**Unpacking Power and Privilege: The Kentucky Council of Churches**

The churches of the Indiana-Kentucky Conference UCC (and predecessor bodies) have been a strong component of the Kentucky Council of Churches ever since its inception in 1947. With 70 years of ecumenical witness, the KCC represents 800,000 Kentuckians from 16 conferences, dioceses, regions and presbyteries of 11 denominations and several independent congregations.

The KCC is, without question, among the strongest, broadest, and most long-lived ecumenical partnerships in the country. From cooperating in mission work, to educating law-makers on significant humanitarian policy concerns, the conference ministers, bishops, and other officers give flesh to Jesus’ prayer “That they all may be one.”

Each year the executive council of the KCC invites member communions to engage one important issue. No recent topic has been more timely than this year’s, “Unpacking Power and Privilege.” During the recent Kentucky Council of Churches assembly, workshop leaders Rev. Traci Blackmon, Dr. Miguel de la Torre, and many others helped us unpack how unconsciously privileging some in society diminishes all. We spent time exploring the ways racial bias has given rise to white supremacist movements, but also allowed complacent, good church goers to be unware of the cumulative effects of years of giving white members of society every governmental advantage, and people of color very few.

Understanding the toxic effects of primarily white, primarily male privilege has proven to be literally a matter of life and death. Whether encouraging the arrogance and abusive power that allows a male employer to rape female subordinates, or creating the unthinking fear that fires 12 police revolver rounds into a non-violent compliant black driver in a car with his hands up, or generating a new neo-nazi movement intent on white male domination, we must understand that unmerited, unexamined power and privilege are gravely affecting the wellbeing of us all.

So what to do? The Council is convinced that churches must lead the way and we must start at home. All of our denominations are committed to the equal and just treatment of every person: we do so because we are commanded to love one another by Christ, and because we know each person is made in the image of God. But as churches we have not always been bastions of equality, of equity, or of resistance to those who have taken harmful advantage of their power or privilege. So the first thing we can do is LISTEN and LEARN from those who have not often been heard, and have NOT benefited from the world that is so easy for some. Then we must enact equity wherever we have the ability to do so. Acting together under the banner of the Gospel we can be a powerful, visible, and welcome force for justice. Understanding our role in the past, we can show a heart for humility and a willingness to love kindness, as both Jesus and the prophets insisted we do. The Indiana Kentucky Conference has a vital role to play in this important work and I invite you to join with the Kentucky Council of Churches in building a just world for all.

The gathered leaders of the Kentucky Council of Churches believe this call transcends race, denomination, and nationality. If we are to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly in God’s way, we must pray and act accordingly. The Kentucky Council of Churches is proud to be working with the United Church of Christ for a better understanding and a safer, more just world. While it may seem like a drop in the bucket, it is tiny drops of love that gather to let “justice roll down like waters.”

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