

# 8th Principle Focus Group Feedback Summary

**Focus Groups Held:** Four focus groups were held between November 2nd and November 4th with a total of 36 attendees. The purpose was to understand what the congregation is thinking about the 8th Principle, to glean insights about our readiness to take up the work of racial justice as described in the principle, and to identify what additional information will be needed prior to the vote next June. Several of the focus groups discussed the evolution of the 8th principle and felt it was important to understand how it has come about- so we are including a VERY brief history in the comprehensive synthesis and encourage all to read the background information for more details.

**YES!, But...** There is a wide recognition of the need to do racial justice work, but at this time, the congregation is not unified in doing that work under the auspices of the 8th Principle. More than half of the attendees expressed an interest in adopting the 8th principle, but had hesitations around the wording of the principle, how it is not structured like the other 7 principles, and concerns they had not yet seen what the actual work plan would look like and how we would “hold ourselves accountable”. A fair number (that's scientific for less than half, but more than ¼) of attendees expressed a belief that adoption of the 8th principle would take time away from other priorities, belief that not every one who attends Tapestry is interested in doing Racial Justice work and conviction that we are already “doing so much.” There are varying levels of understanding about how deep and emotional this work could be and concern that it might shift the focus from what current members come to Tapestry for.

**Take CARE doing this hard work:** There was significant appreciation expressed for the workshops conducted a few years back on racism and confronting one's own biases (shout out to Celia and her team). There was moderate recognition that there is an ongoing need for internal reflection and personal education and growth. In two of the sessions, there were difficult, direct conversations where it became clear that, without a good structure (and diversity, equity and inclusion training) doing this work might lead to BIPOC congregants either being unfairly burdened with the emotional work and/or creating more of a sense of being “othered”, something which all attendees recognized is NOT the intent. There is understanding that this is not a decision to make lightly because the work will take time and energy and can be messy and difficult.

**It's all about the Details:** Many people came away saying that they had thought it was “a no brainer to say yes” when they came in, but that they left realizing they needed to think more deeply about the implications of adopting the 8th Principle. There was a sense that this issue was deeper and more complex than they initially thought and that the sharing of differing viewpoints during the focus groups helped people see the complexities and think more deeply about what taking on this work would mean to the congregation. Attendees were consistent in noting that there would need to be a clearly defined action plan, with goals or accountabilities identified (including the “governance” structure—i.e., committee or other oversight) and timeframe for achieving goals—while also noting that this work is “never done.” Several issues

were identified for the RJTF to assist in communicating the work plan, gathering feedback on the specifics of the plan, and explaining the implications should Article II pass at General Assembly 2024.

**Next Steps:** Many ideas and insights were raised during the focus groups, which are included in the full write up, and are being incorporated into a Racial Justice Work Plan Questionnaire. In February 2024, the RJTF will share the Racial Justice Work Plan Questionnaire with the entire congregation, in order to gather feedback and create Racial Justice Work Plan suggestions. A draft of Racial Justice Work Plan suggestions will be shared with the congregation, and feedback from the congregation will be collected via email. Work Plan suggestions will be shared with the Comprehensive Planning Committee for consideration.

If you have questions or would like to read the comprehensive synthesis from the focus groups, please email Hannah at [h.e.carey525@gmail.com](mailto:h.e.carey525@gmail.com).

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