

Final Report - NEXT Church Antiracism Audit

February 2021

Glossary

BIPOC - an acronym standing for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color; used to signify the myriad identities of non-white people, and to acknowledge the disproportionate levels of injustice experienced by Black and Indigenous people.

White supremacy culture: Coined by Tema Okun and Kenneth Jones, “White supremacy culture is the idea (ideology) that white people and the ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions of white people are superior to People of Color and their ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions.”¹

White supremacy characteristics/values: The values that uphold white supremacy culture. “The list of white supremacy characteristics includes: perfectionism, a sense of urgency, defensiveness, valuing quantity over quality, worship of the written word, belief in only one right way, paternalism, either/or thinking, power hoarding, fear of open conflict, individualism, belief that I'm the only one (who can do this 'right'), the belief that progress is bigger and more, a belief in objectivity, and claiming a right to comfort.”²

Antiracism: The practice of opposing systemic racism and its structures in thought, word, and deed. Anti-racism is a lifelong process, working to address and eradicate racism as it shows up in the world and in ourselves.

Executive Summary

From its inception, NEXT Church has thought of itself as an organization hungry for change. The original thirteen leaders who met in a church hall dreamed of creating a future-oriented space where leaders could push beyond the stale status quo toward new mission engagement. As year after year passed, thirteen became 200, 200 became 500, and NEXT Church’s reputation as a forward-thinking, progressive church think-tank spread.

Like many progressive, mostly white spaces, however, fundamental issues of racial justice were left unaddressed and were often reduced to perfunctory diversity-counting and “we aren’t racist” posturing.

It turns out you cannot create a whole new *next* church if the people, systems, and underlying assumptions are rooted in the current one. From its roots - in the initial brainstorming meeting, all white pastors, seven white men, almost all from “tall steeple churches” - NEXT Church led from the centers of power, and the organization did not challenge that power center in its founding or evolution.

¹ <https://www.dismantlingracism.org/white-supremacy-culture.html>

² *ibid.*

Then, in 2018, among the core leadership, NEXT Church's forward-thinking reputation met reality. A leadership meeting at the 2018 National Gathering in Baltimore - a room filled with talented leaders, thinkers, and movers and shakers of the PC(USA) - devolved into a greatest hits of stereotypical white supremacist work culture. A white male leader contradicted and overrode the co-leadership of a Black woman. An Asian woman named her discomfort, and was joined by others in naming similar experiences. BIPOC leaders in the room were stuck balancing their own preservation with their dignity, watching their white "allies" choose white comfort over true fellowship. Another white man said "he did not see color" and had worked his whole life to help Black people.

This incident sparked an internal soul-searching that required real analysis, self-awareness, and repentance in individual leaders within NEXT Church as well as the organization itself. NEXT Church contracted with Crossroads Antiracism Organizing and Training, a national organization with decades of experience in racial equity work, for a racial equity audit of NEXT Church as an organization.

Through this process, the audit team found the following six major racist patterns within the life of NEXT Church:

PATTERN #1: An analysis of NEXT Church's culture and structure reveals an organization shaped by an unexamined capitalist ideology that has co-opted our imagination. As a result, NEXT Church programs and BIPOC leaders involved in NEXT Church are commodified. This gives the illusion that NEXT Church is a more just and equitable organization than it is in reality.

PATTERN #2: An analysis of NEXT Church's culture and structure reveals an organization created by white people and for white people, even though this is not the expressed intention. As a result, the culture of NEXT Church disproportionately benefits white people -- white people feel more at home and have their needs met by NEXT Church programs and relationships in ways that BIPOC participants do not.

PATTERN #3: An analysis of NEXT Church's culture and structure reveals an organization where the values of white supremacy undergird its culture, organizational structure, and programs -- often in ways that are not immediately visible. As a result, there is 1) a disproportionate institutional investment in whiteness and 2) secrecy and exclusivity experienced by BIPOC.

PATTERN #4: An analysis of NEXT Church's culture and structure reveals an organization that has been more concerned with being perceived as antiracist - meaning innocent, good, progressive, and diverse - than with antiracist transformation of NEXT Church as an organization, participants in NEXT Church programming, and/or the PCUSA.

PATTERN #5: An analysis of NEXT Church's culture and structure reveals an organization that has confused symbolic diversity with equity. As a result, the institution uses BIPOC individuals and organizations as commodities in order to create an illusion of diverse inclusion. This leads white people to believe they are invested in a leading edge institution.

PATTERN #6: An analysis of NEXT Church's culture and structure reveals an organization that has not invested in intentional relationships with communities of color nor cultivated equitable relationships to BIPOC individuals and communities.

Based on these patterns, these are chief interventions recommended (full list in report):

- Transparency and a re-evaluation of our financial relationships and sources as they keep us dependent on white supremacist structures, including an annual re-interrogation of the relationship between Village Church and NEXT Church.
- A creation of an Equity and Inclusion team of the Strategy Team, led by a consultant/director of Equity and Inclusion, that will hold the team accountable at every meeting to meet antiracist goals. The Equity and Inclusion team will also create a Recruitment/Hiring/Retention process and manual so hiring paid staff does not follow patterns of white supremacy.
- A listening campaign among communities of color connected to NEXT Church to strengthen relationships and see how NEXT Church can center and support the work of these communities, completed by the end of 2021, with the goal of conducting campaigns annually.
- A thorough re-examination and re-evaluation of programming in light of antiracist goals.
- Commissioning a writing of a thick, honest history of NEXT Church, warts and all, using a journalistic approach.
- More thorough assessment and evaluation in the 2021 National Gathering, including demographic information to assess the experiences of BIPOC.

NEXT Church sees itself as a movement. It has inevitably become an institution. And as an institution with influence, NEXT Church has used its power -- however unintentionally -- to harm. NEXT Church as an organization has held up and promoted white supremacy. As individuals and as an organization, we are racist.

This racial equity audit is an attempt to come to terms with the racism that exists in us and interrupt it within ourselves and the organization. We pray God will grant us mercy so that we can take the actions necessary to stop oppressing BIPOC folks and instead be a part of God's liberating justice for all.

NEXT Church Race Audit

2019-2021

Introduction

Mark 10:17-22: As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, 'Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: "You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honour your father and mother." ' He said to him, 'Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth.' Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, 'You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.' When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

Throughout the Gospel of Mark, as Jesus heals the sick and calls disciples, he speaks of the immediacy of God's kingdom, and shows us what the Commandments look like when they are more than empty practices or upheld traditions, but are lived into being. In healing stories, Jesus often tells the person who has been afflicted to get up as a sign of their healing. In call stories, Christ calls people to leave behind the security provided by their vocation and to follow him. The story of the man in Mark 10 is part healing story, part call story. And yet it is a failed story on both accounts. The man cannot be made well because he does not realize he is afflicted. His wealth and status have blinded him to the difference between piety and discipleship; as a result, he cannot answer the call to follow Christ.

Like the man in Mark 10, many within NEXT Church have failed to see ways the organization is afflicted, particularly ways in which privilege and power (or proximity to it) have blinded us to the reality of the Gospel. As a result, we have upheld dehumanizing structures, caused harm, and prevented ourselves from living into the fullness of God's invitation to discipleship.

As a community of people, NEXT Church, like the institutional church itself, is flawed. Reformed theology invites us to take seriously the ways in which sin permeates every part of our lives and the world. As such, we recognize that it is vital to examine the ways in which we have also failed to live into the fullness of the vision we held at our inception. Further, we trust the Holy Spirit is moving among us even when we fall short of living into the people we are called to be, and we trust that a serious examination of the ways white supremacy has found roots in the life and ministry of NEXT Church will yield a new way of being in community together.

Throughout NEXT Church's history, there have been rumblings and inflection points that have defined and redefined how leaders of the organization see ourselves and how we relate to one another as a community. Though we long to be a more diverse and just organization, our governance and values are

so deeply intertwined with the PC(USA) and the U.S. more broadly that it has been difficult to maintain a sustained and critical examination of the ways in which white supremacy has informed our ways of being. While we have longed to be more diverse, we have failed to live into diversity of thought or values³. We have allowed things like scarcity, competition, and either/or thinking to dominate our process. As a result, BIPOC leaders and participants in NEXT Church have endured particular harm, and all of us have missed the opportunity for deeper connection and understanding of ourselves, one another, and the Gospel.

While we have sought to transform our communities, we have failed to see the need for transformation within ourselves. When BIPOC leaders have dared to share their pain at the ways they have felt unseen and excluded, minimized and tokenized by NEXT Church, we merely added more balanced content to our programs and additional leaders to our teams. NEXT Church brought more people to the table, but did not pause to consider whether the table itself was the problem.

This Race Audit is an attempt to do just that.

The History of NEXT Church

On Monday, September 28th, 2009, thirteen pastors gathered in a church meeting room at Village Church in Prairie Village, Kansas to talk about the state of the Presbyterian Church (USA). They were blunt. This isn't working.

We are caught up in our inner conflicts, they said to each other. Ministry is happening at the congregational level, yet we don't have a central mission as a church body. Our ministries and structures were made for the church of the 1950s, not the 21st century. We don't have all the answers, they said, but we need to create a space where someone could at least ask good questions. We need to create a space that is future-oriented and talking about the *next* generation of the church, recognizing that sometimes the most fecund soil is found beyond the church's center.

Out of these conversations, the leaders pulled in additional church leadership and collectively decided to hold a national conversation to talk about the future of the Presbyterian church. They anticipated about 80 participants. Instead, over 200 people filled the overflowing halls of Second Presbyterian Church of Indianapolis in February 2011. They realized they hit a nerve. It was out of this dream to envision a space together where people from across the denomination would build and strengthen relationships, sharpen one another's ministry toolkits, and bring the Gospel to life in an ever-evolving world that NEXT Church was born.

The informal steering team met to plan a second national conference for February 2012. More than 400 people found a Texas welcome at the First Presbyterian Church of Dallas. In the lead-up to the conference it became clear that this effort could no longer be sustained by volunteers. Money was raised

³ We are indebted to the work of Kenneth Jones and Tema Okun's work on the characteristics of white supremacy culture. http://www.csworkshop.org/PARC_site_B/dr-culture.html

from large, predominantly white churches, to hire a full-time Director. In May 2012, the Reverend Jessica Tate came on board as the Director; and, at the same time a Strategy Team was formed as the governing board.

Since 2012, NEXT Church has continued to offer an annual National Gathering while expanding its work to focus on leadership development, equipping congregations, and strengthening connections. That work has included seasonal coaching cohorts, deep-dive workshop offerings, the Sarasota Statement, and Cultivated Ministry. Additionally, NEXT Church has a robust online presence and offers free resources, and occasional focused smaller, in-person gatherings such as the elder symposium. Over 10,000 people have participated in NEXT Church activities.

“We are not the community we say that we are”

When we reflect on NEXT Church’s origin story, we recognize the seeds of what makes NEXT Church what it is: an insistence on the Holy Spirit’s creative work, a refusal to continue the status quo, and a hunger for questioning, self-reflection, and reform.

But in the context of an American mainline denomination entrenched in white supremacy in a white supremacist country, we also see the seeds of racism that have affected the organization’s evolution. In the initial planning meeting, six of the participants were white women and seven were white men, almost all pastors from “tall steeple churches.” The initial conference was overwhelmingly filled with white people, with some diversity coming from the 80 seminarians the leadership had worked to invite and to offset the cost of travel.

The fundamental roots of white supremacy in NEXT Church went largely unchecked through years of conferences and offerings. Then, at the leadership meeting immediately following the 2018 National Gathering in Baltimore, the organization experienced an inflection point where the urgent need to address the deep racism of NEXT Church became obvious. Members of NEXT Church’s Strategy Team (the governing board) and Advisory Team (a loose network of supporters of NEXT Church) had gathered for this meeting – approximately 50 influential Presbyterians with varying degrees of connection to NEXT Church and one another. Due to personal circumstances, the Executive Director and the Community Organizing Consultant, who had intended to lead the meeting, had to step away. Leadership of the meeting fell to one of NEXT Church’s Strategy Team Co-chairs (a Black woman) and a former Strategy Team member (a white man).

The meeting began with an exercise designed to engage everyone in telling NEXT Church’s history, facilitated by the white male former Strategy Team member. Each person was asked to share their own perspective, so the stories could be woven into a “common narrative,” which would then be reflected on with family systems analysis. The black female Strategy Team Co-Chair welcomed people into the space by inviting them to reflect on a given prompt, only to have the former Strategy Team member interject an alternative prompt. While many observed in that moment a white man correcting a Black woman,

nothing was said. After the “common narrative” was assembled, an Asian woman and member of the Strategy Team spoke up to share her discomfort. Her discomfort was effectively dismissed. Another Black woman and member of the Strategy Team called out the racist dynamics in the Church and in the room, and a white man responded by saying he did not “see color” and had worked his whole life to help talented Black youth succeed. With defensiveness, prejudice, and white saviorism swirling through the room, white people hunkered down in silent solidarity, neglecting the trauma and abandonment they were inflicting on our BIPOC sisters, brothers, and siblings in the room.

The Executive Team met overnight, changing the next day’s Strategy Team meeting schedule so the Strategy Team could address what had happened. The Executive Team designed a “fishbowl experience” where BIPOC and white participants took turns sharing their reactions. BIPOC folks sat in quiet pain for a long time before verbalizing their hurt and frustration, then making the active choice to remain in the room. White people spoke intellectually rather than emotionally about what was happening.

Upon returning from maternity leave, Jessica listened to each member of the Strategy Team to try to understand what had happened. Each member of the team told a variation on a common story; there was gratitude for the Strategy Team leadership working hard to create enough space for vulnerability and honesty that a common narrative came from the experience. There was an overwhelming sense that this moment was a breaking open of something significant, a death with potential for new life. The prevailing grief that came out of the meeting was “We are not the community we say that we are.”

At the 2019 National Gathering in Seattle, NEXT Church experienced another inflection point. At this Gathering, the worship musicians were of Asian descent. During opening worship, God was referred to as “He” throughout, much to the discomfort of some of the NEXT Church participants. After worship, NEXT Church leadership offered a public apology to the entire conference for the use of exclusive language. This quick apology was perceived to be centering white Progressive values around use of language at the expense of, and even undermining, the leaders of color who had been charged with worship leadership. Processing this moment and the pain it caused for leaders of color exposed NEXT Church’s inability to respond thoughtfully when intersectionality creates tension, and in this moment treated the worship leaders as scapegoats.

The experiences in Baltimore and Seattle left NEXT Church leaders with the reality that people were experiencing NEXT Church in strikingly different ways: the white participants were experiencing NEXT Church as the founding group had envisioned, while BIPOC members were experiencing NEXT Church in many of the same damaging ways they experienced much of the rest of the denomination. As NEXT Church leadership began the process of examining the organization’s ties to white supremacist values, it did so with the hope of learning from the mistakes of the past to form a different future.

In our own words - the Sarasota Statement

In 2017 NEXT Church released the [Sarasota Statement](#), a new confession of faith speaking to the current era of division in the life of the world, the nation, and the church. NEXT Church commended it as a resource to the church with the hope that it would inspire groups and individuals to make their own statements of faith that proclaim the light of Christ in their own contexts. The statement articulates the hope of the Kingdom - the Kin-dom community of God - confesses the ways we fall short, and makes a strong commitment to take action. NEXT Church's antiracism audit team has made a spiritual journey that applies the Sarasota Statement to NEXT as an organization and a community of faith. If we are to call the broader church to greater faithfulness in accordance with the statement, we must examine ourselves first. As its preamble notes, "[W]e vow to do and be better, with God's help."

The Sarasota Statement affirms that we trust our Lord and Savior "who defies racism by forming a community of every tribe, people, and nation" (Part I). Racism breaks that community. The statement repeatedly confesses that we "grieve deeply and repent" of our sinful participation in it (Preamble and Part I), and that we will act and serve as "vehicles of change" (Part I). Part I states that commitment explicitly: "We commit to reject and resist all racist practices, however explicit or subtle. We commit to dismantle white supremacy, including societal structures that maintain and protect white privilege." Part II adds, "We also commit to doing our part, working to empower those who have systematically been excluded from the benefits of democracy and equity." Part III states the theme again: "We insist on the truth and we strive against systemic injustice." This is possible through Jesus Christ who undoes and remakes us (Part I). In and through his life, death, and resurrection, God is redeeming all creation and reconciling the whole world, *and* including us in that work (Preamble).

NEXT Church's antiracism audit team has tried to do the kind of listening that Part III of the Sarasota Statement declares is critical: "In our silence, we listen for the stories of those whose cries for justice we have disregarded and whose expressions of faith we have refused to hear." As we have listened, we have begun to recognize and name the sin that has hurt many and hobbled us from fulfilling our deepest hopes for NEXT, and from noticing what God truly has in mind for the church next. Now that we know there are many "for whom we have failed to seek justice, offer hospitality, or fully embraced as God's beloved family" (Part III) in our own organization, will we repent, do differently, and will we accept the Sarasota Statement's challenge to "rededicate ourselves to this work and strive, with hearty faith, to live [God's] Kingdom on earth"? (Part III.)

Working with Crossroads

In the winter of 2019, NEXT Church contracted with Crossroads Antiracism Organizing and Training for a racial equity audit of NEXT Church as an organization.

The audit team was composed of individuals with a variety of experience with NEXT Church: some had been with the organization since its inception, while others had little-to-no experience with the organization beyond participation at a National Conference. Additionally, the team was made up of a group of people from diverse backgrounds and contexts.

Members of the Audit team:

Adam Fronczek, Amy Kim Kyremes-Parks, Angela Williams, Carla Pratt Keyes, Chris Dela Cruz, Denise Anderson, Jess Cook, Jessica Tate, Kirk Louis, Mary Ellen Azada, Mary Todd, Sarang Kang, Susan Young Thornton, and Tom Cramer

The NEXT Church Audit Team began meeting in June 2019, and completed its work in February 2021. The team met regularly over Zoom to familiarize themselves with the tools and methodology provided by Crossroads Anti-Racism Organizing and Training. A progress report was offered at the 2020 National Gathering in Cincinnati, to update the greater body about the progress the team was making, and to offer a general update on what the journey had been like up to that point.

Methodology

The methodology for this Racial Equity Audit utilizes a triangulated design in which multiple data collection strategies are applied to develop the clearest and fullest picture of the racialized landscape of the organization. These methods include:

- A Matrix Tool that examines the organization's workings in terms of individual, cultural, and institutional power dynamics related to race and other intersections of oppression.
- A Continuum Tool that allows the group to get a sense of where the institution currently is relative to its stated commitments to equity, inclusion, diversity, and antiracist values and culture; in addition, this tool helps assess how levels of the institution are progressing toward anti-racist/anti oppressive transformation.
- A Racial Equity Survey (see appendix for survey questions and responses) that is designed by the Audit Survey Group themselves to help them ask questions that can provide broader quantitative data to complement the qualitative data from the Matrix and Continuum strategies. They ask questions related to specific racial justice objectives indicated by the first two layers of data and to specifically amplify the voices of BIPOC among the institution's broad constituents."^[1]

[1] Crossroads Antiracism Organizing & Training. (2020, November). How to Conduct a Survey as Part of a Race Equity Audit.

THEMES AND INTERVENTIONS

The three tools used to examine the structure, programs, and life of NEXT Church yielded much data and many anecdotal examples. In this section, we attempt to clarify how these six patterns grew out of the data from these three tools.

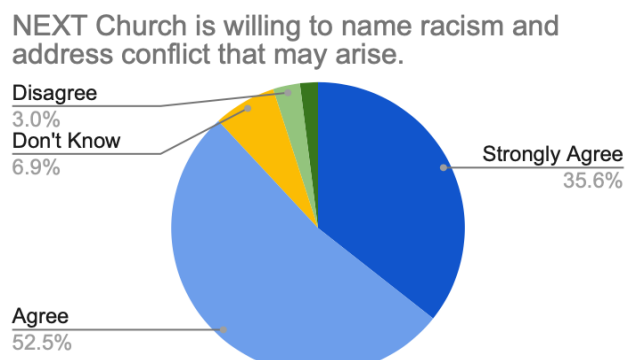
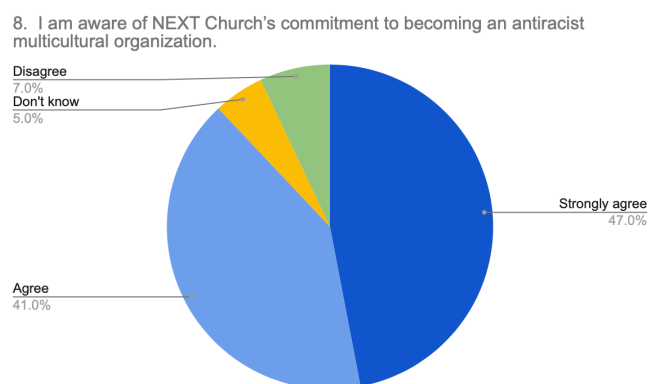
PATTERN #1

An analysis of NEXT Church’s culture and structure reveals an organization shaped by an unexamined capitalist ideology that has co-opted our imagination. As a result, NEXT Church programs and BIPOC individuals involved in NEXT Church are commodified. This gives the illusion that NEXT Church is a more just and equitable organization than it is in reality.

Examples of this pattern in the life of NEXT Church

This pattern is observed most clearly in the survey results. The data shows that NEXT Church is viewed as an organization committed to becoming an antiracist multicultural organization [see charts for Question #8 below] and as an organization willing to name racism and address conflict that may arise [see charts for Question #3 below].

8. I am aware of NEXT Church’s commitment to becoming an antiracist multicultural organization.	Person of Color	White Person	Grand Total
Strongly agree	42%	52%	47%
Agree	38%	42%	41%
Don't know	12%	0%	5%
Disagree	8%	6%	7%
Strongly Disagree	0	0	0
Grand Total	100%	100%	100%



3. NEXT Church is willing to name racism and address conflict that may arise.	Person of Color	White Person	Grand Total
Agree	62%	45%	53%
Disagree	4%	3%	3%
Don't know	8%	6%	7%
Strongly agree	27%	42%	36%
Strongly disagree		3%	2%
Grand Total	100%	100%	100%

61% of respondents to the survey are connected to NEXT Church via the National Gathering or the blog only. In these two programmatic areas, the focus in the direction of anti-racism is clear.

At the same time, it is striking that 25 of the 32 survey questions had high (greater than 30%) “Don’t Know” responses. The team interpreting the survey data believes this points to several factors:

- Despite the desire and intention to be a relational network, most people engage as *consumers of* NEXT Church’s programs and products. As a result, we hypothesize, they do not perceive a need to know the behind the scenes realities as they apply to antiracism.
- There is a great deal of fuzziness about how NEXT Church functions. This is experienced as genuine lack of knowledge about NEXT Church’s vision, mission, and values as well as how decisions are made. Again, this speaks to the consumptive mentality created in our network.

This pattern is directly tied to the overwhelmingly white racial demographics within the PC(USA) and NEXT Church. As a result, NEXT Church’s grassroots approach leads us to organize around the needs and wants of white people while suggesting that our programs and products are for everyone.

In particular, the structure of the NEXT Church National Gathering mirrors affluent, programmatic, perhaps even large, tall-steeple ways of being and doing church. There is the perception that NEXT Church assumes everyone has the means to bear the costs of participating, such as travel. Scholarships to the National Gathering are offered, but this may be an expression of the charity model of capitalism with the rich serving as benefactors to the poor.

More broadly, NEXT Church's process for program development and communication is largely based on who has money or energy to initiate programming, rather than anti-racist values. This unintentionally extends white control, and prevents outreach and relationship-building that otherwise could happen.

NEXT Church has focused on sources of financial support, rather than in-kind giving. One audit team member reported, "I was so disappointed when I was asked to be on the Advisory Team, and the first thing I was asked to do was help raise money." There is also a lack of clarity to the wider NEXT Church community about the motivations of those who financially support NEXT Church: "Is the donor intent to turn around a dying denomination or to achieve greater diversity and inclusion?" The prioritization of financial support over in-kind giving devalues the myriad gifts BIPOC people who, due to the impact of systemic racism on income equality, often do not have access to the same financial resources as white people.

Moreover, there are two key ways in which NEXT Church commodifies BIPOC people -- individually and as communities. Instead of engaging with and investing in the work BIPOC are doing in their contexts, NEXT Church asks BIPOC repeatedly to bring their "capital," their time, talent, and resources, to serve the needs of white people, such as "teaching them about us (people of color)," to use one team member's words. This enhances NEXT Church's product and gives it the sheen of inclusivity, while failing to address the underlying inequity. Secondly, NEXT Church has sought BIPOC leadership, but has not simultaneously sought mutual partnership with the institutions these leaders are already connected to and serving. As a result, if BIPOC serve NEXT Church in leadership, it means they aren't serving a group with more connection to and understanding of their own culture.

There are some glimmers of hope, however. Consciousness of white supremacy in NEXT Church's culture is new, but it is happening. As the survey suggests, people who attend NEXT Church events expect to hear about racial justice, which naturally leads to an interrogation of the idols that cause racial inequity, including capitalist ideology. And, the institution has begun to shift toward a worldview of collaboration and cooperation, abundance, transparency, and both/and thinking -- attributes which are not normally associated with capitalist ideology.

Overall, the lack of clarity around how racist or antiracist practices function within the organizational life of NEXT Church and the overwhelmingly white racial demographic of the PC(USA) and NEXT Church results in consumption of NEXT Church's programs and products. By extension, despite sincere efforts made by NEXT Church leadership, leaders of color are tokenized in ways that are antithetical to our values.

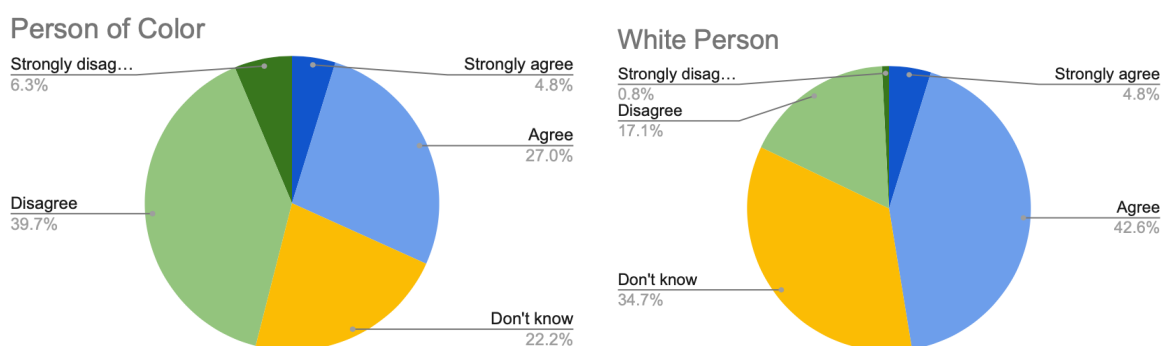
PATTERN #2

An analysis of NEXT Church's culture and structure reveals an organization created by white people and for white people, even though this is not the expressed intention. As a result, the culture of NEXT Church disproportionately benefits white people -- white people feel more at home and have their needs met by NEXT Church programs and relationships in ways that BIPOC participants do not.

Examples of this pattern in the life of NEXT Church

NEXT Church was created by white people, serving white congregations. Even as NEXT Church has made significant strides to diversify leadership in the Strategy Team, in National Gathering leadership, and in planning teams, white norms and values assumed at its inception remain in the culture of NEXT Church today.

Question 28 of the survey stated: *The environment of Next Church's national programs - Gathering, elder symposium, community organizing training---actively challenge white norms in an effort to create a space that is fully inclusive of BIPOC.* You can see from the responses below the discrepancy between how white people and BIPOC people experience white values and norms in NEXT Church's culture, with white people largely agreeing or uncertain and BIPOC most often disagreeing.



We interpret this data to suggest that we are simultaneously challenging white norms and not being fully inclusive of BIPOC.

We have noticed this discrepancy in the creation of a hospitality suite and caucus gathering times for BIPOC in our National Gatherings. The fact that this need arose organically reinforces the idea that white norms and values shape the culture of NEXT Church. There has been an

underlying assumption “that the initial, white-conceived vision of NEXT Church was a good one, into which all people could ‘buy’.”

In addition, we observe this pattern in the life of NEXT Church in the following ways:

- We have consistently hired staff who are already part of the white dominant network of NEXT Church.
- Many of NEXT Church’s programs were initiated by white people or those serving white congregations. Often the idea generation was accompanied by resources to help carry it out, which increased the likelihood of leadership saying “yes” to pursuing the project. Examples of programs developed along this pattern are:
 - the Sarasota Statement,
 - the Holy Land Pilgrimage,
 - NEXT Church coaching cohorts.
- NEXT Church has consistently measured financial giving more than in-kind giving, which over-values white investments. (61% of total congregational contributions come from 10 tall-steeple congregations and of the top 20 individual financial gifts, 19 were from white people, raising questions of influence.)
- BIPOC leaders are chosen to serve and to present based on white definitions of capability and leadership. One respondent wrote, “At times NEXT feels like it is for the ‘cool kids,’ which perpetuates that the BIPOC involved are model minorities.”
- NEXT Church leadership have struggled to interrupt whiteness in critical moments -- like staff hiring, program development, crisis management, and organizational structure -- and put the responsibility on BIPOC to navigate white space and methods of communication.
- Reassessment of NEXT Church’s relationship with Industrial Areas Foundation demonstrated commitment to anti-racism work, yet people who attended the training with IAF in 2019 training were hurt, demonstrating NEXT Church’s failure to set expectations for anti-racist work.

PATTERN #3

An analysis of NEXT Church’s culture and structure reveals an organization where the values of white supremacy undergird its culture, organizational structure, and

programs -- often in ways that are not immediately visible. As a result, there is 1) a disproportionate institutional investment in whiteness and 2) secrecy and exclusivity experienced by BIPOC.

Examples of this pattern in the life of NEXT Church

NEXT Church embodies, reflects, and upholds values of white supremacy culture: white values -- bigness, success, financial wealth, perfection, order, either/or thinking, centralization of power, look good, be “nice”, avoid/squelch conflict, be the benefactor, individualism -- which leads to inequitable relationships between BIPOC people and white people.

Though NEXT Church leadership has acted to interrupt white values in programming (e.g., Cultivated Ministry, community organizing, Sarasota Statement), the pace is often too swift to allow for growth and transformation in accordance with alternative values and processes.

There is a value toward individualism in the culture of NEXT Church. A presumption of the organization has been, “everyone has opportunity; you just have to raise your hand.” This has benefited white people disproportionately. Further, a team member noted that when the Strategy Team engaged in a fishbowl exercise after an intense racialized moment in a meeting, “[T]he people of color used ‘we’ language, while the people of white used ‘I’ language. People of white were engaged in *individualistic thinking*, while people of color were engaged in communal thinking.”

Individually and collectively, the NEXT Church Strategy Team exhibits a low threshold of discomfort and an avoidance of conflict. One example of this is that critique is often met with a notation of the progress achieved. The Strategy Team’s low threshold for discomfort and avoidance of conflict also shows up in passivity. Rather than asking ourselves, “What have we done to make our gatherings to and for white people?”, we have deferred back to the demographics of the PC(USA).

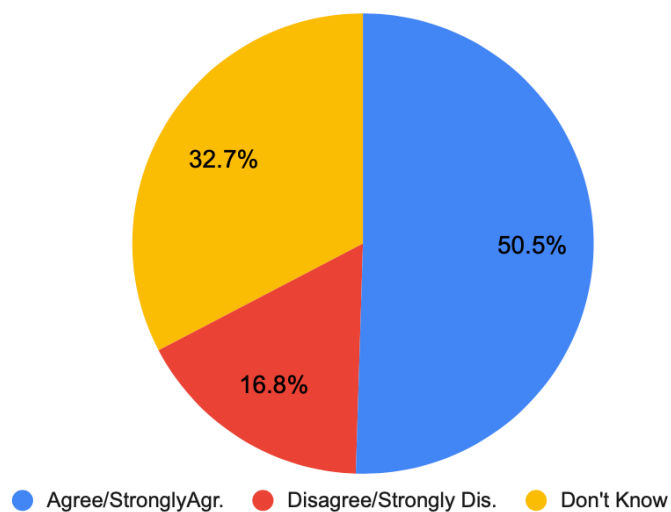
The paths to leadership in NEXT Church continually call BIPOC and resources from Communities of Color to NEXT Church to educate and inspire the white majority of participants within NEXT Church. This can create implicit pressure for BIPOC leaders to speak on behalf of an entire identity group, and to do so as a performance for the white constituency of NEXT Church. It also creates a dynamic where BIPOC leaders are pulled from communities of BIPOC folks and are engaged solely as individuals. We then largely ignore the community from which leaders have come.

There is further division between white leaders and leaders of color at the staff level. Although

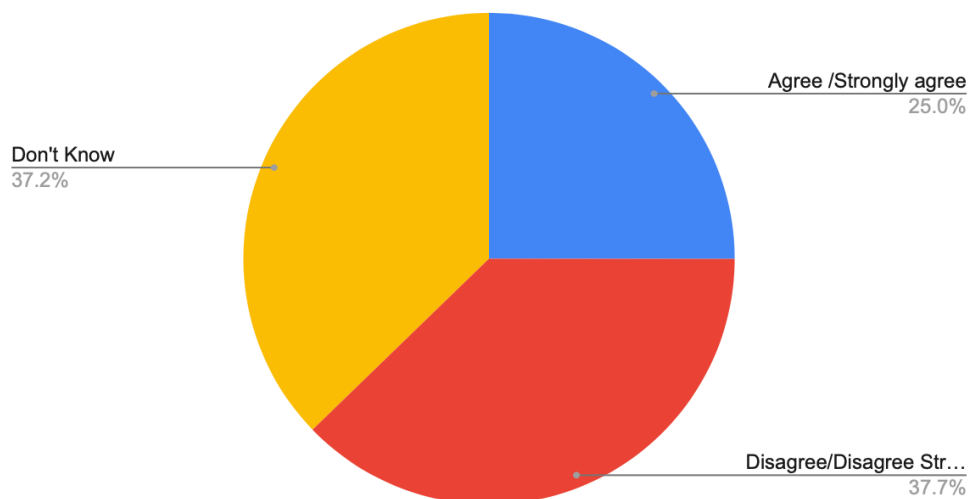
recent interim hires have been Women of Color for part-time positions, there is still disproportionate investment in, and influence of, white people on the staff of NEXT Church.

There is “fuzziness” around the vision, mission, and values of NEXT Church and a lack of clarity and lack of transparency about processes. We saw this theme clearly in the “don’t know” responses in the survey, as you can see in the following three charts.

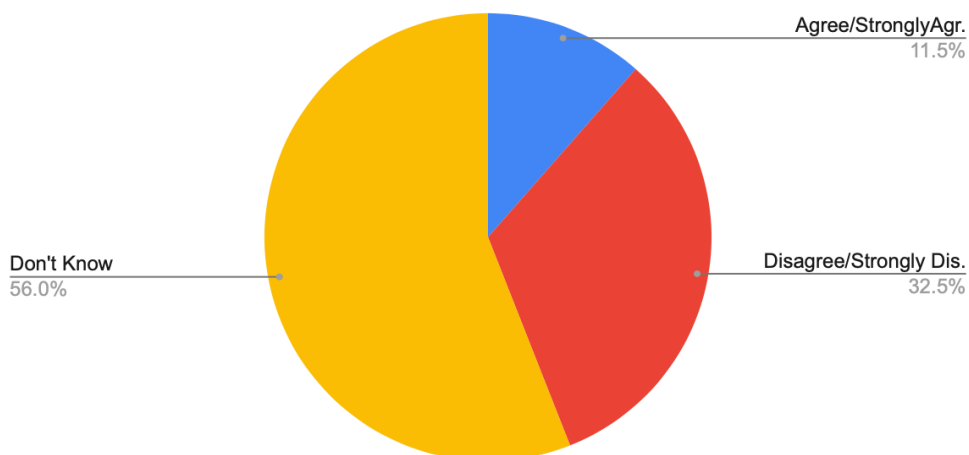
Q10. The values, mission, and goals of NEXT Church's partners are aligned with NEXT Church's commitment to becoming an antiracist multicultural organization. - Amplified and Weighted



Q18. NEXT Church communicates clearly and transparently how power is organized and distributed. - Amplified and Weighted



31. NEXT Church measures the success and effectiveness of its programs by how well the needs and concerns of people of color and other minoritized constituents are met.--Amplified & Weighted



The high proportions of “don’t know” demonstrate this fuzziness or lack of clarity around NEXT Church’s mission, vision, and values, as well as its processes, and accountability structures. This also means that NEXT Church does not have to give account for its work because people “don’t know” to what they should measure the organization against. The lack of transparency creates a power dynamic in favor of whiteness.

The audit also observed that core leadership of NEXT Church is taking on antiracism work and not shying away from it. There is a new consciousness of white supremacy in NEXT Church’s culture that is enough to make white supremacist culture come under examination, which could lead to NEXT benefiting BIPOC more robustly.

PATTERN #4

An analysis of NEXT Church’s culture and structure reveals an organization that has been more concerned with being perceived as antiracist - meaning innocent, good, progressive, and diverse - than with antiracist transformation of NEXT Church as an organization, participants in NEXT Church programming, and/or the PC(USA).

Examples of this pattern in the life of NEXT Church:

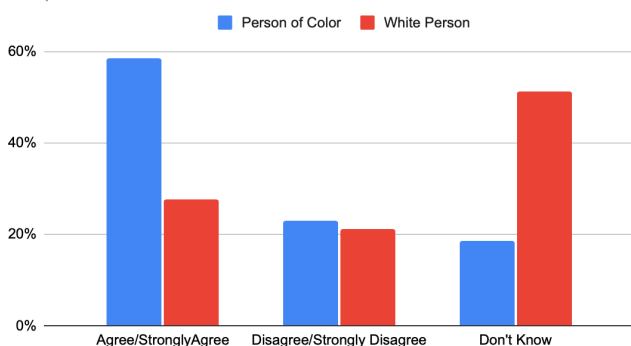
NEXT Church has focused consistently on diversity as it has evolved. However, the impact of this

focus has done more to bolster the image of NEXT Church as a diverse body than it has to create an equitable organization.

The focus on diversity has led white leaders and participants to believe they are “good” white people. This undermines growth toward equity, giving the impression we have “arrived” when there is much work still to do.

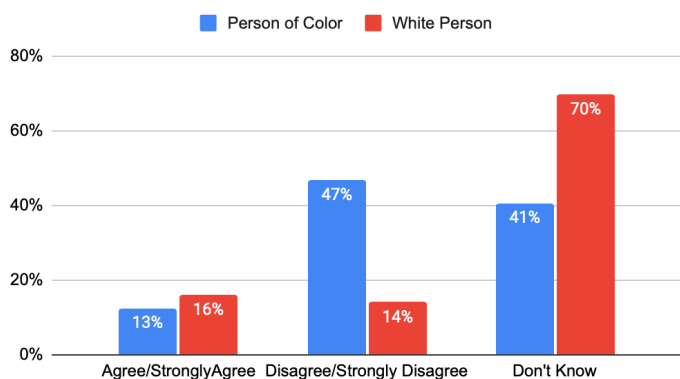
Two examples of the gap the perception of NEXT Church as anti-racist and the reality transformation showed up in the survey. Question 30 had the largest discrepancy between white and BIPOC people, with 58% of BIPOC respondents agreeing the NEXT Church’s programs meet the needs of white participants at the expense of BIPOC. In contrast, 28% of white people agree.

Q 30. NEXT Church’s programs, while seeking to be inclusive, often meet primarily the needs of White participants at the expense of People of Color’s needs. BY Racial Identity Group



Similarly, the largest “Don’t Know” response in the entire survey came in question 31, in which a majority of respondents reported no knowledge of how NEXT Church measures its success and effectiveness as it relates to the concerns of BIPOC.

31. NEXT Church measures the success and effectiveness of its programs by how well the needs and concerns of people of color and other minoritized constituents are met. BY Racial Identity Group



This data suggests NEXT Church has not consistently pushed beyond diversity to equity. As one team member noted, “Sometimes the checking off of boxes does not serve us well.just serves the optics.” Good intentions and progressive statements have been valued over impacts.

NEXT Church has also witnessed and perpetuated harm as a result of getting diversity around the leadership table without listening deeply enough to those diverse voices at the table.

PATTERN #5

An analysis of NEXT Church’s culture and structure reveals an organization that has confused symbolic diversity with equity. As a result, the institution uses BIPOC as commodities in order to create an illusion of diverse inclusion. This leads white people to believe they are invested in a leading edge institution.

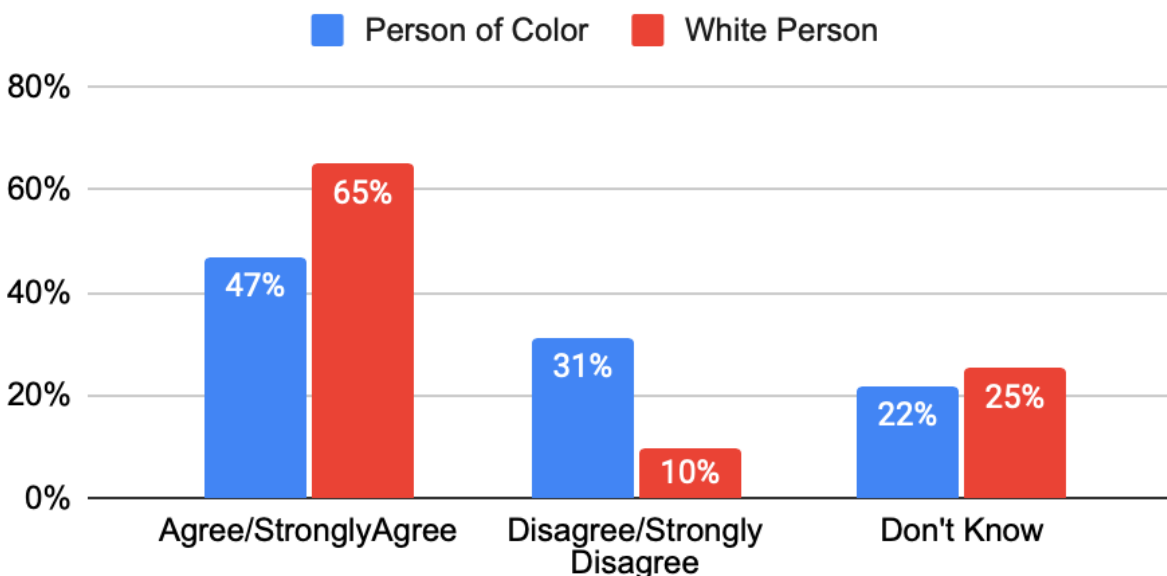
Examples of this pattern in the life of NEXT Church

NEXT Church has a commitment to multiculturalism and is accomplished at projecting that commitment. For example, the National Gathering and NEXT Church blog are the most widely viewed and known offerings. They are also the most curated of the NEXT Church offerings, where significant attention is paid to diversity in leadership.

NEXT Church has tried to avoid tokenism, but early in the life of NEXT Church BIPOC leaders named that they felt tokenized. One said, “if there are not more chocolate chips in this cookie by this time next year, I’m done.” This led to the Strategy Team’s commitment to have 50% of its leadership be BIPOC people. Tokenism has also been experienced by participants in National Gatherings, particularly as there has been inappropriate cultural appropriation in worship.

Another significant aspect of this pattern is the difference between naming or educating around race and actually making an anti-racist impact. Question number 21 in the survey points to this tension. Respondents overwhelmingly agreed that NEXT Church incorporates content that raises awareness about the impacts of systemic racism. What the NEXT Church has not adequately addressed is whether raising awareness is making impacts to dismantle racism and white supremacy.

Q 21. NEXT Church incorporates into all programmatic services content that raises awareness about the impacts of systemic racism BY Racial Identity Group



At the same time, while NEXT Church has made anti-racism a topic within our programs, equity, inclusion, belonging and representation are not clearly stated and measurable goals for NEXT Church. That NEXT Church regularly measures financial gifts but not in-kind giving is an example of the lack of clarity or measurable goals toward equity and inclusion. In addition, the lack of clarity around stated values and goals communicates that these kinds of gifts are not valued. The audit team also observes that Identity documents and bylaws have not been updated since 2016, which also contributes to lack of clarity and measurable goals toward equity and inclusion.

PATTERN #6

An analysis of NEXT Church's culture and structure reveals an organization that has not invested in intentional relationships with communities of color nor cultivated equitable relationships to BIPOC individuals and their communities.

Examples of this Pattern in the life of NEXT Church

We see this pattern borne out in the way leadership functions within NEXT Church. As has been named previously, NEXT Church has actively recruited BIPOC leaders into NEXT Church leadership, but has not worked to develop mutual and authentic relationships with the

communities to whom these leaders are connected and serve. As one team member observes, “We have not prioritized building relationships with BIPOC institutions or networks within the PC(USA).” Additionally, to date, there has been no examination of how many NEXT Church leaders who are BIPOC are serving predominantly white congregations and therefore reinvesting back in white communities rather than communities of color.

This gives rise to tokenism and burnout.

BIPOC leaders often talk about being spread thin and overextending themselves. One noted feeling, “too tired to speak truth into spaces that they came to be fed by,” and “overextending in hopes to be included or respected for it.”

Another important reality that lives within the PCUSA and also within NEXT Church is that the same BIPOC are asked again and again and again to lend their talents, time, and energy not only with NEXT Church but to other PCUSA entities. “The church’s admiration is a bigger burden than anyone should bear.”

While BIPOC leaders within NEXT Church describe commitment to and appreciation for the work of NEXT Church, there is simultaneously recognition that some of the appreciation for NEXT Church is not because of NEXT Church is great, but because of negative experiences elsewhere in the life of the PC(USA).

Programmatically, NEXT Church has focused on an attractional model that invites and encourages people to join “us,” rather than investing in them. One team member named it this way, “We have focused mostly on business as usual kinds of events and practices (conferences, cohorts, etc.) rather than specifically looking at how to invest in BIPOC leaders and institutions.” As the demographics of NEXT Church participants largely mirror the demographics of the denomination of the whole, these attractional models have largely focused on white constituencies, not BIPOC individuals or their communities.

Lastly, we again point to the high number of “don't know” responses in the survey when folks were asked about NEXT Church’s commitments to anti-racism, particularly in how they relate to structure, decision-making, and programs. We hypothesize that if NEXT Church indeed had deep and meaningful connections to communities of color, there would be more clarity from our constituency about these commitments.

INTERVENTION GOALS - 2021

In order to interrupt these patterns of white supremacy in the life and culture of NEXT Church, the audit team recommends the following interventions. These interventions are designed to be taken in the short-term (1-3 years), and we believe they will have lasting impact.

Note: these are listed in order of due date (ie. soonest due date first.)

1. National Gathering team to create an evaluation for the National Gathering 2021, including demographic information to assess BIPOC experiences at the National Gathering. To be done now. (Pattern #4, #5)
2. The Coordinating Team will work with the Communications Specialist to be more transparent about the relationship between NEXT Church and Village Presbyterian Church and will report the result to the Strategy Team. To be done now. (Pattern #1)
3. Executive Director, in conversation with the Coordinating team, to create a 4-5 member Equity and Inclusion team from the Strategy Team. Invite at least 2 members from the Strategy Team who served on the Audit team. Select a chair within the Equity and Inclusion team to lead. Team selected by 2021 National Gathering. (Pattern #3)
4. Executive Director to develop 3-5 core questions to determine what programs to offer/pursue. Present these questions for refinement and edits to the Strategy Team by Spring retreat 2021. (Pattern #2, #4, #6)
5. Leadership Development team to have all Strategy Team members trained on the Continuum (recording w/JVT) by Spring retreat and to ensure all Strategy Team members receive the Audit report and to discuss at the Spring 2021 retreat. (Pattern #3, #5)
6. Executive Director and National Gathering Coordinator will include in evaluations of events following the National Gathering a question that relates back to the 2021 National Gathering to encourage and assess participants' ongoing relationship with NEXT Church and to counteract a consumer mentality. Spring-Fall 2021. (Pattern #3, #4, #5)
7. Equity and Inclusion team to create a job description and present to ST on 6.15.2021 meeting. Recommend a candidate for consultant (or Dir of) Equity and Inclusion to guide this team and coach NEXT Church leadership in this work. (Pattern #3)
8. Equity and Inclusion team will develop a process ritual and/or practice to be led by Equity and Inclusion, in all Strategy Team meetings. The purpose of the process/ritual is to develop sensitivity and awareness of white supremacy values within their organization. Begin June 2021 ST meeting. (Pattern #3)

9. Equity and Inclusion team to watch the 2021 National Gathering and review the evaluations received along issues of Equity and Inclusion. Gather observations and recommendations to the National Gathering Leadership team. Summer 2021. (Pattern #3, #4)
10. National Gathering Leadership Team will hold a Focus Group in summer of 2021 to connect back to 2021 National Gathering participants to uncover stories of transformation and help counteract a consumer mentality. Summer 2021. (Pattern #3, #4, #5)
11. The Coordinating Team will create a process for a listening campaign among communities of color connected to NEXT Church. The purpose of this campaign will be to strengthen relationships and see how NEXT can center and support the work of these communities. Campaign will be designed by summer 2021 and completed by the end of 2021. Our intention is that this gets built into the rhythm of NEXT Church annually. (Pattern #2, #5, #6)
12. The consultant/Dir of Equity and Inclusion & National Gathering Coordinator meet monthly for the purpose of offering their insight re: issues of Equity and Inclusion at the National Gathering. Summer 2021- Spring 2022. (Pattern #3, #4)
13. Equity and Inclusion team to develop a checklist for creating intentionality and ensuring accountability around antiracist goals: ensuring transparency, monitoring power dynamics, building in places to pause and evaluate our work. Fall 2021. (Pattern #3, #4)
14. Executive Director to articulate the theory of change by which NEXT Church operates and to discuss and elicit feedback from the Strategy Team during the May or June 2021 Strategy Team meeting. Have a completed working theory of change to present to the Strategy Team in Sept 2021. (Pattern #3, #6)
15. Equity and Inclusion team to create a Recruitment/Hiring/Retention process and manual. Completed by December 2021. (Pattern #3)
16. Coordinating Team will supervise the writing of a thick, honest history of NEXT Church, using a journalistic approach. This history will be done by January 2022. (Pattern, #1, #2, #3, #5, #6)
17. Coordinating Team will initiate an annual re-interrogation of the relationship between Village Church and NEXT Church, to explore 501c3 options, and report that interrogation to the Strategy Team. Summer 2022. (Pattern #1)

CLOSING

Acts 15:6-11: The apostles and the elders met together to consider this matter. After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, 'My brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that I should be the one through whom the Gentiles would hear the message of the good news and become believers. And God, who knows the human heart, testified to them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us; and in cleansing their hearts by faith he has made no distinction between them and us. Now therefore why are you putting God to the test by placing on the neck of the disciples a yoke that neither our ancestors nor we have been able to bear? On the contrary, we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.'

Thomas Merton states that “One of the moral diseases we communicate to one another in society comes from huddling together in the pale light of an insufficient answer to a question we are afraid to ask.”⁴ White Supremacy functions by creating a false reality, written by and for those who benefit from it, while also remaining largely invisible. As members of the Church, we believe “we have the obligation to confess faith in God by standing against racism, imperialism, and any thought, action, or policy that denies the dignity and humanity of God’s children and the sanctity of the planet.”⁵ We believe this process involves asking questions of any system which would commodify our BIPOC sisters, brothers, and siblings, including ourselves.

When NEXT Church was first imagined, the convening group acknowledged they, as a small body, did not have all the answers, and they recognized the need to create space where someone could ask good questions. In many ways, NEXT Church is becoming the very space that was imagined in 2009, especially in the willingness to deeply examine its deep ties with white supremacy culture. We “believe God calls the Church to declare our faith boldly, to embody Christ’s love radically, to demand justice fully, and to participate in the Spirit’s transformation and healing of our world.”⁶

The story of the Jerusalem Council in Acts reminds us that being the Church is hard. Yet, it also reminds us that the Spirit’s imagination is greater than our own. When we are baptized into the Church, we are baptized as our whole, true selves, assuredly fallible and infinitely loved. Being the Church means learning to ask the questions of ourselves and one another that enable us to find wholeness together. We believe the Holy Spirit has been present throughout the history of NEXT Church: for some, she was present with those who had been alienated and harmed, instilling in us the strength to stay and to show a more abundant way of being the Body of Christ in the world. For others, the Spirit was present in the painful realization of the harm their actions and inactions had caused, pulling us through our own shame and into a more abundant way of being the Body of Christ in the world. Acts 15 shows us that being the church does not mean finding all of the answers, but remaining together as we ask good questions.

⁴ Thomas Merton, *No Man Is An Island*, Harcourt Brace & Company, San Diego, 1983, p. xiii.

⁵ Sarasota Statement, <https://nextpcusa.s3.amazonaws.com/Sarasota-Statement2020.pdf>

⁶ 2020 Preamble to the Sarasota Statement
<https://nextpcusa.s3.amazonaws.com/Sarasota-Statement2020.pdf>

This is even more essential as we seek to be the Body of Christ in a world brimming with tension, fear, and violence. This story is a challenge and an invitation to radical honesty, to embody the courage and not only face, but to name the things many of us have been taught to ignore.

As NEXT Church, we enter this work believing we are worthy of this, not because of who we are, but who God is. As we move forward to implement the recommendations put forth in this report, we do so with the trust in the Holy Spirit to continue moving us together and forward.

APPENDICES

Note: The tools shown here are the property of Crossroads, please do not use or distribute without their permission.

The Matrix

Assignment:

1. Identify and articulate the specific ways of how white people are benefiting and how people of color are being harmed at the individual, institutional and cultural levels (Rows 1 & 2).
2. Identify and articulate the ways all of us are socially conditioned to maintain and perpetuate systemic racism and white supremacy culture (Row 3).
3. What are the key areas of concern that are emerging from this power analysis?

	Individual	Institutional	Cultural
Racism's Power to Oppress People of Color	<i>In your institution, what ways are individual People of Color and People of Color communities being harmed, exploited, disempowered?</i>	<i>How does your institution harm, exploit, disempower, co opt, coerce People of Color institutions?</i> <i>How does your institution contribute to People of Color institutions benefiting the Center in ways that undermine their ability to serve their People of Color constituencies? (This is about accountability of People of Color institutions)</i>	<i>In what ways does your institution harm, exploit, distort, discount, discredit, destroy, co opt, coerce and appropriate People of Color cultures because their world view contradicts that of the dominant cultural center? Or because People of Color cultural expressions are perceived as exotic and desirable commodities by the dominant white center?</i>
RACISM's Power "for" white people and white society?	<i>What ways does your institution benefit and maintain control of power and resources for White people and White society?</i> <i>How does the center normalize and affirm White People and their experiences in the world?</i>	<i>In what ways does your institution reinforce an idea of itself as non-racist and innocent masking its complicity in imposing the White Supremacist dominant center? (Internal)</i> <i>In what ways does your institution affirm and legitimize and other White institutions in ways that maintain control of societal resources and to establish and enforce societal norms? (External)</i>	<i>In what ways does your institution impose White dominant culture and values (i.e. secrecy, scarcity, either/or, competitive individualism, etc.)?</i> <i>How does this result in the maintenance of White supremacy norms and ways of being?</i>
Racism's power to socialize us all into racialized rules and roles and to misshape the identity of individuals, institutions, and culture.	<i>All individuals are misshaped dehumanized & socialized - into maintaining white supremacy. (Recall: Internalized Racist Oppression for People of Color, Internalized Racist Superiority for White People)</i> <i>In your institution, what are the self-harming behaviors People of Color use in order to gain or maintain access to institutional resources?</i> <i>In your institution, what are the self-preservation behaviors that White People engage in to maintain their comfort and control of institutional resources and power?</i>	<i>All institutions are misshapen by white supremacy.</i> <i>In what ways does your institution structurally solidify dominant white cultural values and worldview?</i> <i>In what ways does your institution operate in ways that indicate they are more concerned with self-preservation than effectively realizing their mission/purpose?</i> <i>How does the imperative to maintain the Center/Borderlands power arrangement prevent your institution from fully achieving their stated mission and purpose?</i>	<i>All cultures, even cultures of resistance, are misshapen by white supremacy.</i> <i>In what ways does your institutional culture function to keep whiteness and white supremacy at the center?</i> <i>What expressions of "cultural deviance" are tolerated in your institution and which ones are experienced as threats to security and stability?</i> <i>How does your institution support and maintain the "culture of violence" that emerges from the White Supremacist center of dominance?</i>

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MATRIX Report

Matrix Patterns and Themes

Jess Cook, Sarang Kang, Mary Harris Todd, Susan Young Thornton

Patterns: conscious and unconscious behaviors; intentional and unintentional practices

Themes: pervasive, repeated behaviors, practices, perceptions

...white people's moral objection to racism increases their resistance to acknowledging their *complicity with it*. (Robin Diangelo, White Fragility, p.108)

...whites who position [themselves] as liberal often opt to protect what [they] perceive as [their] moral reputations, rather than recognize or change [their] participation in systems of inequality and domination. (Robin Diangelo, White Fragility, p.109)

NEXT Church operates under white cultural norms. We:

- Do not see, understand or name whiteness as a culture.
- Center the white experience.
- Expect BIPOC to navigate white spaces with little regard to the emotional cost.
- Assume that our progressive white values are the values of communities of color.
- Engage in binary rather than nuanced thinking.
- Default to white methodologies of programming, communicating, organizing, and structuring.
- Are critical of organizational skills, timing, and communication styles that deviate from ways we have always done things.
- Uphold and reinforce white culture.

NEXT Church serves a white agenda. We:

- Expect BIPOC people to teach about their experiences of the world and help us be less racist rather than doing the hard work ourselves.
- Rely on relationships that our BIPOC sisters, brothers, and siblings have with one another to increase participation, but rarely cultivate or deepen relationships with the entire community.
- Have not prioritized building relationships or supporting BIPOC networks or institutions.
- Consume cultural expressions without understanding or respecting the cultures from which they arise or the people for whom they have deep meaning.
- Perpetuate a public narrative that we are good non-racist people.
- Take credit for bringing together communities of color.
- Do not take seriously enough the problems travel, lodging, and time away from their own communities pose for BIPOC.
- Focus on doing, not being.

NEXT Church has settled for simple inclusion instead of aiming for true equity and justice. We:

- Check the inclusion boxes.
- Appear to be relatively racially diverse, but lack true variation of thought, style, or expression.

- Commodify worship experiences. Include variety, but do not necessarily collaborate.
- Have made our BIPOC colleagues feel like tokens, “chocolate chips in the dough of NEXT.”
- Tend to turn away from the challenges voiced by BIPOC people, because they hurt or offend white people.

NEXT Church takes people away from the border and from their particular constituencies stretching people too thin. We:

- Have invited and highlighted BIPOC institutions, but have not supported them with money or hands and feet.
- Have not invested in BIPOC leaders and their institutions.
- Ask BIPOC leaders to accept roles without compensating them.
- Pull people away from their work and their ministry contexts.
- Expect BIPOC to participate but do not partner with their institutions or ministries.
- Call upon the same gifted people of color over and over again to do the work.
- Expect people of color to speak for their whole group.
- Place an unfair burden on people of color.

NEXT Church’s opaque structures and decision-making processes and aversion to conflict make it difficult to understand how things work and who holds power. We:

- Wish people would not rock the boat.
- Fear and avoid conflict squelching authentic, meaningful, transformative community.
- Believe in our own goodwill and protest our innocence inhibiting honest communication.
- Lack clarity, so contribute to people of color experiencing less access and ownership.
- Have not figured out how to handle conflicts that erupt during the national gathering.
- Have used the excuse of hurting people’s feelings or offending their sensibilities to let ourselves off the hook.

Questions are a window into what remains to be resolved.

- Why do some people of color hesitate to bring friends and colleagues to NEXT Church gatherings and events?
- Does the decision to create separate gathering space for people of color at the national gathering reveal ways that NEXT is reinforcing its image of itself as non-racist and innocent?
- Is it possible to create spaces where people of color feel truly honored and justly treated?
- What is the difference between cultural appropriation and true appreciation for and being blessed by forms of worship other than those from our own culture?
- Do we focus too much on success stories to the detriment of stories of struggle?
- Is our structure the real problem?
- How can we operate in ways that do not suck energy and resources from the borderlands?
- Can we go to the borderlands instead of expecting people to come to the center?
- Are we reinforcing ways of being church that require affluence?
- Are we blind to who we are and how we behave? Do we need to confess?
- Can we explore other ways of doing and being?

Glimmers of what could be in the future.

- Come to an understanding that this is a process, a journey rather than a destination.

- Model partnering with other denominations and entities to decentralize white supremacy.
- Challenge the wider church to stop maintaining the center/borderline divide.
- Shift the “what is good” paradigm.
- Open ourselves to cultural changes that affect our whole being.

Intersections

- Shift resources and share in ways that do not feel like the big, wealthy, white church is being beneficent to “needy” groups.

In the wake of an incident that broke open NEXT Church’s issues of white fragility, the Strategy Team engaged in a fishbowl exercise, which produced a very memorable observation. It was pointed out that the people of color used “we” language, while the people of white used “I” language. People of white were engaged in individualistic thinking, while people of color were engaged in communal thinking.

Individualism is a story line that creates, communicates, reproduces and reinforces the concept that each of us is a unique individual and that our group memberships, such as race, class, or gender, are irrelevant to our opportunities. (Robin Diangelo, White Fragility, p.9)

CONTINUUM



Institutional Assessment Tool Levels of Institutions and Continuum on Becoming an Antiracist Multicultural Institution

Assignment:

- Taking into account the data from the history analysis and power matrix, where would you place your institution in the continuum at each of these levels? Why? (Use any other supporting institutional documents as needed, i.e. by-laws, staff handbook, etc.)
- What are the key areas of concern that are emerging from this reality? How does this compare to the key areas of concern you previously identified with the Matrix tool?
- Begin identifying what leverage points are emerging where the team can strategize to make changes.

INSTITUTIONAL LEVELS	2. PASSIVE A "Club" Institution	3. SYMBOLIC CHANGE A Multicultural Institution	4. IDENTITY CHANGE An Antiracist Institution
PERSONNEL	<p>VERY FEW PEOPLE IN DECISION-MAKING POSITIONS ARE PAID WELL.</p> <p>PEOPLE OF COLOR IN CLERICAL OR SERVICE POSITIONS RECEIVE LOW WAGES WITH FEW IF ANY BENEFITS AND LITTLE JOB SECURITY.</p> <p>PEOPLE AT BOTTOM HAVE VERY LITTLE POWER.</p>	<p>VERY FEW PEOPLE CONTINUE TO ACCEPT MOST OF THE DECISION-MAKING POSITIONS AND ARE PAID RELATIVELY WELL.</p> <p>PEOPLE OF COLOR IN CLERICAL AND SERVICE POSITIONS THAT ARE PAID WELL.</p> <p>FEW IF ANY BENEFITS FOR BOTTOM.</p> <p>PEOPLE AT THE BOTTOM HAVE VERY LITTLE POWER.</p>	<p>PEOPLE OF COLOR AND WHITE PEOPLE ARE IN DECISION-MAKING POSITIONS THAT ARE COMPARABLE (SOME PAID WELL AND SOME NOT).</p> <p>CLERICAL AND SERVICE POSITIONS REFLECT SOME DIVERSITY IN RACE AND ETHNICITY AND ARE PROVIDED AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY TO POSITIONS OF MORE POWER (IF ANY).</p> <p>CONVICTIONS IN WHITE SPACES ON STAFF AND BOARD ARE RARE.</p>

	<p>TOLERANCE OF A LIMITED NUMBER OF PEOPLE OF COLOR WITH "WHITE" IDENTITIES AND ORIENTATIONS.</p> <p>LETTER IF ANY LEADERSHIP OR STAFF DEVELOPMENT NO DISCUSSION OF POWER ANALYSIS OR OPPRESSION (BIAS).</p> <p>PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN THAT HAVE OTHER IDENTIFICATIONS ARE CONSIDERED WELCOMED.</p>	<p>CAREER AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES ARE LIMITED TO PEOPLE OF COLOR, ESPECIALLY IF THEIR WORK STYLE DIFFERS FROM THAT OF WHITE PEOPLE AND THEIR CULTURE.</p> <p>TRAINING TO IMPROVE SKILLS IS SUPERFICIAL AND SUPERFICIAL.</p> <p>PEOPLE EXPECTED TO BE MORE SUPPORTIVE OF SUPERIOR LEADERSHIP LEVELS (SUPERVISORS).</p> <p>DEAR THOUGHTS OF PEOPLE OF COLOR.</p> <p>DIVERSITY TRAINING FOR STAFF, BOARD AND VOLUNTEERS INCLUDES ON REDUCING PREJUDICE, BUT UNCOMFORTABLE WHITE RACE.</p>	<p>ORGANIZATION ACTIVELY RECRUIT AND HIRE PEOPLE OF COLOR.</p> <p>RESOURCES DEVOTED TO DEVELOPING BOARD GOALS, TRAINING AND TRAINING SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE (SUPERVISORS).</p> <p>THERE IS A BOARD AND STAFF ANALYSIS OF RACE AND RACE AND WHITE STAFF, BOARD AND VOLUNTEERS.</p>
PROGRAMS, PRODUCTS, SERVICES	<p>PROGRAMS ESSENTIALLY MAINTAIN WHITE PRACTICE AND PRACTICE.</p> <p>PEOPLE OF COLOR NEED ARE NOT COVERED WHEN DESIGNING PROGRAMS.</p> <p>PROGRAMS REFLECT A PREDOMINANTLY WHITE CULTURE.</p> <p>PROGRAMS OFFERED THROUGH BY NEW RACE IS ACCOMMODATED THROUGH THIS (PRACTICE).</p>	<p>PROGRAMS OFFERED THROUGH BY NEW RACE IS ACCOMMODATED THROUGH THIS (PRACTICE).</p> <p>PROGRAMS OFFERED THROUGH BY NEW RACE IS ACCOMMODATED THROUGH THIS (PRACTICE).</p> <p>PROGRAMS OFFERED THROUGH BY NEW RACE IS ACCOMMODATED THROUGH THIS (PRACTICE).</p> <p>PROGRAMS OFFERED THROUGH BY NEW RACE IS ACCOMMODATED THROUGH THIS (PRACTICE).</p>	<p>PROGRAMS DEMONSTRATE AN UNDERSTANDING THAT RACE AND OTHER SOCIAL IDENTIFICATIONS CREATE BARRIERS TO INCLUSIVITY.</p> <p>PROGRAMS PROVIDED TO ALL PEOPLE RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEOPLE OF COLOR IN ORDER TO ADDRESS BARRIERS TO MEET THEIR NEEDS.</p> <p>SUBSIDIZED AFFIRMATIVE TRAINING IS THAT AN ANALYSIS OF FACTORS BARRIERS TO BE RECOGNIZED SPECIAL PROGRAMS.</p> <p>PROGRAMS OFFERED THROUGH BY NEW RACE IS ACCOMMODATED THROUGH THIS (PRACTICE).</p>

CONSTITUENCY	<p>CONSTITUENTS INCLUDE VERY FEW PEOPLE WITH HIGH SKILLS OF PEOPLE OF COLOR (IF ANY).</p> <p>CONSTITUENTS HAVE TO BEAL DESIGN-MAKING POWER.</p> <p>FUNDING COMES FROM A LIMITED NUMBER OF SOURCES, OFFER HEAVY FUNDATION OF A SMALL NUMBER OF VERY LARGE DONORS.</p> <p>MEMBERSHIP IS LIMITED TO A SMALL NUMBER OF WEALTHY OR MIDDLE-CLASS COLLEGE EDUCATED WHITE DONORS WHO MAKE LARGE CONTRIBUTIONS.</p> <p>ACCOUNTABLE TO A FEW WHITE PEOPLE ON BOARD OR STAFF.</p>	<p>CONSTITUENTS INCLUDE MORE PEOPLE AND PEOPLE OF COLOR WHO DON'T HAVE HIGH SKILLS.</p> <p>CONSTITUENTS HAVE A STRONG ABILITY TO PARTICIPATE IN DECISION-MAKING.</p> <p>FUNDING DEPENDENT ON BROADER RANGE OF INDIVIDUALS AND WEALTHY OR MIDDLE-CLASS COLLEGE EDUCATED WHITE DONORS.</p> <p>WHILE ACCOUNTABILITY CONTINUES TO BE EXERCISED BY WEALTHY DONORS, THE BOARD AND STAFF ARE HEAVY INVESTED IN AN ACCOUNTABILITY FROM OTHER CONSTITUENTS.</p>	<p>CONSTITUENTS INCLUDE INCREASING DIVERSITY FROM THE RACE OF CONSTITUENTS TARGETED BY MISSION.</p> <p>CONSTITUENTS DEVELOPING TO PARTICIPATE IN MEANS OF DECISION-MAKING.</p> <p>FUNDING DEPENDENT ON BROADER RANGE AND BROADER RANGE OF SOURCES IN TERMS OF WEALTH, INCOME, EDUCATION, SEX AND PROFESSION (ETHNICITY INCLUDES).</p> <p>BOARD IS HEAVY INVESTED IN ACCOUNTABILITY TO RACE AND ETHNICITY CONSTITUENTS.</p> <p>CHANGING ACCOUNTABILITY TO STAFF AND BOARD, WITH HIGH ATTEMPTS TO REPORT TO THOSE TARGETED BY MISSION.</p>
ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE	<p>NOY STILL SIGNIFICANT LIMIT ON EXCELLENCE OF PEOPLE OF COLOR IN CONTRIBUTION TO VISIBLE COLLECTIVE.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE ESSENTIALLY MAINTAIN WHITE PRACTICE AND PRACTICE.</p> <p>DECISION-MAKING MADE BY FEW WHITE PEOPLE (STAFF WHO).</p> <p>DECISION-MAKING MADE IN PRIVATE BY FEW WHITE PEOPLE CAN'T SEE OR HEAR FROM.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE IS HIERARCHICAL AND BUREAUCRATIC.</p> <p>BOARD DEVELOPING, CONTROLLED, AND CONTROLLED BY FEW OR FEW WHITE PEOPLE (STAFF WHO).</p> <p>CONSTITUENTS AWARE OF ALL COSTS.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE IS INCLUSIVE WITH ONLY A FEW PEOPLE WHO KNOW HOW THINGS GET DONE.</p>	<p>BOARD OFFICIAL POLICY REINFORCEMENTS REINFORCE ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY.</p> <p>A BARRIER FOR INCLUSIVITY IS EXISTED IN ORGANIZATIONAL AND CULTURAL CHANGES IN POLICY AND DECISION-MAKING.</p> <p>FEWER REINFORCEMENTS OF PEOPLE OF COLOR TO PARTICIPATE IN DECISION-MAKING, BUT REPRESENTATIVE DECISIONS CONTINUE TO BE MADE MOSTLY BY WHITE PEOPLE.</p> <p>DECISIONS ARE MADE IN PRIVATE, AND OFFER IN DECISION-MAKING.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE CONTINUES TO BE HIERARCHICAL.</p> <p>THE NUMBER OF ORGANIZATIONAL CONTROLLERS AND CONTRIBUTORS IS GROWING (OR THAT) WITH MORE PEOPLE.</p>	<p>ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE CELEBRATE DIVERSITY.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE REINFORCE COMMITMENT TO ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES AND REINFORCE ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE CONTINUES TO BE HIERARCHICAL, BUT WITH GREATER POWER SHARED AND COLLABORATION.</p> <p>ACTIVITY IS DEVELOPED AND UNDERSTOOD BY STAFF AND BOARD.</p>

	<p>LETTER IF ANY ACTIVATION AND TO PROCEED, OR NEW WHITE PEOPLE COME.</p>	<p>CONTACT HAS INCREASED, INTENSIFIED AND IMPROVED ON THESE (STAFF AND BOARD) ARE THE MOST.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE CONTINUES TO BE RESTRUCTURED BY INCLUDING MEMBERS OF PEOPLE OF COLOR AND WHITE PEOPLE COME.</p> <p>TASKS IN PRIVATE ACTING THROUGH (STAFF AND BOARD) AND NOT OF (STAFF AND BOARD) ARE VISIBLE, MOST VISIBLE AND FEW WHITE PEOPLE CAN'T SEE OR HEAR FROM (STAFF AND BOARD).</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE IS HIERARCHICAL AND BUREAUCRATIC.</p>	<p>WILLINGNESS TO MAKE FACTS AND ADDRESS CONFLICT.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE CONTINUES TO BE RESTRUCTURED BY INCLUDING MEMBERS OF PEOPLE OF COLOR.</p> <p>A DIVERSITY OF WHITE PEOPLE INVOLVED WITH ACTIVE PARTICIPATION ABOUT ALL ABOUT WHAT DOES OUR WHITE PEOPLE GET DONE.</p>
MISSION, PURPOSE, IDENTITY	<p>OTHER DECLARES "WE DON'T HAVE A PROBLEM."</p> <p>LEADERS ASSUME "WE ARE ALL THE SAME."</p> <p>LOCATED IN A WHITE COMMUNITY.</p> <p>PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT REFLECTS WHITE CULTURAL NORMS.</p> <p>PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT DOES NOT INCLUDE RACE CONSCIOUSNESS.</p> <p>BY LAWS POLICE OF ADHERENCE TO LAWS AND ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICES THAT ARE TO PROTECT THE INSTITUTION FROM LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE PENALTIES, CRIMINAL, OR OTHER (STAFF) MEMBERS.</p> <p>INSTITUTION OPERATES OUT OF A NEIGHBORHOOD THAT INCLUDES COMPETITIVE ENTREPRENEURS, VARIETY OF BUSINESS, RECREATION, AND OTHER (STAFF) MEMBERS.</p>	<p>SEE FIRSTLY A "WELFARE" PROVISION WITH OTHER (STAFF AND BOARD).</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE CONTINUES TO BE RESTRUCTURED BY INCLUDING MEMBERS OF PEOPLE OF COLOR AND WHITE PEOPLE COME.</p> <p>WAS LOCATED IN A WHITE COMMUNITY WITH BOARD, BUT COMMUNITY AROUND IT WAS WHITE CHANGING.</p> <p>PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT DOES NOT REFLECT SOME CULTURAL IDENTITY.</p> <p>IT IS STILL RELATIVELY CHANGE OF CONTINUING HISTORY OF RACIAL, ETHNICITY AND CULTURAL IDENTITY DOCUMENTS AND BY LAWS REMAIN ON BOARD.</p> <p>THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE INSTITUTION IS CHALLENGED BY OTHER MEMBERS OF PEOPLE OF COLOR EXISTING THE INSTITUTION.</p>	<p>DEVELOPS IDENTITY AS AN "ANTIRACIST" INSTITUTION.</p> <p>CHANGING ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND OTHER SOCIAL IDENTIFICATION AS BARRIERS TO INCLUSIVE IDENTITY.</p> <p>LOCATION IS ACCESSIBLE TO PEOPLE OF COLOR.</p> <p>PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT REFLECTS A COMMITMENT TO CULTURAL IDENTITY AND ACTIVELY.</p> <p>DEVELOPS ANALYSIS OF SYSTEMIC BARRIERS.</p> <p>NEW CONSCIOUSNESS OF INSTITUTIONALIZED WHITE POWER AND PRIVILEGE.</p> <p>IDENTITY DOCUMENTS ARE WRITTEN TO REFLECT A COMMITMENT TO CULTURAL IDENTITY AND ACTIVELY.</p> <p>BY LAWS DEVISED TO FOCUS ON HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS AND (STAFF) MEMBERS.</p> <p>THE INSTITUTION MOVES TO MEET TOWARD A WIDER RANGING OF COLLABORATION AND COOPERATION, REINFORCEMENT, TRANSPARENCY AND BROADEN TRAINING.</p>

Continuum Team Report

Draft 1/12/20

Members: Denise Anderson, Mary Ellen Azada, Adam Fronczek, Carla Pratt Keyes, Angela Williams

Continuum Team Notes

Overall - 3.25

The Continuum Explained

The Crossroads tool, "Continuum on Becoming an Antiracist Multicultural Institution," provides a basis for locating an organization's progress through six typical stages of being:

1. Exclusive, A Segregated Institution
2. Passive, A "Club" Institution
3. Symbolic Change, A Multicultural Institution
4. Identity Change, An Antiracist Institution
5. Structural Change, A transforming Institution

6. Fully Inclusive, A Transformed Institution in a Transformed Society.

Using the Continuum and the Crossroads' Institutional Assessment Tool (which describes aspects of the continuum in greater detail) a "Continuum Team" subgroup of the Audit Team evaluated NEXT Church according to its personnel; programs, products and services; constituency; organizational structure, and mission and purpose. The Continuum Team gave NEXT an overall score of 3.25 - indicating that NEXT is a multicultural Institution that often "performs" as and occasionally acts as an antiracist institution.

According to the continuum, an institution at the level of "symbolic change" makes official policy pronouncements regarding multicultural diversity, sees itself as an institution open to People of Color, expands its view of what diversity means, and even carries out inclusiveness efforts, but has made few changes in its culture, policies, and decision-making to interrupt patterns of privilege, paternalism, and control. Even as NEXT is growing in its understanding of the impacts of racism and sponsoring programs to challenge racism, whiteness continues to drive NEXT's practices and ways of being.

According to Crossroads, 3 is the least stable position on the continuum. The power of whiteness pulls NEXT backwards, toward 2 - a passive "club" institution. The vision, programming, and efforts of NEXT's leadership, especially in response to people of color, pull NEXT toward 4 - an antiracist institution that has undergone an identity change - though in truth, NEXT's efforts have often been performative, seeking representation and diversity of optics, rather than fundamental change in who NEXT is and what NEXT does. NEXT's ability to incorporate interventions will determine if NEXT moves toward the transformative 4 stage or settles back toward the comfort of the 2 stage.

In developing this report, the continuum team noted multiple places that did not receive as much attention and analysis in our work, including the Sarasota Statement and the NEXT Church blog. We also note that there are a number of data points missing in this report that are outside of the scope of this audit team but should be addressed by the Strategy Team. This reflects the pattern of opacity.

Personnel - 3+

Rationale

- NEXT has made intentional efforts to include People of Color in leadership, shifts that pull NEXT toward a 4 on the continuum.
 - The Strategy Team (primary leadership board) is now 50% People of Color.
 - Plenary speakers and worship leaders at the last two National Gatherings included many People of Color. This seems well-balanced.
- At the time of this assessment, paid staff of NEXT Church were all white: a full-time Director, a part-time Communications Specialist, a part-time National Gathering Coordinator, and a part-time Relationship Developer. This pulled NEXT toward a 2 on the continuum. Since then, NEXT has employed a part-time interim Director and a part-time interim Communications Specialist who are women of color. While there has been some progress in this regard, there is still disproportionate investment in, and influence of, white people on the staff of NEXT.

- Where People of Color contribute in a significant, designated way to the leadership of NEXT, an additional honorarium is often offered. (25% equity increase for people of color)
- The following questions were raised:
 - Is NEXT an organization in which People of Color can thrive on staff?
 - In hiring processes, is enough time given for People of Color to apply?
 - Are the compensation and benefits offered competitive and sufficient for People of Color to meet their needs?
 - In National Gatherings, are People of Color doing work that mostly benefits white people?
 - In what contexts do NEXT leaders work: in predominantly white institutions, People of Color institutions, or multi-ethnic institutions?
 - Are the People of Color in NEXT too “left” for their own cultural contexts? Is it easier for them to exist in white spaces?

Programs, Products, Services - 3

Rationale

- The National Gathering is a big piece of this equation. Its content has shifted significantly toward the work of antiracism in the last several years. This pulls NEXT toward a 4 on the continuum. That said, attendees/beneficiaries are still predominantly white, which pulls NEXT toward a 2.
- The Community Organizing Training has been a partnership of NEXT with Johnson C. Smith Seminary and the Industrial Areas Foundation. In 2019 issues around race in IAF presentations were called out by People of Color and others. In the moment, NEXT worked to engage the critique and has since put this training on hold to reassess the content and evaluate NEXT’s relationship with IAF. This demonstration of commitment to anti-racism and willingness to change pulls NEXT toward a 5 on the continuum ... yet, the people who attended the 2019 training were hurt, and NEXT’s failure to set expectations for anti-racist work pulls NEXT back toward a 2.
- NEXT’s work on Cultivated Ministry provides content resonant with a 4 on the continuum. It challenges business as usual and does not use white supremacist measures of success. People of Color are providing the most significant leadership of NEXT’s Cultivated Ministry initiatives.
 - Is NEXT using these metrics in evaluating their own work? Why or why not?
- Coaching Cohort - The continuum team did little research on this effort of NEXT, but observed that of all the coaches, only 2 or 3 are People of Color.
 - How were coaches recruited? Why are there so few People of Color coaches?
 - How many People of Color participate in coaching supported by NEXT Church?
 - What does it reveal about the model and program that it disproportionately attracts white people?
- Holy Land Pilgrimage - In the website pictures, the continuum saw white leaders and mostly white participants, yet throughout the pilgrimage, Palestinian leaders and teachers were engaged, and understanding the oppression of Palestinians was part of

the goal. This pilgrimage came about when a tall steeple white pastor approached NEXT with the energy to make a pilgrimage happen. This is often how things happen with NEXT: someone (often a white person) who has a dream or vision brings it to the table. If they provide the money or do the work, and if NEXT has the bandwidth to support it, it happens. Questions this raises:

- If NEXT were really an anti-racist, anti-oppression organization, would NEXT say yes to everything that comes NEXT's way? Or would NEXT have a more strategic approach, based in antiracist principles? NEXT should be asking who benefits? How does it benefit? Who is harmed? How does it harm? Maybe this will mean fewer offerings.
- In what ways is NEXT a movement/space/organization willing to risk on the ideas of well positioned white leaders? What impact does this have on People of Color? What message does it send to communities of color? How does NEXT default into ways of being and thinking that extend white control? In which ways is NEXT ill-equipped to be a space People of Color leaders can count on for support and investment?
- Leadership Trainings - Trent and Elder Symposia. These good programs attract mostly well-resourced people/congregations. Mostly white people benefit.
- Blog - At the time of this survey, the blog had mostly white contributors. Since then, the blog has diversified significantly.
- Sarasota Statement - See <https://nextchurch.net/the-sarasota-statement/sarasota-statement-text/> - much to commend and critique here. The continuum team did not discuss this or see the 2020 prologue.
- As in the PCUSA at large, mostly white people benefit from the programs, products, and services provided by NEXT Church.

Constituency - 2.75

Rationale

- The "Constituency" rating explores the funding, in kind contributions, and the demographic makeup of the leadership and participants/audience of NEXT Church.
- NEXT is supported financially by:
 - 125 congregations who give a total of \$110,000
 - 120 individuals who give a total of \$45,000
 - National Gathering revenues that contribute \$20,000
 - A deeper dive into one recent year, 2018, shows that:
 - The top 10 congregations (tall steeple) giving were \$80,000, (61% of total congregational contributions)
 - 126 Individuals contributed, for 15% of NEXT income. Of the top 20 gifts, 19 were from white people.

- 68 congregations contributed. 4 of those congregations were predominantly People of Color, for 2% of total income from congregations.
 - 8% of contributions came from denominational sources - the Presbyterian Mission Agency, the Presbyterian Foundation, and the Board of Pensions.
- NEXT Church has done less work to understand how we measure in-kind giving. How do we measure the time, energy, resources that People of Color give to NEXT?
 - We haven't measured this, indicating that we don't know it and we don't value it.
 - One strategy might be asking People of Color to measure their contributions in hours/connections/etc. This strategy still lives in a capitalist framework, and may not mesh with ways People of Color value/measure time and resources.
 - Perhaps Cultivated Ministry measures could help us find an entirely new way of valuing in kind contributions.
- Comments on the Rationale ranking:
 - Historically NEXT has focused on where financial support comes from, which would rank us at (2)
 - When we take into account People of Color in-kind giving, we might move closer to (3) or (4)
- NEXT has been more intentional about diversifying leadership than audience/participants, noting:
 - The main audience for NEXT is PCUSA, which is 90% white
 - It is unclear to whom NEXT is accountable.
 - [Several years ago, the Strategy Team committed to a membership made up of 50% People of Color.](#) This was not a response to PCUSA guidance, but to changing demographics in the United States, and a hope for the church to reflect that diversity.

Organizational Structure - 3.5 with room for improvement

Rationale

- NEXT Church's leadership structure came from the Industrial Areas Foundation. The intent is to be different from other organizational structures, but the impact has made leadership structures and processes opaque. NEXT has an egalitarian leadership style and structure, which performs equality and diversity, but does not mean it is actually an equitable, inclusive, or antiracist institution. NEXT Church has intentionally worked toward transparency in recent years around who is in leadership and how someone becomes a leader with NEXT. However, the egalitarian structure is not clear and becomes a barrier to involvement for all but those who are in the inner circle. This demonstrates a value of efficiency, which leads to a lack of transparency, and is perceived as secrecy.
- NEXT Church claims to be open, transparent, and a place full of possibility for innovative ministry. The organizational structure of lean staff, Strategy Team, and Advisory Team performs

openness to new ideas, new people, and new leadership. However, this structure benefits white people more than people of color. When white people with an idea, energy, and resources raise their hands, their ideas can become programs or initiatives of NEXT. People of color do not have the same experience of NEXT Church.

- NEXT Church has invested in developing statements demonstrating commitments to antiracist values and theologies, but NEXT Church has not demonstrated that these statements translate into substantive action toward antiracism or change within the organization in response to these statements. This demonstrates a commitment to symbolism and representation as a performance, not necessarily a commitment to dismantling white supremacy.
- Lingering Questions
 - NEXT is good at putting out statements, but what real change do we see?
 - Decision-making feels unclear, only a small group of people really know what all is happening, where is room for accountability? When would People of Color and antiracist white people have time/space to raise concerns?
 - If we were really an anti-racist, anti-oppression organization, would we say yes to everything that comes to us? Or would we have a more strategic approach?
 - One of the first questions - who benefits? How does it benefit? Who is harmed? How does it harm?
 - How do we become a place where People of Color want to bring their good ideas? While also avoiding white supremacist pitfalls of taking the lead/control? How to support/equip?
 - In response to PNC presence at NG: What message is getting out? Commitment to diversity? Or this is the group to turn around the dying denomination?

Mission and Purpose - 4

MISSION STATEMENT

NEXT Church is a purposeful relational community of Presbyterian leaders whose mission is to strengthen a vibrant and thriving PC(USA) that shares the good news of Jesus Christ in ways that matter to and have impact on God's evolving world.

VISION STATEMENT

We believe God is always calling the church into the future. NEXT Church seeks to follow God by strengthening the relational fabric of the Presbyterian Church (USA). We do this by cultivating congregations and leaders who work in sustained, effective, and faithful ways to promote God's transformation of our communities for the common good.

Rationale

- This seems to be a place where NEXT has made some of the best progress. Leaning toward 4, our mission and purpose has shifted in the years since the above statements were written (2015/2016). Today there is relatively more transparency. People know they will hear about race when they attend our National Gathering. Worship feels more

like home to People of Color. People of Color might see themselves in the space, which has not always been the case. Consciousness of white supremacy in NEXT's culture is new, but it is happening. The institution has begun to shift toward a worldview of collaboration and cooperation and cooperation, abundance, transparency and both/and thinking.

- Core leadership of NEXT is taking on this work and not shying away from it. Many of the above observations are true in leadership, but the audit team is more uncertain about audience/participants. Strategy Team members are taking on the work; people aren't too resistant. The Strategy Team wants to go farther along, but is happy to be still together and still moving?
- The Audit Team has identified a need to update identity documents and bylaws, which has not happened since 2015/2016. This will help to incorporate anti-racism work more explicitly into NEXT's public and internal communications, and will increase transparency.
- A number of identified questions and observations may lead NEXT toward intervention strategies coming out of the audit:
 - Are there any pockets in NEXT where there is pushback to this work? Resistance? Withdrawal?
 - What are ways to not just preach to the choir? What could NEXT leadership say that would get pushback?
 - White people in leadership need to take responsibility for the conversations around pushback, don't make this the burden of People of Color
 - Numbers at the National Gathering aren't changing, but more people are there for the first time. Why?
 - Survey - people who aren't coming anymore, why? Because they know they will hear about race and don't want to? Because it's super white? Would you come again? Why/why not?
 - If NEXT stays with all white paid personnel, this keeps us from being a (4)
 - In a perfect world, if we could pay all the people who could be getting paid, would feel closer to 4

Patterns

1. An analysis of NEXT Church's culture and structure reveals an organization shaped by an unexamined capitalist ideology that has co-opted our imagination and results in a commodification of both NEXT programs and BIPOC, in service of the illusion that NEXT is a more just and equitable organization than it is in reality.
2. An analysis of NEXT Church's culture and structure reveals an organization created by white people and for white people which results in ways of being that disproportionately benefit white people leading them to feel at home in ways BIPOC do not.
3. An analysis of NEXT Church's culture and structure reveals an organization where the values of white supremacy undergird its culture, organizational structure, and programs -- often in ways

Af Am	55	7%	55	18%	54	17%	34	10%	1.59	3.18
Ar Am	0	0	0	0%	Not Available		0			
As Am	20	2%	20	7%	10	3%	21	7%	1.00	2.00
Latnx	11	1%	11	4%	29	9%	7	2%	4.1	8.2
Na Am	4	0%	4	1%	Not Available		1	<1%	4.00	8
Wh Am	740	90%	200	67%	210	67%	252	79%	.79	.39
Biracial/Multiracial	10	1%	10	3%	9	3%	2	1%	4.5	9
TOTAL	821	100%	300	100%			317	100%		

- 12 demographic surveys contained no useful race data, not included in analysis.

Our racial identification is abbreviated in the far-left column: African American, Arab American, Asian American, Latinx, Native American, White American, and Biracial/Multiracial American. The top row shows the data collected from the Wave 1 micro survey, the proportions for the intended stratified sample frame for Wave 2, the estimate of a particular racial identification in the **potential** population, the data collected from Wave 2, the weighting factor for Wave 2 based on the statistical proportion, and the amplified weighting after analyzing the weighted data collected for Wave 2.

We used two levels of weighting for this data. The first level, shown in the second column from the right (teal column labeled “statistical weighting factor”), was proportionally represented in the Wave 1 micro survey. However, after analyzing this weighted data, we noticed that there was still a disparity of the numbers of Peoples of Color. We decided to further weight the data for both Peoples of Color and White people; we explain our reasoning for this further below.

It is important for us to discuss the limitations of our data and how we have addressed them. One key limitation in our data is in the collection of the Wave 1 micro survey data. Our goal for the Wave 1 micro survey was to draw racial demographics and emails of the NEXT Church population so that we could use that information for a randomized list that was stratified by racial identity for the Wave 2 survey. The plan for Wave 2 was to use stratified sampling to select a statistically appropriate number of surveys from each racial identity group. Because error was made in Wave 1 data collection, no emails were collected, which did not allow for Wave 2 to have a randomized stratified group. The data we’ve collected, while descriptive, does not have the rigorous level of randomization that we would like it to.

A key objective in the survey methodology was to amplify the voices of BIPOC for NEXT Church constituency as accurately as possible. The results of this Race Equity Audit are weighted for both White people and BIPOC. The American Association for Public Opinion Research writes, “Weight can be used to . . . make adjustments after data are collected to bring certain features of the sample into line with other known characteristics of the population.” [1] Since a majority of the respondents for these surveys are White people [2], the data has been weighted in a way to reduce the data of White people responding and uplift the data from BIPOC responding. We are intentional in our use of weighting data, as we recognize that, for generations, the voices and responses of BIPOC have been and are often suppressed and overshadowed by White people’s voices and responses. Even as we weight this data for this audit, this does not account for the generations of genocide, exclusion, enslavement, and other systemic injustices that have attempted to silence BIPOC. Rather than “waiting” for racial equity in our institutions, Crossroads is committed to proactively “weighting” the data, and pushing back against the power dynamic of traditional, unweighted sampling.

Another limitation in weighting our data is the lack of data and information available on the racial distribution of Arab Americans and Native Americans in the potential population. In both Wave 1 and Wave 2, none of the respondents identified as Arab American. There were four responses of individuals who identified as Native American, but there is limited data on the population of Native Americans living in the United States.

[1] American Association for Public Opinion Research. (2020).

<https://www.aapor.org/Education-Resources/For-Researchers/Poll-Survey-FAQ/Weighting.aspx>

[2] As noted previously, about 2500 constituents, or 42%, of NEXT Church’s constituency, are active email responders, and the proportion of BIPOC is relatively small.