

Comments Categorized from all 4 Open Conversations

Comments concerning the process for deciding on a banner

- What is the purpose of our banners? Witness? Educate? Advertise? All of these.
- Work on consensus
- Don't be divisive
- We've been timid
- What could be the positive outcomes?
- Process is more important than banner
- Good process and taking time are crucial
- How did other churches that have a banner decide on wording?
- Thanks to those who developed the process
- Internal conversations are important
- BLM banners are more common in UU churches.
- This is a big decision and it can bring out some ugliness, like "taking a knee" at a football game.
- Banner space is very special and I would rather work with white supremacy issues.
- Consensus is important. If it is not my ideal sign, then I should go with the consensus anyway.
- It's going to make us uncomfortable and even subject to attack but it will also start these deep conversations.
- What is our goal with a banner. If we put up a banner I also want a commitment about what we are going to do about racism, "unravel racism." I would like us to get involved with the racial justice movement more than I would like us to put up a banner.
- It's late for a banner but still relevant.
- I'm in favor of the BLM banner partly because I believe it will make POC in our community more likely to attend our church.
- I didn't want to come today but was asked to so here I am. I'm very angry and embarrassed that we are so late in this.
- We worked hard for the rainbow banner in the past and I believe in the process. I feel good about the UU commitment to social justice and I'm not afraid of controversy.
- Goals for a banner would be to foster conversation in church and our local communities about race and also to show that we are welcoming to POC.
- Being honest, joining the banner process committee, I thought I would just be helping to hang the banner and this has been frustrating. Sometimes I want to be provoking. I am not afraid of some push back and I think we should listen to our youth, all of whom want to put up a banner.
- Amen to listening to our youth.
- For me courage is needed, especially since I'm a non-confrontational person.
- I liked the idea of a newspaper article to go along with the banner.
- We want to change hearts and minds and I question whether the banner will do this.
- It doesn't matter where we start as long as we do. Just start today. It doesn't have to be perfect.
- This is a fabulous opportunity to be part of a multi-faith, multiracial coalition.
- I would like this church to have the courage to speak out more, like the abolitionists did and say black live DO matter.
- Stop intellectualizing and do it.
- A banner might well have a positive impact on a "racist."
- I'm afraid that people will say that the church put the banner up and not the people. We need to

own this decision.

- What is our purpose? What are we trying to achieve? Showing solidarity, changing hearts and minds, changing systemic racism?
- How can you not put up the banner?
- Do it!
- Why have we not already done this? What does it say to black people, putting this up so late? That's my worry.
- It's disappointing that it's taken so long but hopefully conversations like this will continue so we can explore why it took so long.
- This is overdue but each of us, let alone an institution at its best, is a work in progress.
- There needs to be a process to make this kind of thing happen. Then, if we get question when/if a banner goes up we can refer to the process.
- The youth are much better educated and were a big part of the service 2 years ago. They were disappointed at all the time this has taken.
- We need a plan for what to do when the banner gets vandalized. I see this as an opportunity to engage the community in the conversation, to educate more people and even make use of restorative justice.
- First Parish Arlington did have an opportunity to use restorative justice with a young man who vandalized their sign.
- The plan is to contact our chief of police ahead of time.
- Thursday's conversation (#3) had lots of notes for few participants
- A banner is like a bumper sticker – we need to know the background
- Listen to young people and those who feel threatened
- Who have we talked to? Who have we asked about what would be helpful?
- The perfect is the enemy of the good
- So angry, mortified that WUS is so far behind the curve
- Just do it – put up BLM banner – or forget it
- The procedure is offensive and embarrassing given the brutality and unfairness of racism
- It's late, so typical of New England and white liberals
- It's important to get consensus; we don't have it.
- Consensus does not mean unanimity
- Those with strong feelings should talk with others
- Conversation is part of the process
- It's important that we are starting to grapple with the issue
- Talk with young people [noted that there was a discussion with WUSYG]
- Should not be a top-down decision
- We're intellectualizing this to death. Do it because we FEEL it.
- Even if we're late putting it up, a banner will still be relevant. Institutional racism won't disappear soon.
- Everyone in the church should be aware and behind what the church does. That takes time.
- Invite further input on the process.
- I hope this is just the beginning of engaging.

Suggestions for banner

- Black Lives Matter, too

- Black Lives Matter [only]
- Standing on the Side of Love
- What was feedback from others (in response to poster)?
- Be creative, come up with wording that is different, that really fits WUS
- If we create new wording, it becomes all about us, an example of white supremacy.
- Concord UU church has “Black Lives Matter” and “Join the Conversation”
- What would a banner say to young people coming into our church? Need to be honest with them.
- I want a straight ahead “Black Lives Matter” banner.
- I'd like to just put out the banner and have a conversation afterward.
- The reactions to the BLM message show how effective it has been.
- My reaction is weird. This was current 2 years ago and now we are ready? Maybe our sign should start with “You might have forgotten...”
- We know the sign will get ripped down, which means someone is paying attention.
- A BLM banner doesn't say much and I want to put up “Black Lives Matter Too” and have a conversation about that.
- What is the goal of having the banner, “getting on the band wagon?”
- “Black Lives Matter Equally” works for me.
- Black Lives Matter was created by black people and we can support them in their own words.
- I'd like to add something to BLM: “All lives matter but they don't.”
- I want to go with “Black Lives Matter” and deal with the response.
- I would like a BLM banner just as it is. We are supporting a cause.
- BLM banner is very meaningful to me as I first saw it at the UU church in Arlington and learned that All Lives Matter makes as much sense as putting water on all the houses in the neighborhood, even when only one is on fire.
- I want to do the plain banner.
- The banner is a place to start for me.
- I want to add the word “equally” to BLM.
- A banner can be a communal bearing of witness.
- We will have more humanity by supporting BLM.
- I feel fairly strongly that the banner should just say Black Lives Matter. I particularly don't like “BLM too,” because I find it particularly offensive. It's important to me to respect the creators of the movement and not modify their language.
- We need to respect the creators, use their language, and not quibble over words. We have aligned with causes in the past without agreeing with everything.
- Don't change the words of (from BLM). It's offensive and adding insult to injury.
- I'm here to learn about variations proposed for the sign
- I'm unclear on the goals of the banner
- Black Lives Matter too
- Black Lives Matter equally
- The space could be better used
- How long would it be displayed?
- Add “Join the Discussion”
- If we want to support BLM, don't change the wording
- Because BLM may mean different things to different people, use a longer explanation such as the one at the Sudbury church

- I don't like banners in general
- What is the goal of the banner? Don't just make a public statement of our beliefs
- A provocative statement will provoke conversation
- We should put up the banner and don't modify the wording
- I immediately favored the banner because people of color have dealt with extraordinary difficulties – more so than poor whites
- It's a statement. It's supposed to be.
- Put the banner up and prepare for repercussions such as vandalism
- There will be ramifications to putting up a banner. Don't be afraid of vandalism
- We really have to believe it if we put the banner up
- We need a banner that just says Black Lives Matter
- Would like a permanent BLM banner like we have the rainbow flag for GLBTQ
- Don't Shoot
- Do it. Don't be afraid
- If we put a banner up, we'll have to think about what we want our legacy to be. What will the future say about us?
- This is our opportunity, our job, to say something
- I'm hearing that there is consensus that we should have a banner that says Black Lives Matter
- Making a statement is the least we can do
- Black Lives Matter plus an invitation to a discussion with specific day and time
- A banner will continue to challenge us. It would be disruptive
- A banner doesn't DO anything. We need education and action
- A banner is not just a statement of faith to the outside world but also a statement directed to us

Comments on BLM movement/platform

- We need to know what BLM means
- BLM is a political movement. Should church be involved? Separation of church and state. Churches can advocate for policies, not candidates.
- Strong disagreement with reparations. Those who want to pay can, voluntarily.
- Don't agree with every point but in agreement with principles, general thrust, goals. In large movements (which are needed to effect change) individuals will not agree with every point.
- The general population is not aware of the BLM platform. A BLM banner is more likely to make people think that we are anti-police. We should talk with the police before installing banner to let them know we are not anti-police. Note: That is part of the planned process.
- Did other churches base decisions on the BLM platform? Many churches would not have since the platform is less than one year old.
- The platform is very inclusive.
- BLM is a statement, aligned with a movement and as white allies we are in solidarity with that.
- My response was on a gut level of "all lives matter," but over time I have found that there is something there that I can understand better, like the platform, which I'm glad to have something clear to learn from.
- BLM platform is a political movement and should be separate from church. I will never agree with reparations.
- I don't agree with the violence of the BLM movement. The platform is beautiful but the BLM banner does reflect that.
- I don't think we should compete with BLM and I think the platform is usurping the BLM

movement.

- Initially I was very upset when BLM stopped traffic on I93 for 4 hours a few years ago. I couldn't support a movement with those kind of tactics. I still think BLM is inflammatory.
- I don't agree with the platform but I can't believe how many UU's it is taking to put up a sign.
- BLM is not a political movement it's a social justice movement. We can still support a movement, even if we don't agree with every tactic, like stopping I93.
- The BLM slogan has been around for over 5 years, was started by 3 lesbian black women who are not happy about all the ways that it has been usurped. The female leaders of both BLM Boston and Cambridge have referred to the Movement for Black Lives Platform as something their groups are in alignment with.
- Violence and inflammatory behavior comes with the territory. Does a protest have to be perfect. There will always be people who misunderstand.
- The antislavery movement was a political movement that UU's got behind. Our faith calls us to be in solidarity with those who need support.
- I came here for spirituality not for social justice issues with teeth. I believe in the first principle but am offended by the use of the term White Supremacy and reparations. This has to be separate because it is political and I won't be a part of it.
- I am concerned about any militant side that does not represent who we are as UU's.
- Reparations are so complicated. I recommend an article by Ta-Nehisi Coates: <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/>
- We are like the abolitionist who helped the slaves run away (mostly Quaker.) We are being asked to enter a national movement. I feel it's spiritual.
- Reparations could be seen in a metaphorical sense, a kind of making amends for injustice that occurred on our watch. Patriarchy is also a problem in our society.
- I see this as bearing witness here to folks that have been really harmed. I came back here for spiritual input toward social action.
- We don't have to all agree to everything in order to support a movement.
- I don't know much about reparations but I wonder what we are so afraid of.
- SURJ (Standing up for racial justice) is a national group of white allies in solidarity with BLM.
- WMCN is also active on these issues, as is Temple Shir Tikva in Winchester.
- I found it useful to re-read the platform today and I like the way it addresses intersectionalism.
- It pleases me that black are looking at other kinds of oppression too (transgender, for example.)
- It think it's "unchecked" capitalism that is the issue. I'm proud of our UU Youth, including the ones that got the original UUA public witness statement passed in 2015 despite the strong opposition of one black minister.
- 54 years later we are all still learning from MLK, even though there has been some progress.
- I like the BLM platform since it helps us to pick up on institutional racism where we left off when MLK was assassinated.
- I experienced 2 episodes this summer of being terrified by police around my support of BLM and being with an African American friend in PA.
- Even middle aged white women are sometimes terrified by police in MA.
- We are blessed to have a new chief of police in Winchester who is doing "Visions" trainings with his top people. Also he is committed to educating his peers, including the inevitable "outliers."
- Reparations can be an issue – not sure how to deal with it
- BLM is a charged political movement that leads to distrust for impoverished whites – rancor and misunderstanding

- Tying the banner to the platform is a mistake
- Reparations hijack the movement
- BLM needs a clearer focus such as police brutality
- The manifesto is expansive – would be better to focus
- BLM means I don't matter
- Not sure if BLM will fix white problem

Confronting racism

- Need to get white people to work against systemic racism. Does BLM do that? How do we want to work on the issue?
- Don't want to offend people (because then they are less likely to listen to what we are saying)
- We should not work hard to avoid offending people. We are not here to make Winchester feel comfortable.
- We swim in systemic racism, and it will make people uncomfortable to confront it.
- Can't fix a problem you don't acknowledge
- Some churches are working on addressing white supremacy
- Work with groups outside the church as well as other groups within the church
- Reject identity politics, need to find common ground
- There are forms of witness other than banners: weekly vigils, knocking on doors, phoning – put your body out there.
- Need to give language to things that are unspeakable.
- Of course all lives matter but that is not what this is about.
- There are 2 ways to interpret BLM (as only black lives matter or that black lives matter more) vs (that black live also matter.) People tend to be defensive with the first interpretation (white fragility).
- To edit the BLM message is to whiten or soften it make ourselves feel better. Black Lives of UU has called upon use to have these conversations.
- The history of policy in the US is that black lives didn't matter as much and this is still true. We don't see ourselves as white supremacist but we are still part of that system.
- I was thinking earlier this morning that my life must make someone mad.
- Black means anyone who is not identified with the dominant culture.
- I feel very strongly regarding all kinds of discrimination.
- As a community, this is real prophetic voice opportunity. If it's not controversial, there's no point in doing it.
- BLM is a statement of outrage and a demand for equality, which they don't have even today. We want black live to matter equally.
- We are in a white supremacist society.
- It is rare in our culture to celebrate loving black people.
- I'm passionate about racial justice and want to make a statement, like going down on one knee.
- Slavery is the US's "original sin." "All lives will not matter until black live matter."
- I'm very lucky as a white person. Every type of prejudice is the problem and we really need to support POC with a banner. Then we need to walk our talk.
- The prison system says black live don't matter we can say that we believe they do.
- I grew up during segregation of both black and native Americans. There have been positive changes but we have a long way to go.
- Nobody wants to be a racist. We each have our own private definition of racist that excludes us.

- We need to think about why is BLM “inflammatory”?
- Some folks complain that politics is ruining their beloved game of football.
- Had a student this week who pulled over to bear witness (be a public witness) for a black person pulled over by the police.
- BLM is part of the general problem of violence in our society. Who kills who? Mostly whites kill whites but police are killing more blacks than whites. I want to know the magnitude of these problems.
- I am a racist and a white supremacist because I don't do enough.
- I wanted to put an occupy tent up and standing committee blocked me. Please talk to other members of our congregation to get more input to give to standing committee.
- I came of age in the civil rights era and supported that but was horrified by the black power movement. But now I think the goal are the same, anti-racism.
- We are all inherently valuable. Honk Fest yesterday was so much fun with all sorts of different people accepting each other.
- I just want my coffee some days and don't want to be bothered with other issues but I think we can help the local community with this banner.
- Reading the NYT every day makes me want to cry so I come here.
- I can also say that I'm a racist and a white supremacist and I have felt for a long time that I can not ever do enough. But the more comfortable I get with this fact, the easier it is for me to relax and do what I can.
- There is a difference between structural racism and personal racism. We are not personally responsible for the system.
- Changing the language on the BLM banner would be making who more comfortable?
- We are racist in part by being part of this racist society.
- Confronting the reality of racial injustice is a good thing whenever we can make it happen.
- MLK was frustrated by white moderates and I think this church tends to be like white moderates, not really taking a stand. We say the right things but some of us don't put ourselves out there.
- There is still some ignorance about BLM and racial justice in our congregation despite how intellectual and well educated we generally are. Most people don't know the basics like the 4 I's of oppression: internalized, institutional, interpersonal and ideological.
- It's easier to see the interpersonal and institutional racism but harder to see the internal racism. Anyone raised in this culture has had to deal with internal racism. Catching it is good so we can worked toward improvement. We need to work on this in this congregation.
- WMCN showed a wonderful film a ago, American Denial. I was surprised and moved by black children liking white dolls better. Racism is so pervasive it effects even black children.
- It would be good to ask congregants if they are afraid when they are stopped by police.
- I was shocked by some discrimination I witnessed on he west coast, toward a black business woman in a hotel.
- I'm not sure how to respond effectively to All Lives Matter
- In Winchester the poor are also targeted by police
- We need to be more universal than race
- Create an environment for dialog
- Dismayed by idea of living where people need to fear law enforcement
- Is Winchester safe for people of color?
- I know nothing about biases of police here [noted by another speaker that chief of police has attended Visions multicultural training, seems sensitive to issues. Multicultural Network would

have a lot to say about the police.]

- Wonderful things are happening in our building, but people need to be in the building to know about them. It's important to make an external statement
- Black lives matter is an absolute spiritual truth
- Police brutality and poor training is an issue
- 8-year-old nearly lynched in NH – not so far from here
- What about [racism in] the schools? The school system should be on our to-do list.
- We need not just education in the community but also internally
- Respect the lives of all people; link where we've been to where we're going
- Need to think internally about these issues
- UU Principles will bring us to peace on the planet
- I'm not a white liberal, don't trust liberals in use [or suppression] of statistics
- Should have social activism
- William Barber's address to poor people's gathering was not reported in the Boston Globe
- Why don't other congregations in Winchester have a BLM banner?
- Confronting racism puts us in a place of white vulnerability, which is a spiritual task
- This is a long-term issue that will force people to think
- Have a white supremacy teach-in for the community
- A banner isn't the only thing we should do. We need to walk the walk
- Interweave antiracism into the fabric of who we are, such as using words of wisdom by people of color in our community conversations
- We need to do a better job in the education of young children. Three times more black boys are suspended from preschool than are suspended from high school.
- WUS has had many anti-racism events: multi-week workshop, films, book discussions, actions addressing mass incarceration. So our decision on a banner may be late, but it is not coming out of the blue. There are ways to be involved.
- We believe in the inherent worth and dignity of all. Don't lose this in the BLM work
- Making this a political church reminds us what we're not talking about: black-on-black deaths
- I don't do enough to fix things.
- This is a white problem. We need to educate our white neighbors.
- What does it mean to be UU? To seek justice? We should feel pain that people are harmed.
- Killing young men is not normal, not right.
- Have ongoing conversations. We can come to them in our own time.

Comments on the discussion

- Discussion helps with personal journey
- Encourage others to attend future discussions
- Would help to have a trained facilitator so all can fully participate
- Write comments down so all can see
- Being politically correct suppresses discussion
- Structure of discussion was good
- I've learned a lot from this process and a banner might help us to learn more.
- I have heard lots of well thought out statements.
- I am not a process person but there is so much going on for all of us, so I think this process is very good.

- I'm learning so much from everyone who spoke today.
 - It's a privilege to be in this open honest conversation. This could expand beyond to a large conversation in the community.
 - Thanks to everyone for sharing. I love process stuff.
 - I love process too and have learned so much in this community.
 - This is messy but good messy.
 - I'm grateful for this messy controversial conversation at the national, UU and WUS level.
 - I have learned a lot in this process and am now seeing how hard it is for us to be black centered. We keep trying to make it whiter.
 - I am finding it easier to publicly acknowledge my own racism and white supremacy by being in this process group.
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- Two-minute limit impinges on free speech
 - Glad for this opportunity to learn; BLM 101
 - It's important to have this conversation [3 people]
 - My head is full; there are valid concerns
 - I appreciate the statements by others
 - I would prefer not to be in this conversation.
 - Citation from Derrick Bell, Ethical Ambition: Living a Life of Meaning and Worth*
 - Quote from Gnostic Gospel of Thomas*
 - Gratitude for leaders, candor, care of conversation
 - Thank you. I have learned from each of you who have spoken.

NOTE: * Read too quickly for notetaker to capture content.