

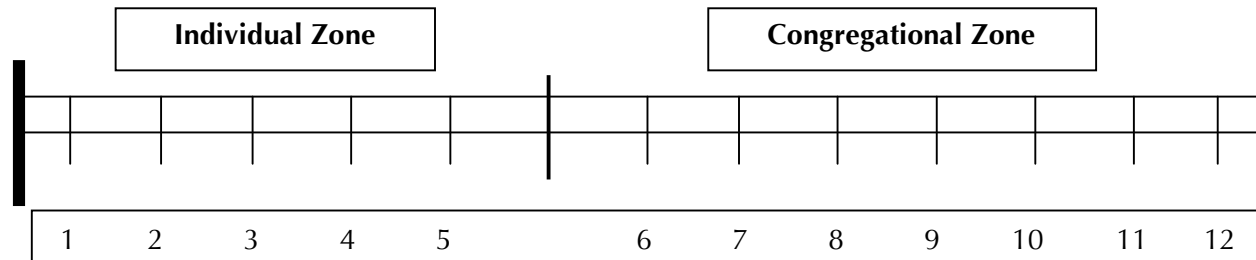
A Continuum of Multiracial/Multiethnic/Multicultural Congregational Living in the RCA

The Reformed Church in America envisions a multiracial future. This continuum is intended to help congregations think clearly about where they are and identify some next steps to take as they move towards their multiracial future.

For purposes of this continuum, the terms racial, ethnic, and cultural are used interchangeably.

When using the continuum, keep these critical considerations in mind:

1. There are two clear segments to the continuum: individuals and congregations.
2. Each segment has a beginning point (at which the person or congregation has little to no experience with multiracial living) and an ending point (at which a person outside the congregation could say, "This person/congregation really knows how to live multiracially!").
3. The points along each continuum segment should not be viewed as sequential. Congregations can select what they want to work on next.
4. After a congregation or its leaders identify a next step, they can chart their own strategy or program. Contact Earl James, coordinator of multiracial initiatives and social justice, for assistance with ideas and contacts for getting started, coaching, and evaluation.



Individual Zone Descriptions

Point 1: Little to no experience with other people groups.

Point 2: Gain information. Attend multiple conferences, workshops, readings, and study groups.

Point 3: Gain close personal relationships. Meet regularly with at least one person of another people group to share perspectives about each other's faith, race, and personal journeys.

Point 4: Gain engagements. Work on significant projects with people you have close personal relationships with from other people groups. This will allow you to engage cultural differences in identity, decision making, group orientations, spirituality, etc. in work settings, which will require making room for each other as coworkers in deep ways.

Point 5: Gain widespread reputation for trust and justice. People from other groups recognize you as reliably and validly sharing power and building trust.

Congregational Zone Descriptions

Point 6: Little to no experience with other people groups.

Point 7: Gain in mono-racial congregations. Mono-racial churches serve people by 1) allowing those who do not speak English well to worship God and engage with God and others fruitfully, 2) preserving history and culture, and 3) providing places for worship and life in situations where other people groups are not trusted to build trust and share control well. Mono-racial churches also are powerful environments for attracting many new people of color to the RCA.

Point 8: Gain in leadership symbols. Incorporate multiracial leadership in your congregation with copastors from different races who share preaching responsibilities, a multiracial choir or music, or multiracial ministry teams (including team leadership). Also events with other congregations can add value to work, worship, and life experiences.

Point 9: Gain in multiracial congregational living. A congregation honors people of at least three racial/ethnic groups in the church through the food they share, the holidays they celebrate, the languages they use, and their other cultural specifics in the average life of the church.

Point 10: Gain in reducing institutional and systemic racism. The congregation becomes more anti-racist institutionally and systemically. It also intentionally focuses on equipping its leaders of color to lead strategically and tactically in Reformed settings.

Point 11: Gain in leadership and governance assignments. The church becomes multiracial in its consistory, consistory leadership, and congregational representation at classis.

Point 12: Gain in widespread reputation for trust and justice. The congregation is known by people groups other than the dominant one for reliably and validly sharing power and building trust.

Additional Ideas about Using the Continuum

Contact Earl James, coordinator of multiracial initiatives and social justice, at (616) 698-7071 or ejames@rca.org for vision casting, suggestions, planning, implementation coaching, or evaluation.

1. **Gain information.** There often are a variety of opportunities available to assist individuals, groups, and congregations, including lectures, books, videos, conferences, etc.
2. **Gain close personal relationships.** Consider “The Breakfast Club,” a low-cost, year-long program where multiracial groups of people meet monthly in pairs around a meal to share about faith, race, and their personal life journeys. The founding organization, Chicago Urban Reconciliation Enterprise (or CURE), provides three to five questions each month to guide the conversations. Contact Earl James for additional information.
3. **Gain engagements.** Sometimes multiracial living is cemented by working in close proximity on a series of projects with people of other races and ethnic groups. Identify some projects of mutual interest, make joint contributions together, and learn about and from each other along the way.
4. **Gain in mono-racial congregations.** In *More Than Equals: Racial Healing for the Sake of the Gospel*, Spencer Perkins and Chris Rice introduce the “Admit-Submit-Commit” model, a highly practical experience about how to deeply learn, grow from, and incorporate into our everyday lives values and mores of other people groups.
5. **Gain in leadership symbols.** These symbols model for us how to submit to each other and value each other as ministry partners. Sharing facilities, pulpits, and choirs is often not enough to provide in-depth living and valuing of how God shapes and sustains members of other congregations as he does members of your own. A critical gain in this experience involves learning more about God as well as about other people he loves.
6. **Gain in multiracial congregational living.** Achievement of the specified markers is always intentional and is always done under the calls of Christ for salvation and reconciliation to God and to other humans. It has Revelation 7:9 in view.
7. **Gain in reducing institutional and systemic racism.** Take the hard and grace-filled walk of examining closely held practices, institutions, and ways that, while a blessing to one group, can sinfully exclude or diminish people of other

groups. It's very different from personal bias. Learn about how to open processes and systems so that all may participate as sisters and brothers rather than as senior partners and junior partners. This also equips people to lead and govern in assemblies, commissions, and other critical venues.

8. **Gain in leadership and governance assignments.** Until power and control are equitably and justly shared and all are well-equipped for their responsibilities to lead and manage, trust can easily be broken.