups (e.g. law enforcement, non-profits, cultural/community centers, and educational institutions) engaged in issues related to identified areas of biggest need for racial equity in Lincoln.
  - ii. Develop partnerships and collaborate with organizations with BIPOC leadership and other groups working toward racial equity and justice in Lincoln.

**4. How can the Task Force best assist and support the congregation in the work of dismantling white supremacy in our church and broader community?**

- a. Within our church
  - i. Facilitate the internal education of the congregation
  - ii. Assist the congregation to understand areas of engagement within our city.
- b. Community
  - i. Identify...
  - ii. Foster...
  - iii. Nurture...