Diversity Discussion March 25, 2021

Definitions

Diversity is the range of human differences, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, social class, physical ability or attributes, religious or ethical values system, national origin, and political beliefs.

Inclusion is involvement and empowerment, where the inherent worth and dignity of all people are recognized. An inclusive environment promotes and sustains a sense of belonging; it values and practices respect for the talents, beliefs, backgrounds, and ways of living of its members.

What does God have to say?

A hatred for diversity doesn't reflect a love for the one who created it. We should celebrate the differences that we have because of their beauty, usefulness and because they are the work of our Father in heaven.

Here are five Bible verses that teach us to have a heart for variety.

Galatians 3:28 – "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

1. Be aware of unconscious bias

Understanding bias and building awareness is a first step towards real change. There are a couple of different forms of bias - conscious & unconscious. **Unconscious bias**, which can include associations or feelings of bias that may be hidden underneath the surface. Unconscious biases do not necessarily align with our **conscious** beliefs or declared beliefs, which means unconscious biases are even more important to pay attention to.

One way to build awareness and address unconscious bias is to review, question, and analyze our own personal biases and assumptions. Recording instances of stereotyping as they occur will help people become more aware as they start to make those biases more conscious. This will help people observe when they begin to stereotype individuals so they can refute and replace biases.

2. Communicate the importance of managing bias

Cultural humility is another way we can manage bias and foster more inclusive environments. This concept involves remaining curious and humble about cultural differences. No one is an expert, but is on a continuous learning journey when it comes to respecting and embracing other people's experiences and realities. Becoming culturally competent is a lifelong practice.

Pastor Wendolyn provided an information sheet about NJ ELCA resources:

Active Bystander Training (information from Pastor Wendolyn)

In this 2-hour session, you will learn how to DIRECT, DISTRACT DELEGATE AND DOCUMENT - safely and faithfully: This is a FREE online event, offered THREE different dates/times:

Saturday, March 27, 2021 10:00 AM to noon

Saturday, April 17, 2021, 10:00 AM to noon

Thursday, April 29, 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM

Email Rev. Kimberly Vaughn kvaughn@njsynod.org or see the NJ Synod webpage at njsynod.org

Multicultural Ministry Resources: njsynod.org/multicultural-ministry-resources

Book recommendations:

Enough About Me, The Power of Giving by Richard Lui (none in the library, $27 at Amazon)

When his father was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, Richard Lui did something tough. The award-winning news anchor decided to set aside his growing career to care for family. Selflessness, however, did not come easily. So, Richard set out to explore why he struggled.

Across that Bridge by John Lewis (1 copy in library, $8 at Amazon)

In *Across That Bridge*, Congressman John Lewis draws from his experience as a prominent leader of the Civil Rights Movement to offer timeless wisdom, poignant recollections, and powerful principles for anyone interested in challenging injustices and inspiring real change toward a freer, more peaceful society.

Betsy's description:

how to do a peaceful resistance; connect with legislator; anticipate their responses & plan how to cope & how to act; respond with peace, song, love (to beatings & horrific jail conditions); prior planning prevents problems

Elijah Cummings another inspirational figure (also has a book)

On the Corner of Bitter and Sweet by Jamie Ford (6 copies in the library)

Depicts the life of Japanese and Chinese Americans living on the west coast during WWII

Dear Church: A Love Letter from a Black Preacher to the Whitest Denomination in the US Paperback – July 2, 2019 by Lenny Duncan (0 in library, $14 Amazon)

Lenny Duncan is the unlikeliest of pastors. Formerly incarcerated, he is now a black preacher in the whitest denomination in the United States: the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Shifting demographics and shrinking congregations make all the headlines, but Duncan sees something else at work--drawing a direct line between the church's lack of diversity and the church's lack of vitality. The problems the ELCA faces are theological, not sociological. But so are the answers.

I'm Still Here: Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness by Austin Channing Brown (2 in library, $11 Amazon, Ebay $2 - $9)
From a leading voice on racial justice, an eye-opening account of growing up Black, Christian, and female that exposes how white America's love affair with "diversity" so often falls short of its ideals.

Movie - Green Book (DVD - 13 copies at library)

When Tony Lip, a bouncer from an Italian-American neighborhood in the Bronx, is hired to drive Dr. Don Shirley, a world-class black pianist, on a concert tour from Manhattan to the Deep South, they must rely on a book to guide them to the few establishments that were then safe for African Americans. Confronted with racism and danger, as well as unexpected humanity and humor, they are forced to set aside differences to survive and thrive on the journey of a lifetime.

Discussion:

Black History Trail - being planned for South Jersey

Rich play blacks against poor whites, historically and today: "keep fighting, we're making money"

Asian Americans - hatred due to trade wars, blame for Covid, fear of job loss (yet we need immigrants for fill jobs)

Immigrants trying to follow laws - but even lawyers can't keep up

Why do people hate minorities anyway? One thought: we are wired to go toward what is similar and familiar

Anti-bullying strategies - be curious instead of furious; learn to ask questions when things happen that aren't right; ie - "why is that funny?"

the movie Hidden Figures - example of movie that has a "white savior":

Kevin Costner's character is what's known as a "white savior." A white character who saves a person of color from their troubles, troubles that the person of color can't save themselves from. The white savior trope has been utilized since the beginning of filmmaking, but it really grew popular during the civil rights era. Offscreen, black activists were leading the fight for civil rights in America, but filmmakers turned to white characters to tell these nonwhite stories.

future "field trip" ideas:

Smithville museum

Timbuctoo Village, Westampton https://www.westamptonnj.gov/about/pages/timbuctoo-village

Jacob's Chapel, Mt. Laurel https://www.jacobschapelame.org/

Salem, NJ African-American church (Betsy)

speaker?

need ideas about people in the community who have different backgrounds and would be willing to engage in conversation with us