

Five-Fold Multi-Dimensional Test

Reformed Church in America (RCA)
Pressing Forward into Our Multiracial Future Freed from Racism

The RCA is a fellowship of congregations called by God and empowered by the Holy Spirit to be the very presence of Jesus Christ in the world. Our shared task is to equip congregations for ministry--a thousand churches in a million ways doing one thing--following Christ in mission in a lost and broken world so loved by God. This mission sources our shared efforts towards what we call "OUR CALL" - church multiplication and congregational revitalization grounded by discipleship, leadership, and mission. OUR CALL unavoidably draws us towards living in this time and world the vision of Revelations 7:9 (*every tribe and tongue worshipping and serving God together*). Through OUR CALL, the RCA presses forward into its multiracial future freed from racism. The Five-Fold Test will help us get there.

Ours is a missional motivation –maturing the body of Christ for its work of discipleship and justice, evangelism and mercy. We seek to grow into the entirety of this mission in all the places in which we live, work, and worship. The population diversity of the United States and Canada is broad. The world is at our doorsteps. For Christ's Kingdom's sake, we must address unique mission opportunities with and among diverse populations.

We are likewise motivated by our commitment to the unity of Christ's Church. Sin sustains strife among races, ethnicities, cultures, languages, and genders, all of which are gifts God gives humanity. But, Christ, through his death and resurrection, overwhelms sin and is reconciling the world to himself. His Coming Kingdom will transcend all efforts which divide. Therefore, the Church on earth is richer and stronger when it lives now in the light of that future reality.

The RCA has made significant strides towards its multi-racial future. However, we believe that multi-racial/ethnic ministry has multi-dimensional implications. Unless we engage this dimensionality with wisdom and resolve, the RCA cannot expect to fare differently than other groups that have had similar intent, only to pull back. This five-fold test, therefore, empowers us to move forward on multiple fronts.

1. **Population: How is the RCA – congregationally and consistorially, classically, regionally, denominationally - reaching and enfolding increasing numbers of people among diverse racial and ethnic populations?**

Target #1.1 – To develop a strategy for measuring diversity in the RCA. (17)

- A. Establish a challenging target for the number of multi-racial congregations by 2013. (13)
- B. Establish a challenging target for the number of predominately people of color congregations by 2013. (13)

Target #1.2 – To develop multiple cultural competency and anti-racism training programs.

- A. Deliver these programs through classes for pastors and elders by 2010. (14)
- B. Deliver these programs to all church planters, seminarians and MFCA participants by 2010. (15)

Target #1.3 – To develop a guide and promote its use that assists congregations, etc. explore Biblical and theological grounds and potentials for their engagement in a multiracial future freed from racism. (13)

Target #1.4 – To use an expanding set of effective communication methods that reach people in their own languages. (10)

Target #1.5 – To assist congregations to annually increase their knowledge of the people groups and social dynamics in their geographic ministry areas, and to increase their capacities for engaging those groups and dynamics. (8)

2. **Participation: How effectively are we intentionally looking for ways to engage life together through congregational and consistorial, classical, regional, and denominational events, as well as with others outside the RCA?**

Target #2.1 – To create a tool usable at all levels and occasions of denominational life that assesses racial/ethnic inclusivity. (21)

Target #2.2 – To assist congregations to create and do a wide range of multi-racial/cultural events. (15)

Target #2.3 – To reform all aspects of how meetings are managed so that the participation of people of color is increased in ways that their voices are more fully heard and welcomed. (12)

Target #2.4 – To increase the knowledge and empathy of Whites for the experiences of people of color through cross cultural experiences. (11)

Target #2.5 – To incorporate the “sights and sounds” representative of the world-wide church into the RCA’s collective life (including, but not limited to, during Pentecost and world wide communion Sunday), and to share that incorporation with the world-wide church. (8)

3. Power: Are the positions and structures of leadership (boards, commissions, committees, and positions at the congregational and consistorial, classical, regional, or denominational levels) influenced by the perspectives and gifts of diverse racial and ethnic populations? Specifically, how can we improve our preparations and performances at these leadership levels?

Target #3.1 – To ensure a minimum of 25% of the moderators of General Synod commissions and advisory committees are people of color. (18)

Target #3.2 – To institute a denominational dialogue that facilitates conversation regarding the Biblical view of power (15)

Target #3.3 – To rethink and institutionalize how we affirm and prepare for people for ministry to reflect current denominational and societal ministry needs. (13)

Target #3.4 – To actively promote the person and work of the Holy Spirit, including God’s intentions and power to transcend racial barriers and enliven deep relationships with God. (10)

Target #3.5 – To increasingly identify and institutionalize work cultures and methods of racial/ethnic groups into the life and ministry of the RCA. (8)

4. Pace-Setting: Having been informed by additional perspectives, burdens, and gifts that our racial and ethnic diversity bring to us, what new mission opportunities is the RCA now better positioned to strengthen and initiate?

Target #4.1 – To rebrand the public image of the RCA and use it in new ways to reach the unchurched, de-churched, youth, racial-ethnic people, and emerging leaders. (25)

Target #4.2 – To increase the RCA’s ability to plant churches among diverse people. (16)

Target #4.3 – To increase private and faith-based initiative opportunities to promote and provide renewed urban ministries. (14)

Target #4.4 – To encourage the transformation of individuals, churches, and neighborhoods through cross cultural engagements, learning, and ministry. (12)

Target #4.5 – To encourage classes to develop teams focused on multiracial issues. (8)

5. Purposeful Narrative: In what ways do we honor our various cultures and traditions? How do the stories of new backgrounds become incorporated into our overarching RCA history? How do all of these streams flow together into one story moving forward?

Target #5.1 – To incorporate storytelling, including stories from people of color, into the RCA’s culture at all meetings, through arts and literature, etc. (23)

Target #5.2 – To develop a denominational culture that uses internet and technology in viral ways to tell stories. (22)

Target #5.3 – To change in various ways how the RCA’s multiracial stories are told at General Synod (racial/ethnic council displays, videos, flags, annual rotation of racial/ethnic group stories, sharing foods, etc.). (20)

Target #5.4 – To direct the Commission on Church History to research and publish the hitherto untold stories of the RCA’s multi-racial history. (11)

While the RCA is uniquely positioned to press forward in multiracial/ethnic ministry, we must remember that our movement, ultimately, is not solely about structure and mechanics. It is only as we relate to one another as sisters and brothers in Christ, spiritually earnest in our desires, and continually dependent on the Holy Spirit to be shaped as the family of God, that we have hope. When we engage each other at such high standards as that, we will emerge to our best future as we truly engage life and service together in Christ.