

From “Us” And “Them”—To “One In Christ”

“What makes me uneasy about diversity,” the white churchwoman said, “is that people of color seem so sure of who they are. Meanwhile, I feel that by contrast I haven’t kept up my heritage. It’s rather overwhelming.”

Does her sense of “us” and “them” resonate with you and your congregation?

Do you often hear “us” and “them” language? Do people talk about “them” as those who might mess up or misuse the building? Does language of “them” cast an aura of “less than us”? If you share a building with another congregational group, does “us” and “them” keep the groups apart? What will it take to move toward “One in Christ” language?

It is true that many people of color in the United States have had to become more familiar with white culture, since the history and structures of our country are based on white norms. And many white persons haven’t had to learn about people of color, unless their professional work, family, interest or faith led them in that direction. Yet in the faith, we all have roles to play in the journey toward authentic multicultural community. This resource was designed to help us get a handle on some knowledge, skills and tools for living in a community of “one in Christ.”

If you shared the history of your congregation and your vision in “Celebrating Our Past” in the Awareness section, go a little deeper now. Examine who you are and articulate the meaning of “us.” Explore what it would mean to move to “One in Christ.”

If you did not do the earlier exercise, take extra time here. Exploring and affirming identity as a congregation is essential for the journey. How do you find out who you are and what your role is meant to be in this world abundant with diverse peoples? It’s important to know. It’s like being able to tell someone your name, when you begin to relate to one another.

Knowing your identity gives you a solid foundation for realizing what you want to keep, as well as what you may want to change. Learning about others/your neighbors will be discussed in other sections of this resource. For now, let’s concentrate on you and your congregation.

Continue to Comfort Zones



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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