

## Creating Racial Equity Committee Report Summary

This document summarizes key findings, actions and recommended next steps from the work of the Creating Racial Equity Committee. The full committee report is stored on the church's google drive and can be obtained via request. The Racial Equity Committee members are listed at the end of this report.

### Background:

In 2019, an in-depth [Racial Equity survey](#) was taken by church members and active participants in the life of the church. As a result of this survey, the Creating Racial Equity Committee was created to support each of the church's ministries in implementing the survey team recommendations and in measuring the church's progress on the recommendations. The Creating Racial Equity Committee consisted of two specific work teams: the ministry/programs team and the audit team.

The Creating Racial Equity Committee presented its final report out to Session at the Nov 29, 2023 Session Meeting

### Ministry/Programs Team Actions and Recommendations

The Ministry/Program Team analyzed the work and mission of each church ministry and program to ensure that their activities and statements welcome and support diversity, equity and inclusion of all people. Key accomplishments and recommendations included:

- Worked with each ministry at Forest Hill Church (FHC) to define/refine its mission statement to support diversity, equity, and inclusion of all people. The revised mission statements of each ministry are listed as a separate resource in the website called **“Creating Racial Equity Ministry Mission Statements.”**
- Posted Ministry Mission Statements on a prominent bulletin board where they can be seen, read, and reviewed by everyone entering our church. The Creating Racial Equity Team proposes that the mission statements be posted permanently so that people who might be interested in serving in leadership roles will be aware of what each ministry strives to do.
- Provided each ministry with a tool; a binder. The purpose of the binder is to provide clear and concise explanations of the purpose of each ministry and to improve access to leadership positions for new or marginalized people in our congregation by communicating some of the otherwise "hidden rules" as to how the church operates".

We believe the use of these informational binders will:

- Eliminate the “who you know” aspect of knowing what goes on at FHC.
- Provide a clear record of what is done within each ministry to pass on from year to year and from leader to leader.
- Provide a resource for new members, or members new to ministry to work.
- Level the playing field and eliminate any bias. Every one of our members should have equal opportunities to serve the church in a way that best suits their interests, gifts, and talents.

- A list of recommendations for the content and use of the binders is included in a separate resource in the website called “**Creating Racial Equity Ministry Binder Recommended Content and Use.**”

### Audit Team Actions and Recommendations

The Audit team conducted racial equity audits of specific church processes to identify and address gaps between organizational racial equity goals and actual performance. The processes audited were Procurement, Community Grants, Staff Compensation, Human Resource Policies & Practices, Lay Leadership, Website communications and the Church Mission, Vision, and Guiding Principles. Key accomplishments and recommendations included:

- Created a racial equity audit methodology with steps that included analyzing the current state, identifying improvement opportunities, and developing recommendations to address these opportunities. All steps included meeting with the process owner(s) for feedback and concurrence about the identified opportunities and recommendations.
- Conducted racial equity audits in 7 areas resulting in 52 recommendations. The Audit reports for each process are stored on the church’s google drive and are available upon request.
- Obtained and summarized updates on the implementation status as of Nov 2023 of each of the 52 Audit recommendations from each of the responsible Ministries and/or committees. The list of 52 recommendations and their implementation status as of Nov 2023 is listed as a separate resource in the website called “**Creating Racial Equity Audit Recommendations.**”

### Next Steps:

How the church will maintain collective ownership and responsibility for continuing to advance racial equity is a key question now that the Creating Racial Equity team is ending its work. Some Specific issues identified by the Creating Racial Equity Team are:

- How Does Racial Equity improvement planning regularly occur in the future?
- How do we not let planned recommendations & actions from the Creating Racial Equity Committee be dropped once the Committee completes its work?
- How will communication to the congregation of actions & plans occur in a way that provides an opportunity for the congregation to engage with the plan (i.e. understand it/provide input to it/and participate in execution as appropriate)?
- How Does the church measure the progress it is making?
- How are Creating Racial Equity recommendations shared with new members of Ministries?

The Creating Racial Equity Committee identified that Session needs to

- Plan how these questions will be answered going forward.
- Determine how to organize to ensure plans are effectively executed.

- Determine how to integrate this work with other strategic/organization planning and consulting efforts being undertaken by the church.

The Creating Racial Equity Team proposed the following framework of an ongoing racial equity improvement process for Session to consider:

- At a designated time early in the year
  - Ministries create racial equity improvement plans and review with Session.
    - Planned programs or actions (including completion of audit recommendations)
    - Any Planned metric targets.
  - Session sponsors a “lunch and learn” type event where Ministries can present, and congregation participants can provide feedback on these plans.
- At a designated time late in the year
  - Ministries summarize progress in executing plans, completing audit recommendations, and achieving metrics for review in Session.
  - Session sponsors a “lunch and learn” type event where Ministries can present, and congregation participants can provide feedback on the results achieved.
- At appropriate intervals, measure progress.
  - Publish metric results periodically & include them in the annual report.
  - Hold regular conversations/focus groups to check in: What is your experience at Forest Hill like? How well are we loving each other?
  - At an appropriate time in the future, conduct another Race Equity Survey to assess progress that has been made and areas where further progress is needed.

Whether this framework, or some other variation is adopted, the Creating Racial Equity Committee believes it is critical for the church to commit to establishing a formal racial equity improvement process going forward.

Post Report Note: In the Nov 29, 2023 Session meeting, Session accepted the report, and plans to use in 2024 the proposed framework outlined above for the ongoing racial equity improvement process.

Racial Equity Committee Members:

Ministries Team: Leslie Clement (Co-Leader), Marcie Denton (Co-leader), Mary Ball, Scott Lafferty, Julie Lustic. and Rachel Martinez Finn.

Audit Team: Lia Clement (Co-Leader), Mark Wedell (Co-Leader), Robin Hales, Karen Loughridge, Jeff Smith, Quentin Smith, and Lisa Vahey.