

Churches continue to find CBFNC's racial reconciliation curriculum, **The Body of Christ**, to be helpful. This is a five-week curriculum written by team members who were diverse in their ethnicity but united in their desire to promote conversations about this challenging subject.

Trinity, Raleigh, tailored the curriculum for their location and congregation during the winter and spring of 2017. Karen Eickhoff, Associate Pastor, Education & Families, says, "We believe this is a very sensitive topic but one that is raising its ugly head once again. Several on the discipleship team feel we need to revisit issues that may have never been dealt with and get a biblical perspective. Turns out it was very timely to our nation. We were intentional to be very 'Baptist' about it so as not to be political. The Baptist element helped us to own our heritage and created good discussion."

Although the CBFNC curriculum has five lessons, Trinity held seven hour-long sessions on Sunday evenings. Here is a summary of their study.

**Session 1:** Dr. Randy McKinney, currently the senior pastor of Longview, Raleigh, shared about his role on the CBFNC Racial Reconciliation Task Force and his story of the fire on Saturday, January 13, 2007, that destroyed the sanctuary of The Memorial, Greenville, where he pastored. In an article for the CBFNC webpage, McKinney states, "Later that Sunday morning, the congregation gathered near the picnic shelter on the property. As we were ending our time together, I began to notice some unfamiliar faces. People were joining us in our time of crisis. Not only did they come by our side, they embraced us, cried with us, prayed with us, and encouraged us. I soon discovered that a congregation from our city had ended their time of worship in order to join us in our time of need.

As tears began to flow down my face, Pastor Sidney Locks wrapped his arms around me and spoke words that reached deep inside my soul. Through the love of these sisters and brothers in Christ from Cornerstone Baptist Church, we became keenly aware of the presence of God.

Later that afternoon, The Memorial assembled for a time of worship in a local house of worship. During the sermon, a truth needed to be proclaimed: 'Had the shoes been on the other feet, we would not have done what Cornerstone Baptist Church had done for us this morning.' You see, Cornerstone is a predominately black congregation and The Memorial is predominately white. Sometimes the truth hurts. However, sometimes a declaration of the truth can begin a journey of healing and reconciliation."

**Session 2:** Kathy Driver, CBFNC Capital Region Coordinator, led the first lesson from *The Body of Christ* on the image of God. This session begins with the creation story from Genesis 1 and states, "If each human is created in God's image, that means all are beloved and equal before God." The group dealt with questions such as, "Have there been times that you were made to feel less than the image of God? Have you ever seen others treated as less than the image of God?"

**Session 3:** Attendees watched *Beneath the Skin: Baptists and Racism*. This award-winning documentary, produced by the Baptist Center for Ethics, is described on their website: "From the trans-Atlantic slave trade to the current immigration debate, *Beneath the Skin* peels back prejudices and confronts them with biblical mandates. Interviewees come from nearly a dozen states and represent the best in Baptist life." Discussion followed the screening.

**Session 4:** Dr. Clay Warf, Executive Director of the NC Baptist Foundation, led the second lesson from *The Body of Christ*, titled "A History of Stigmatizing Race in Scripture." Beginning with "The Curse of Ham," the curriculum asks, "In what ways did interpretations of these biblical texts contribute to the racial hierarchy in the early United States? How do these negative Biblical interpretations contribute to the racialized contemporary world?"

**Session 5:** Apryl Bullock led the third lesson from the *The Body of Christ* curriculum, titled "No Longer 'Black' nor 'White': New Identity in Christ." According to the curriculum, "Galatians 3:22-29 demonstrates the invalidity of race as a brand of human differentiation and presents the ideal of reconciliation in the Christian community."

**Session 6:** This session included the fourth lesson from the CBF curriculum along with a presentation by CBF Field Personnel Marc and Kim Wyatt on reaching out to the least of these. They described the Welcome Houses and ways of ministering to refugees.

**Session 7:** This was a panel discussion with various non-white couples and interracial couples in the church.

Karen Metcalf Eickhoff states, "This study seemed very encouraging for our members. Several people have expressed a desire for more follow-up or additional study. I believe other churches could benefit from such a study. We adapted the curriculum and made it customized to the area of NC that we live in and utilized the personalities we know well. Racial Reconciliation and Inclusivity are definitely topics churches need to consider focusing on as our culture continues to change."

## racial reconciliation and inclusivity

by Rick Jordan, CBFNC Church Resources Coordinator