

What is the Authentic Diversity Audit?

GOLD ENTERPRISES, LLC

In May of 2022, the Greater Milwaukee Synod Council voted to undertake an Authentic Diversity Audit. This decision was made recognizing that while this synod has a long history of public statements and resolutions filled with eloquent words and lofty goals regarding our commitments to being an antiracist and fully inclusive church, our actions don't always match our rhetoric. For more detailed information on the audit, visit: <https://milwaukee.synod.org/about-us/authentic-diversity-audit/>

The audit comprises three phases:

- 1) A Synod-wide diversity audit
- 2) A Synod-wide strategic planning process
- 3) Implementation of Phase 1 & 2 outcomes

Authentic Diversity Audit Phase 1 Results

What Gold Enterprises Did in Phase 1: Assessment

- ⇒ Reviewed Synod policies and practices.
- ⇒ Held multiple focus groups and interviews across the GMS Synod.
- ⇒ Developed and administered a survey.

What Gold Enterprises Found in Phase 1: Results

Based on a review of all the focus group, interview, and survey data collected, GELLC identified *six themes*. Themes are issues or topics of commonality arising multiple times across all data. These themes can also be understood as the Audit's Phase 1 findings or results. The six themes will be the foundation upon which the strategic planning process will build and will inform GELLC's final recommendations.

Theme/Finding #1: Racial Justice and Antiracism Integration

What does this mean? GMS needs to engage in an intentional process of integrating racial justice and antiracism into the workings of the GMS from policy to preaching content to communication.

Theme/Finding #2: Self-Awareness

What does this mean? There is a need for all individuals within the GMS to engage in active self-reflection on race, racism, and social justice. Self-reflection is the bedrock of transformative thinking. Questions to reflect on include: How do I benefit from maintaining the status quo in the GMS? Even though I am not responsible for it, how does the U.S.'s history of enslavement of African people affect and inform today's GMS realities? When I feel defensive talking about race, racism, gender, pronouns, and other identity-based issues, why do I feel that way? What is at the root of my discomfort? What does my feeling of avoidance say about me and my journey?

Theme/Finding #3: Identity

What does this mean? The term "diversity" is often used as a synonym for race only. GMS must consider the many intersecting identities of its congregants, leaders, and stakeholders as it continues its journey toward authentic diversity, equity, and inclusion, not solely race. How do a person's multiple identities affect how they experience the world or how they are treated?

Theme/Finding #4: LGBTQIA+ Inclusion

What does this mean? While several GMS congregations are Reconciling in Christ (RIC) congregations, GMS can do more for LGBTQIA+ inclusion. Areas of continued focus include supporting and elevating trans and intersex pastors and lay people and assisting new LGBTQIA+ ministers as they are called to serve.

Theme/Finding #5: Communication

What does this mean? Poor communication pathways create bottlenecks and roadblocks that impact congregational knowledge of the Synod and the Synod's knowledge of each congregation's needs and culture. A diversification of communication methods is needed, particularly to better reach and engage younger people (under 25).

Theme/Finding #6: Knowledge / Relevance of the Synod / Synod Council

What does this mean? Synod leaders must be more visible and available as a resource to congregations. They are currently largely unknown to the broader Synod. Increasing recognition and awareness will enable congregants to better understand the role of the Synod Council and how they can be a resource. It will also assist congregations in understanding the goal of racial and social justice as inclusive of each congregation and not just something happening "far away" and in isolation.

Authentic Diversity Audit Phase 2 Plans

As shared during the Synod Assembly in June 2023, the Strategic Planning process includes:

- **Information Gathering:** Rostered Ministers and Lay Leaders returned to their congregations to garner more information on their congregants' priorities. This information was submitted in June.
- **Sub-Committee Development:** Once Strategic Planning Task Force members are appointed, these individuals will be organized into sub-committees where necessary.
- **Drafting Plans:** The Strategic Planning Task Force will be guided through a process of drafting individual plans for each of the prioritized action items.

At the conclusion of the Strategic Planning process, we will have 1) audited the Synod, 2) prioritized action items suggested in the audit, and 3) drafted Spirit-Led, actionable plans for each prioritized item – for both short-term and long-term forward movement in regard to race and inclusion.