

## Announcing Churches that THRIVE for Racial Justice

by Paula Clayton Dempsey

Followers of Jesus are called to constantly examine the way things are in our churches, communities, nation and world, as compared to God's dream and vision for the way the world should be. Examining the way things are, and working to nurture the way things should be—through the lens of race—is at the heart of the *Churches that THRIVE for Racial Justice* five-year project of the Alliance of Baptists. In this project the Alliance, led by [the 25 congregations who make up the learning cohort](#), will engage in a collective examination of identities, structures, ministries, worship, staffing, and commitments, in order to give birth to the kind of Alliance and local church God dreams.

The [25 churches selected for the cohort](#) represent congregations spanning 18 states reflecting diversity in geography, congregational make-up, size and history. These congregations will learn from one another's efforts to cultivate a more racially-just church and world in their context. They will experiment, engage in new ways of being and doing church, and they will share what they are learning, along with how they are changing, with the larger Alliance family and the larger church in the world, inviting you to join them in the journey.

There are aspects of the project in which all individuals and congregations within the Alliance can participate and from which the racial justice initiatives of all congregations may benefit. Later this year we will be circulating an online survey instrument to everyone in the Alliance family. Once completed and processed, the findings will provide a baseline understanding of where Alliance churches and church people are in understanding systemic racism and its presence within our ecclesial and societal structures. This reflection of where we are, in comparison to other mainline churches, has potential for awakening awareness, action and change.

EVERYONE in the Alliance family is being asked to complete the online survey! We'd love to expand our mailing list to include as many people as we are able to recruit from your congregation for this purpose. [Attached is a form](#) for signing up for our database through which the survey will be distributed. Please forward this request for sign-ups, encouraging your church members, so we can have the assurance the data we collect is representative of all the Alliance constituency.

Meanwhile, know that the findings of the survey, as well as the resource sharing and best practices that are being uncovered throughout the five-year project, will be communicated through this same mailing list.

*Churches that THRIVE for Racial Justice* is excited to join with Gerardo Martí, Davidson College, Davidson, N.C.; Kevin Dougherty, Baylor University, Waco, Texas; and Mark Mulder, Calvin University, Grand Rapids, Mich. who are jointly directing the research for the learning model. Each of these sociologists of religion have committed their careers to eradicating the presence, and addressing the ongoing harm, of white supremacy within the church and its structures.

*Paula Clayton Dempsey serves as the director of partnership relations for the Alliance of Baptists and has been directing the THRIVE project for the Alliance with Gerardo Martí, Davidson College, Kevin Dougherty, and Mark Mulder and has been instrumental to its success. Paula recently announced that she'll be retiring in October of 2021.*