

Lutheran Volunteer Corps

Journey to an Inclusive Community Guide

June 2011

History:

1979 was 16 years after the famous March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, and 11 years after the assassination of its more famous leader, Martin Luther King Jr. Racism had not yet been defeated. It still infected America and poisoned the relationships of the hundreds of thousands of people living in Washington, DC as it does today. During the most active years of the US Civil Rights Movement the population of white residents of Washington, DC declined from 45.2% in 1960 to 26.9% in 1980. This shift in demographics also had an impact on the net wealth of the District of Columbia. As more and more African-Americans moved to DC in the hope of opportunity, white flight accompanied their arrival as was the case in many U. S. urban centers. This was the context in which LVC was born.

Luther Place Memorial Church, an Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) congregation, was a majority white congregation in the Northwest section of Washington DC with a longstanding concern for social causes. They created the ministry of LVC in 1979 in response to the church's strong sense of mission and its ministry of hospitality. In 1996 LVC, Luther Place and N Street Village, another social ministry planted by Luther Place, began conversations about the institutionalized nature of racism and oppression that are intricately woven into the fabric of our society. Despite their commitments to hospitality all three entities were discovering underlying barriers to broadening their collective communities. This led to LVC, N Street Village and Luther Place beginning a project called the "Journey to an Inclusive Community" (JIC) in 1998. The three groups utilized consultants (Crossroads Ministry and PASO Consulting) in a process of analysis and self-examination to create long-term strategies for change. Through this process it became clear that LVC needed to become an independent organization from Luther Place so LVC became its own 501c.03 non-profit in September 2003. Since then LVC has been more focused working on issues for our JIC commitment which are different from those of Luther Place and N Street Village.

LVC's JIC work has continued through trainings, program development and alliance building addressing racism, sexism, heterosexism and other institutionalized oppression. In LVC's early years, sexism was named as a critical issue. LVC's staff in the early years was all women and women were part of governing leadership, but the real power in LVC was held by men. LVC remains influenced by sexism as seen in the majority male board of directors, majority female staff headed by a man and the dynamics of volunteerism being more prominent among women than men. In 2000 LVC became a Reconciling in Christ (RIC) organization thus publicly affirming the full inclusion of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people in the life of the church, specifically in the Lutheran community. More work needs to be done to broaden our welcome and inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning people in LVC.

Over the years LVC has received anti-racism trainings from its previous consultants along with Lutheran Human Relations Association (LHRA) and the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond (PISAB). We are now in a contractual partnership with Crossroads Anti-Racism Training and Organizing (previously Crossroads Ministry) for continued training as well as consulting in our process of becoming a multicultural, anti-racist organization. The trainings have generated conversations throughout the LVC community, involving the Board of Directors, Local Support Committees, Staff and Volunteers. In 2007 the first JIC guide was written offering suggestions of ways leadership, recruitment and development work be done to further us along in JIC. It was written by and used mostly by staff. This version of the JIC guide is meant to be used by a broader scope of our constituency, as reflected in the structure of the document.

An analysis of LVC's historic social location reveals that from its inception it has been an organization with a desire to provide an opportunity for those of relative privilege to respond to their "sense of mission" and "ministry of hospitality." To grow by only including more people of privilege is not enough. As LVC moves forward to become a more inclusive community, it must embrace the reordering of its priorities and the restructuring of its commitments. The Lutheran roots of LVC have sometimes been a hindrance to doing this. Yet an embrace of Lutheranism beyond its cultural trappings can keep LVC both Lutheran and inclusive. This includes claiming a theology that convicts us of our own privilege and racism and lifts up our ecumenical and interfaith stance. LVC, in our Journey to an Inclusive Community, will wrestle with the meaning of not simply welcoming others to its position of privilege but being transformed to reflect the priorities of those of a different social location. The following is a plan to help us along on that journey.

Preamble:

Recognizing...

that institutional racism and other oppressions including heterosexism, classism, ableism and sexism profoundly impact the social landscape in which we live and work;

that we have the tendency to discuss other forms of oppression including heterosexism, classism, ableism and sexism before racism and evade difficult conversations about race;

that our explanations and analyses of other forms of oppression including heterosexism, classism, ableism and sexism are impoverished when we do not fully understand intersections with racism;

that white dominance within LVC undermines our efforts among multiple constituencies to be an organization committed to social justice;

that we cannot do a sufficient job of anti-racism work on our own;

and that the education and support we offer volunteers are egregiously lacking when we fail to account for racial dynamics within LVC, at our placement organizations and within volunteer communities as well as the process of racial identity formation for individuals;

...we commit to undergoing organization-wide reflection and change in partnership with other organizations doing anti-oppression work.

The following actions and aspirations will guide our Journey to an Inclusive Community towards becoming an anti-racist and anti-oppressive institution:

LVC Board

- I. Board members understand and articulate LVC's JIC work as laid out in this guide.

- II. Board members build their own capacity for implementing institutional transformation by
 - A. going through Crossroads 2 ½ day Anti-Racism Training when they join the board.
 - B. participating in local training and educational events that build their understanding of institutional oppression and their skills for combating injustice.
 - C. utilizing Crossroads support and expertise as they guide the organization to live out the JIC.

- III. The Board affirms a JIC board committee of at least 3 board members who:
 - A. raises issues of institutional transformation and provides recommendations to the Board for action.
 - B. evaluates the ramifications of governance decisions in light of the JIC by serving as an advising body when issues arise.
 - C. makes sure that JIC work is on board meeting agendas.
 - D. leads the board in their annual review and possible revision of this JIC guide.
 - E. collaborates with staff JIC team, Crossroads, and other constituent bodies to build an organization-wide effort.

- IV. The Board continues to evaluate LVC's mission, principles, structure, and long range goals in light of our commitment to the JIC. The Board ensures that our JIC is one of the long range plan goals.

All LVC Staff

- I. Staff members begin and continue anti-racism training individually and collectively
 - A. Each new staff member attends a 2 and ½ day Analyzing & Understanding Systemic Racism Workshop with Crossroads Anti-racism Organizing and Training or a similar organizational training unless they have attended a similar training in the past year.
 - B. All staff members participate in anti-racism training each year during orientation, Crossroads organizer-led workshops during staff conferences and facilitated conference calls.

- C. Staff members pursue individual training opportunities in their local areas to supplement those stated above.
- II. Staff members participate in racial identity caucusing once/month and a follow-up conversation once/month.
- A. New staff join racial identity caucuses after attending the initial Analyzing & Understanding Systemic Racism Workshop.
 - B. The follow-up to racial identity caucusing focuses on next steps that came out of caucusing and how to move LVC along the continuum of becoming an anti-racist, multicultural organization
- III. Staff members participate in other anti-oppression trainings individually and collectively
- A. Each staff member participates in one anti-oppression training or workshop per year at orientation or staff conference, led by an outside facilitator. Topics may include anti-homophobia/heterosexism training, cis-gender privilege, ableism, sexism.
 - B. Staff members pursue other training opportunities in their local regions in addition to the training stated above.
- IV. Staff members engage in ongoing support and accountability with each other including:
- A. white accountability partner meetings once per month for white staff
 - B. people of color support calls
 - C. other forms of support and accountability
- V. The staff as a whole appoints a staff JIC team to:
- A. work collaboratively with the board JIC team to strategize in moving LVC along the anti-racist/multicultural identity continuum and dismantling other forms of oppression within LVC, the church and society. Work includes:
 - i. gathering information from other LVC constituents (LSCs, Volunteers, Support Congregations, etc.).
 - ii. surveying the Volunteers or gathering a group of Volunteers together to help recommend updates to the JIC guide each year in December.
 - B. be a container for ideas that come out of staff meetings, discuss these ideas, and move them forward in whatever way is most suited for the idea.
 - C. strategize around JIC together and organize strategy discussions amongst all staff.
 - D. be an additional point of accountability for all staff to participate in anti-racism and other anti-oppression work.
 - E. submit a monthly report to be distributed through internal and external publications (leader letter, president's report, simply said, etc).
 - F. shepherd the process of developing a JIC resource packet which Volunteers can use for community nights.
- VI. The staff as a whole appoints a staff Crossroads team to:

- A. communicate regularly with Crossroads Anti-Racism Organizing and Training staff about organization-wide anti-racism trainings and work.
 - B. discuss and implement ways to further the anti-racism work of the board, staff, and br
 - C. work collaboratively with Crossroads to ensure the development of a year-long ant
- VII. The Leadership Team includes anti-oppression work as a focus for recruiting and hiring new staff.
- A. Job descriptions should include language around having knowledge of and previous experience with anti-oppression work.
 - B. Job postings should be circulated through anti-oppression networks.
- VIII. Staff performance of JIC work will be evaluated individually and collectively. in all staff performance reviews (individual) and at staff conferences (collective).
- A. Individual staff will be evaluated in annual performance reviews.
 - B. At the December staff conference, the staff as a whole will do a self-evaluation and offer recommendations for updates to the JIC guide.
 - C. At the June joint staff-board meeting, we will review the collective staff and board JIC work.
- IX. Staff provide support to Volunteers and one another who feel isolated in the LVC community in some way (people of color, GLBTQ, disabled, etc.) by
- A. providing opportunities for Volunteers of color and members of other orientation conversation table groups to stay connected with one another throughout their LVC experience,
 - B. through the development of a list or list serve by staff person/people facilitating these tables
 - C. listening to how Volunteers experience LVC's organizational culture to be exclusive.
- XI. Staff learn to develop and facilitate anti-racism conversations and trainings
- A. Staff members challenge volunteers to deepen their understandings of racism, oppression, and their own racial identity.
 - B. Staff members incorporate analyses of how other oppressions intersect with racism.

Program Staff

- I. Program staff seeks and maintains alliances with anti-racism/anti-oppression partners.
 - A. Regional Directors and LSCs seek out partner organizations for Volunteer placements which:
 - i. directly address dismantling oppression
 - ii. reflect internally on their organizational culture and seek transformation to become more inclusive.
 - B. A Program Director takes the lead in determining a way to evaluate placement organizations' anti-oppression work which will become standard criteria in the approval and denial process.

- C. Regional Directors will follow up with approved placements to encourage them and support them in their steps towards anti-oppression.
 - D. Regional Directors put priority on matching volunteers at placements which are strong anti-racism/anti-oppression partners.
 - E. Regional Directors plan 2 actions per month (one-on-one conversations, meetings, attending events) that build alliances and partnerships with other individuals, organizations, and groups that
 - i. conduct anti-oppression trainings in their local areas
 - ii. organize and advocate to end oppression at a policy level
 - iii. may be able to provide additional support for LVC Volunteers from marginalized communities.
 - F. Regional Directors inform and invite placement organization contacts to attend local training and education events, both LVC sponsored and community events.
- II. A Program Director, in consultation with the Staff LSC team, revises the Jam Session/Snak n Yak packet to incorporate JIC work into each session.
- III. A Program Director leads a revision of the 3 reviews so placements are asked questions regarding systemic oppression and privilege.
- IV. Program staff integrates anti-oppression work into the LVC curriculum at orientation and retreats. They also make available local opportunities for Volunteers to attend further anti-oppression events and trainings at other times in the year.
- V. Program staff supports the anti-racism advocates and JIC teams in their LSCs to deepen their anti-oppression work.
- VI. Regional Directors, in consultation with their supervisor, have the discretion to ask their LSC members and host congregations to leave if they are not upholding JIC values.

Admissions Staff

- I. Admissions Director ensures that all staff and volunteer recruiters are able to articulate our JIC commitments effectively and consistently by:
 - A. communicating the LVC experience in ways that invite people of color to see themselves as members of LVC.
 - B. helping all prospective Volunteers understand our JIC commitments.
 - C. providing recruiting materials that reflect the importance of our JIC work.
 - D. including pictures of people of color in a way that balances where we are now and where we would like to be.
 - E. using language to include the complexity of people's identities.
 - F. providing training, possibly including a script or other guide, on how to present LVCs JIC commitments.
 - G. providing adequate training for application review and assessment of candidates who identify as people of color, LGBTQ, disabled or other

under represented groups.

- II. Admissions staff develops allies for recruiting around JIC values.
 - A. They will seeks professors, college/university administrators, campus ministers, pastors, placement supervisors, community organizers and other mentors to help:
 - i. talk with prospective volunteers of color,
 - ii. advance our JIC process, and
 - iii. develop our message
 - B. They will recognize and create ways for these relationships to be mutually beneficial.
- III. Recruit in settings that will enhance our JIC outcomes:
 - A. at gatherings, conferences and events located on campuses of Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions and Tribal Colleges.
 - B. through campus diversity departments, urban community colleges, city colleges and public universities (including non-traditional students) especially in LVC cities.
 - C. at the COOL conference.
 - D. at diversity and nonprofit career fairs.
 - E. at other social justice events.
- IV. The admission process includes demonstrating a commitment to LVC's JIC values as criteria for admission into the program.
 - A. Staff continues to evaluate this in a measurable way

Development and Communications Staff

- I. In order to further LVC's JIC mission the communications that come from our team, especially print newsletters and brochures, website, facebook and other social media tools and the Leader Letter monthly e-newsletter will:
 - A. include pictures of people of color in a way that balances where we are now and where we would like to be.
 - B. use language to include the complexity of people's identities.
 - C. profile people who deeply value the JIC work of LVC.
 - D. communicate progress and plans for JIC work
 - E. educate the broader constituency about JIC issues.
- II. The Development team's work will reflect and support JIC work by:
 - A. seeking funding for JIC, especially through grants.
 - B. highlighting JIC work in individual donor visits, congregation visits and fundraising events.
 - C. including an ongoing footnote in our donor acknowledgement letters indicating that their gift goes towards JIC work.
 - D. increasing the number of donors who are people of color and recording this information, thus making LVC more accountable to people of color.
 - E. working with board members to have people of color on the Fund

Development Committee.

Volunteers

- I. Volunteers should understand and be able to articulate LVC's Journey to Inclusive Community.
- II. Volunteers participate in events that further their understanding of racism and other oppressions, and commitment to dismantling oppression including:
 - A. going through a JIC orientation and anti-racism training at orientation.
 - B. trainings at retreats.
 - C. events held by the Regional Director and LSC.
 - D. community lectures, forums, films, and other educational opportunities.
 - E. one community night per month focused on an aspect of JIC (using the JIC resource packet)
 - F. snack n yak or jam sessions that integrate JIC.
- III. Volunteers each take personal responsibility to raise questions and reflection on race and other oppressions within their household community discussions.
- IV. Volunteers, with their household communities, work to recognize the dominant culture of the group and practice resisting that culture, while creating a multi-cultural community.
- V. Volunteers, with their household communities, must critically examine LVC's 3 core practices in response to our JIC commitment by:
 - A. exploring how our various understandings of the practices are rooted in our cultural backgrounds.
 - B. recognizing that they can be lived out in a variety of ways.
- VI. Volunteers participate in and are accountable to the communities in which they live and work.
- VII. Volunteers of color and members of conversation tables from orientation (2nd year volunteers, non-Christians, LGBTQQI, People of Color, non-recent college grads) stay in touch throughout the year for support and to provide feedback to LVC staff about their experience.

Alumni

- I. Alumni understand and articulate LVC's JIC commitments.
- II. Alumni continue to develop their understanding of and commitment to dismantling racism and other oppressions by:
 - A. attending events, trainings, lectures, films, and participating in community efforts for change.
 - B. participating in LVC-sponsored JIC events.

- III. Alumni contribute to the ongoing development of LVC in its JIC work by:
- A. informing staff of local resources and alliances that could support volunteers, LSCs, and congregations in their JIC work (conferences, trainings, events, local organizing groups, etc).
 - B. participating in, or spearheading, LSC efforts for change.
 - C. supporting current volunteers through hosting discussions or social gatherings.
 - D. sharing feedback with staff or board members on their experience of JIC work in LVC during their year(s).
 - E. sharing stories with staff on ways they have continued JIC work in their life after LVC for use in LVC newsletters, publications, and recruiting materials.

Donors

- I. LVC development staff will inform those who donate money and other resources to LVC that their gifts are crucial to our JIC work because they fund:
 - A. staff development
 - B. orientation
 - C. retreats
 - D. Crossroads partnership
- II. Donors will receive updates on the JIC work with an emphasis on anti-racism through our publications, appeals and electronic communications.
- III. Donors may challenge one another to better fund LVC at the core to support our organization-wide efforts at becoming an anti-racist multicultural organization.

Local Support Committees

- I. JIC Teams in LVC cities may be established to lead JIC efforts.
 - A. Members should understand and be able to articulate LVC's JIC work and equip the entire LSC in their ability to do the same.
 - B. Members will lead discussions of anti-oppression work during LSC meetings.
 - C. Members will also engage the LSC in conversation about the culture and structure of the LSC which enhance or detract from JIC goals.
 - D. Teams share LVC's JIC story with individuals, organizations and churches (ELCA and others) who are partners in anti-oppression work.
- II. LSCs and Regional Directors may select anti-racism advocates in LVC cities who will:
 - A. attend a Crossroads Analyzing and Understanding Systemic Racism Workshop (1-2 people each year from each LSC paid for by LVC).
 - B. lead anti-racism discussions during LSC meetings.

- C. lead discussions about the culture and structure of the LSC which enhance or detract from JIC goals.
 - D. plan anti-racism events into the LSC yearly calendar (ie. attending local events, planning their own for LSC and volunteers, viewing a film or documentary, going to an exhibit, etc.)
 - E. partner with and support the Volunteers in sharing their experiences of anti-racism work with the rest of the LSC.
 - F. publicize local anti-racism events over the list serve and encourage LSC members and current volunteers to attend.
 - G. share LVC's anti-racism journey with individuals, organizations and churches (ELCA and others) who are partners in anti-oppression work.
 - H. plan 1 action per month (one-on-one conversations, meetings, attending an event) that build alliances and partnerships with other individuals, organizations, and groups who
 - i. conduct anti-oppression trainings in their local areas
 - ii. organize and advocate to end oppression at a policy level
 - iii. may be able to provide additional support for LVC Volunteers from marginalized communities.
- III. Snack 'n Yak/Jam Session leaders will equip themselves to lead sessions from a JIC framework.
- A. They will stay up to date with Regional Directors about the training Volunteers have received.
 - B. They will be intentional about checking in with Volunteer houses around anti-oppression conversations.
- IV. LSC placement committees will evaluate placements according to how well they would support our JIC work.

Placements

- I. In the approval process, placements will be reviewed based on their anti-oppression analysis and work within their organization and this review will carry significant weight in the approval/denial process.
 - A. A National Program Director will take the lead on setting these criteria for approval/denial.
 - i. Placements that seek to engage in mutual support with LVC through conversation with Regional Directors about their anti-oppression work will be more likely to be approved by LVC.
- II. Placement supervisors will respond to questions about systemic oppression/privilege and how it manifests in the placement organization during the 3 LVC reviews.
 - A. Supervisors should be open to further informal conversation with Volunteers about JIC work.
- III. Placement organization contacts will be informed of and invited to attend local training and educational events.

Congregations

I. Congregations in the LVC community may be invited into the Journey to an Inclusive community by:

- A. inviting Volunteers, alumni, staff or others to share the LVC story of JIC during an educational or worship event.
- B. studying racism or other oppressions on their own as part of an educational series.
- C. sending members to a 2 and ½ day Analyzing & Understanding Systemic Racism Workshop with Crossroads Anti-racism Organizing and Training.
- D. becoming a Reconciling in Christ congregation (if a Lutheran congregation), or supporting similar efforts in their own denomination.
- E. evaluating their own social ministry work and how it has been shaped by racism.
- F. learning about the anti-racism history of their denomination or tradition.

II. Host congregations have a particular responsibility in their commitment to LVC by being on the Journey to an Inclusive Community by:

- A. engaging and supporting Volunteers in their experience with JIC.
- B. examining racism in their own history and anti-oppression journey.
- C. planning new ways to support an increasingly diverse population of Volunteers