

## **GMS Authentic Diversity Strategic Planning Task Force Report May 2024**

The Greater Milwaukee Synod began an Authentic Diversity Audit in the summer of 2022, in partnership with a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion consulting firm, Gold Enterprises, LLC. This work included a comprehensive survey, a review of synod policies and practices, and a series of one-on-one and focus group conversations.

Representatives from Gold Enterprises presented their interim report at the synod assembly in 2023, identifying six themes around which to organize our continuing work. The Strategic Planning Task Force was formed in October of 2023 to create a plan to help focus us on the work ahead. The task force worked collaboratively with the Anti-Racism Team, the Reconciling In Christ Team, the synod council, and synod staff to identify SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) goals towards becoming an authentically diverse synod. This plan was approved by the Synod Council in May of 2024.

For the purpose of the work of the Strategic Planning Task Force (SPTF), it has defined Authentic Diversity work as the practice of identifying the policies, practices, beliefs, and attitudes that get in the way of our being a fully inclusive and authentically diverse church and creating plans, programs/initiatives that lead us more fully into that vision; demographically matching the ethnic and racial composition of the Greater Milwaukee area as well as the intersections with other marginalized groups such as gender and sexuality.

The Greater Milwaukee Synod has (113) congregations. Currently 50% (56) of our congregations are engaged in some type of Authentic Diversity work. Our hope is that, by engaging in the important work outlined in the strategic plan, we will continue to grow into a truly welcoming and inclusive church.

The complete strategic plan will be available on the assembly webpage at [tinyurl.com/GMS-Strategic-Plan](https://tinyurl.com/GMS-Strategic-Plan) starting Friday, May 10. Here are the six themes that guide us in this work:

**Theme #1: Racial Justice/Anti-racism Integration** - GMS needs to engage in an intentional process of integrating racial justice and anti-racism into the workings of the GMS from policy to preaching; content to communication.

**Theme/Finding #2: Self-awareness** - There is a need for all individuals within the GMS to engage in active self-reflection on race, racism, and social justice.

**Theme/Finding #3: Identity** - 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.

**Theme/Finding #4: LGBTQIA+ Inclusion** - While 27% (30) of 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** - A diversification of communication methods is needed, particularly to better reach and engage younger people (under 25).

**Theme/Finding #6: Knowledge/ Relevance of Synod/Synod Council** - Synod leaders must be more visible and available as a resource to congregations.

In Christ's Life, Love & Mercy,

The Greater Milwaukee Synod's Strategic Planning Task Force:

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