

Journey to Racial Justice

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# **Survey and Focus Group Results**

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**Kumea Shorter-Gooden, PhD**



Shorter-Gooden Consulting

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UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
WASHINGTON, DC

# **Aim was to learn:**

- 1) perceptions and experiences of racial climate and inclusion at Foundry**
- 2) perceptions of Foundry's commitment to and success to-date vis-a-vis racial equity and justice**
- 3) individuals' personal interest in and commitment to racial equity and justice**
- 4) individuals' knowledge and experience related to racial equity and justice**
- 5) views on what Foundry should do to advance racial equity and justice**

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# Method

## Survey

- Developed by Kumea & JRJ Steering Committee
- Likert-scale, open-ended and demographic questions
- Sent to recent and current members, active non-member participants, and current and past staff
- Launched on May 24<sup>th</sup>
- Total participants – 477

## Focus Groups

- Current members/active participants who are people of color
- In July
- 2 groups, 11 participants



# Survey Participants - Demographic Profile

- **Race** -- 81% White; 12% African/African-American/Caribbean/Black; 4% Hispanic/Latino/Latinx; 2% Asian
- **Gender** -- 54% female; 44% male; <1% nonbinary/queer/trans
- **Sexual Orientation** -- 64% straight/heterosexual; 32% gay/lesbian/bisexual/queer
- **Age** -- 25% ages 30-39; 19% ages 60-69; 19% ages 70 and older; 17% ages 50-59; 13% ages 40-49; 7% ages 19-29; <1% ages 18 or younger
- **Disability** -- 92% don't identify as person with a disability, 6% do
- **Staff** -- 92% are not on staff; 8% are/were on staff



| Item                                                                                                                                             | % Agree or Strongly Agree |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. I see and experience Foundry as racially inclusive and equitable.                                                                             | 83%                       |
| 2. I've seen or experienced racial insults, slights or snubs at Foundry.                                                                         | 10%                       |
| 3. I can be my authentic self at Foundry.                                                                                                        | 90%                       |
| 4. There are parts of my racial identity, culture or background that I hide when I'm at Foundry or participate in Foundry gatherings and events. | 11%                       |
| 5. At Foundry, I feel appreciated for my talents, perspectives and background.                                                                   | 89%                       |

| Item                                                                                                                                                            | % Agree or Strongly Agree |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 6. At Foundry, I am comfortable discussing issues related to race, racism, white privilege and white supremacy.                                                 | 77%                       |
| 7. Foundry does a good job of reaching out to, including, and engaging people from racially underrepresented groups.                                            | 64%                       |
| 8. Foundry's outward-facing ministries are a successful demonstration of its commitment to racial equity and justice.                                           | 89%                       |
| 9. Foundry does a good job of demonstrating its commitment to racial equity and justice in the interactions and relationships amongst the Foundry congregation. | 80%                       |

| Item                                                                                                            | % Agree or Strongly Agree |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 10. I would like Foundry to do more to advance racial equity and justice.                                       | 71%                       |
| 11. I am pleased with the racial diversity of Foundry members, attendees and staff.                             | 56%                       |
| 12. Foundry focuses too much on racial equity and justice.                                                      | 3%                        |
| 13. Racial equity and justice are important to me personally.                                                   | 96%                       |
| 14. A commitment to racial justice is central to my spiritual beliefs and faith.                                | 86%                       |
| 15. In general, I'm comfortable discussing issues related to race, racism, white privilege and white supremacy. | 72%                       |



| Item                                                                                                                                      | % Agree or Strongly Agree |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 16. I am fairly knowledgeable about issues related to race, racism, white privilege and white supremacy.                                  | 67%                       |
| 17. I would like to learn more about racial inequities and racial injustice as it impacts the church and society at-large.                | 84%                       |
| 18. I would like to learn more about white supremacy and white privilege.                                                                 | 68%                       |
| 19. I would like to learn more about the subtle and implicit ways that racial bias shows up in everyday community and interpersonal life. | 83%                       |
| 20. I would like to learn more about the connections between racial justice and Christian theology.                                       | 86%                       |





# Summary of Likert-scale Findings: A majority of Foundry folx--

- 1) perceive and experience racial climate and inclusion at Foundry very positively
- 2) have positive perceptions of Foundry's commitment to and success to-date vis-a-vis racial equity and justice –
  - more positive re external-facing ministries than re diversity, inclusion & equity *within* Foundry
- 3) are very interested in and committed to racial equity and justice
- 4) see themselves as fairly knowledgeable about racial equity and justice AND want to learn more

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**No Meaningful Differences** (i.e. no differences of .35 or greater in mean scores on *any* items) **based on**

- Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Marital/partner status
- Frequency of attendance/streaming
- Zip code (grouped as DC, MD, VA and Other)



# Meaningful Differences (i.e. differences of .35 or greater in mean scores on one or more items) **based on**

- Race
- Age
- Having a disability
- Frequency of attendance at Foundry classes/workshops/activities
- Member vs. non-member
- Current vs. past affiliation with Foundry
- Having child(ren) 18 or younger who attend(s) Foundry
- Staff vs. non-staff
- Foundry leadership position or not



## Examples of Items with Differences by Race

(1 “Strongly Disagree” to 5 “Strongly Agree”)

|                                                                                                                                                  | Black/Afr<br>N=55 | Asian<br>N=10 | White<br>N=375 | Latinx<br>N=18 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|
| 4. There are parts of my racial identity, culture or background that I hide when I’m at Foundry or participate in Foundry gatherings and events. | 1.94              | 2.40          | 1.73           | 2.22           |
| 6. At Foundry, I am comfortable discussing issues related to race, racism, white privilege and white supremacy.                                  | 3.71              | 3.50          | 4.03           | 4.06           |
| 11. I am pleased with the racial diversity of Foundry members, attendees and staff.                                                              | 3.40              | 2.90          | 3.53           | 3.00           |
| 15. In general, I’m comfortable discussing issues related to race, racism, white privilege and white supremacy.                                  | 4.20              | 3.50          | 3.82           | 4.06           |



## Examples of Items with Differences by Age

(1 “Strongly Disagree” to 5 “Strongly Agree”)

|                                                                                                                            | 19-29<br>yrs.<br>N=31 | 30-39<br>yrs.<br>N=116 | 40-49<br>yrs.<br>N=61 | 50-59<br>yrs.<br>N=79 | 60-69<br>yrs.<br>N=87 | 70 +<br>yrs.<br>N=86 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| 10. I would like Foundry to do more to advance racial equity and justice.                                                  | 4.23                  | 4.09                   | 4.15                  | 3.96                  | 3.89                  | 3.77                 |
| 17. I would like to learn more about racial inequities and racial injustice as it impacts the church and society at-large. | 4.48                  | 4.36                   | 4.21                  | 4.09                  | 3.97                  | 3.94                 |
| 18. I would like to learn more about white supremacy and white privilege.                                                  | 4.06                  | 4.08                   | 3.87                  | 3.68                  | 3.65                  | 3.65                 |
| 20. I would like to learn more about the connections between racial justice and Christian theology.                        | 4.61                  | 4.46                   | 4.30                  | 4.18                  | 4.08                  | 4.04                 |



| <b>Examples of Items with Differences by Disability Status</b><br>(1 “Strongly Disagree” to 5 “Strongly Agree”)                                  | <b>Disability</b><br>N=28 | <b>No Disability</b><br>N=426 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 3. I can be my authentic self at Foundry.                                                                                                        | 4.00                      | 4.41                          |
| 4. There are parts of my racial identity, culture or background that I hide when I’m at Foundry or participate in Foundry gatherings and events. | 2.32                      | 1.76                          |

# Open-ended Questions

- Please make any comments that you'd like about your responses to the previous questions. (N=175)
- What, if anything, should Foundry do to advance racial equity and justice? (N=193)



# Themes from Open-ended Questions

- **Kudos to Foundry for its openness, diversity and strong commitment to social and racial justice!**
  - Foundry is seen as different from many other churches and this is the reason why many are drawn to and love Foundry
  - Many comments advised to "stay the course" and to continue/strengthen existing racial equity and justice work and initiatives
  - Much pride in external-facing racial equity and justice ministries.
- **Foundry needs to be more racially diverse, have a congregation that looks more like DC, and have a more diverse ministerial team and staff -- Concern expressed about what appears to be declining representation of people of color at Foundry.**
- **More attention should be given to reaching out and engaging (as congregants and staff) the Asian community and especially the Latinx community - Importance of not framing "race" as only "Black/White".**





# Themes – cont'd.

- **Concern about the lack of socioeconomic (SES) diversity, concern that Foundry is a very affluent congregation and not a welcoming place for working class and low SES folx.**
- **More work needs to be done on the interpersonal dimension of engaging/connecting across race, on creating a more inclusive church, on "zooming in" to get to know each other better and building genuine, meaningful relationships across differences.**
- **Ministers/staff are knowledgeable and committed with respect to racial equity, inclusion and justice, but the congregation lags behind in awareness and commitment.**
- **Consider broader arenas to influence racial justice, including interventions related to incarceration of Black and Brown folx, as well as initiatives that support equity for people of color who are not low SES.**
- **More contact and engagement with Asbury UMC and other Black churches.**



# Themes – cont'd.

- **Desire to learn more about race, one's own biases, White privilege, history of racism in the church -- Want opportunities to gain comfort in dialoguing and more classes and small-group discussions about race; Importance of capable facilitation/leadership.**
- **Some concern about White folx being made to feel guilty about their privilege and about systemic racism -- from the pulpit and from classes.**
- **Desire to center the conversation about racial equity and justice theologically, to learn about the connection between racial equity/justice and Christian faith, to engage racial equity/justice more as a spiritual matter -- Perhaps relatedly, a few indicated concern that attention to social justice sometimes eclipses attention to spiritual growth.**



# Focus Groups

- **2 groups, 90 minutes each, 11 participants total**
- **Majority Black/African American, with Asian, Latinx & Native American representation**
- **Good mix with respect to gender, sexual orientation and age**
- **Kumea facilitated**
- **6 broad questions**



# *Focus Group Q* – What brought you to Foundry?

- A lot of people come to Foundry “by accident” and stay because of one specific component that they find appealing (e.g. music/song, pastor/staff, community service, LGBTQ support)
- **Personal interactions with staff and members keep people at Foundry.**
- Many people are not originally from DC and are looking for a “sense of community” or “place to call home”
- **Love the music, fellowship, and emphasis on inclusion/social justice**
- **Attracted to the casual, laid back atmosphere**
- **Appreciation for the breadth of social justice issues Foundry takes on**



# *Focus Group Q* — How does being a person of color influence your experience at Foundry? What, if any, impact does it have?

- There is a conscious and concerted effort to be inclusive - particularly with respect to the LGBTQ community, but around race as well
- Some note positive experiences of being acknowledged and invited in for their gifts and talents
- Some people feel very welcomed, while others experience the church as “nice” and “friendly” but not “inclusive”
- Beyond racial differences, there is class bias -- acceptance and inclusion is much more difficult for those who are not affluent or who don't come from backgrounds of privilege



# *Quotes* – How does being a person of color influence your experience?

- "I haven't felt like my race has really mattered; everyone is kind."
- "I can cosign what everyone is saying about people being friendly and nice, but I don't feel like I am a part of any specific group or community. People haven't always been as welcoming when I try to mingle and network."
- "I feel like every time I step in Foundry; my race is something that I notice. There is some level of tokenization. When you think about the people who are accepted in this space, they come from a certain background, pedigree, and level of assimilation. I do see a difference in how people engage and how people are exceptionalized. My identity is always on display... that doesn't reflect the leadership, but reflects the regular members who haven't really reconciled with the true diversity of Washington, D.C."



# *Focus Group Q* – How welcomed and engaged do you feel at Foundry and how, if at all, does being a person of color contribute to that?

- **Feeling very welcomed and engaged as a person of color**
- **Lack of intersectionality; issues and plight of groups (especially LGBTQ) are treated as White issues. Want to see Black and Latinx voices uplifted (both during service and in leadership)**
- **Too much of an emphasis on LGBTQ issues**
- **Should focus less on denominational debate and focus more on racial justice**
- **Need to address White privilege and White supremacy**



**Quotes - How welcomed and engaged do you feel at Foundry and how, if at all, does being a person of color contribute to that?**

- **“I feel very welcomed and very engaged at Foundry.”**
- **“As a gay man, it’s helpful to go to a church where you’re taught that Jesus is love. But sometimes it feels like the issue is pushed so hard that there is no room to talk about cross-sectional issues and cross-racial issues. How can we help our community? I want to see more things that we are doing to lift up our neighbors. I want to see more African American leadership on the Senior Team. I leave service sometimes frustrated that we’re doing so much for the LGBT community. Sometimes it feels like overkill. And a lot of the people that I see at the service are affluent Whites. They are getting their gay issues addressed but they don’t care enough about the Black and Latino community.”**





**Focus Group Q** — To what extent is Foundry a good cultural fit for you? The liturgy, the music, the way services and programs are conducted, the expectations of how people show up and engage? How important is it to you that there is a good cultural fit?

- Some are very happy with the culture of Foundry (e.g. casual and laid-back atmosphere); while others feel like improvements can be made, particularly surrounding racial and class inclusion
- **Foundry culture is “very white”**
- Difference between the first and second service – some appreciate the first service which, for some, seems more tailored to Black people; yet others prefer the second service
- **Feelings of comfort in attending services but have difficulty with a sense of belonging in smaller groups and conversations**
- Former evening services were popular and attracted a broader demographic that Foundry does not typically reach



# Quotes - To what extent is Foundry a good cultural fit?

- “I travel a long way to Foundry and am never disappointed. I love that the service starts on time. It has some elements of the old Baptist church I used to attend. It is consistently a blessing for me to be there. It’s the first service that I enjoy. I attend that one more than the second service. They have the same program but different styles and audiences.”
- “I love that Foundry is more laid back than a traditional Black church. I love the casual feel. I don’t need to be dressed in Sunday’s best. It’s interesting though because the 9 am service is said to be tailored to African Americans but it does not feel like a Black church service at all. I do struggle with bringing my whole self to engagements, conversations, etc. though – that is where it is a dance and negotiation of what parts of the beliefs and thoughts I should share. The culture overall is very white at Foundry. I approach Foundry how I approach White-dominated spaces. The level of ease that I have when I go to predominantly Black spaces, I don’t have that at Foundry.”
- “I find that when I go to Foundry, it is very comforting. Maybe because I am not focusing on the people around me there. I focus on the music, the word, and the experience. What I appreciate about the ministers is that they tend to teach. They don’t postulate. And this helps me reaffirm sentiments that I have and provide legitimate teaching to supplement my lack of theological training.”



*Focus Group Q* — What do you think about Foundry's commitment and work to foster racial equity and justice through external-facing ministries? How satisfied are you with what Foundry is doing? What, if anything, additional should Foundry do? How important is this to you?

- Foundry's external-facing ministries are one of our strengths
- Greater efforts in fight for social justice in recent years – could be attributed to new leadership
- Leadership is more committed to the fight than the congregation-at-large



## **Quotes - What do you think about Foundry's work to foster racial equity/justice through external-facing ministries?**

- **“One of the things that initially attracted me to Foundry was that in addition to the LGBTQ inclusion, it's not just a one issue church. They are committed to a variety of issues.”**
- **“Foundry does so well in these areas. They aren't just reactionary, but they are proactive as well. The culture conversation comes about because the leadership is ahead of the congregation-at-large. The issue is that leadership doesn't have the bandwidth to do it all.”**
- **“I was impressed by Foundry's commitment to mutual aid during the protests. There is something to be said about Foundry showing up to the protests. You had folks at the front line and also folks giving out food and water at the church. It gave a larger community response that was remarkable to see and sent a big message.”**
- **“I think they've made more concerted efforts in recent years. It hasn't always been the case.”**



# *Focus Group Q* – What would it take to create a Foundry that represents the racial/ethnic diversity of the greater DC area? Is that an important goal? Why or why not?

- **Many believe greater racial/ethnic diversity is needed, though some are content with current racial diversity of Foundry**
- **Some think that increased diversity (in congregation and leadership) should occur naturally and not by force**
- **Former evening service attracted a diverse group of people that wasn't otherwise represented in the congregation - that was helpful!**



## **Quotes - What would it take to create a Foundry that represents the racial/ethnic diversity of the greater DC area?**

- **“I feel like it would be nice to have more diversity... thinking about diversity of investment portfolios; the same way that it would be best to weather the ups and downs of the market, diversifying the portfolio of our congregation could give us that extra protection against the storms.”**
- **“I appreciate when I interact with people of different backgrounds. For example, at Bible study when I hear the perspective of a Black person, I appreciate having that insight and the contributions of a variety of backgrounds.”**
- **“I think increasing diversity in the congregation has to happen organically. The focus should be on making a welcoming environment. People choose to come and decide on whether or not the environment is right for them... let the chips fall where they may.”**



# Your Reflections?

- **What stands out to you from the findings?**
- **What surprises you?**
- **What do you want to learn more about?**
- **What might you, your small group or your ministry team do to address the issues raised?**

