

Implicit Bias Committee Review Report for GNJ 2022 Annual Conference Session

An Implicit Bias Review of all legislation and reports to the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference was included with the Journey of Hope legislation in 2020 and legislation from COSROW in May 2021. This review, to be led by the Commission on Religion and Race (CoRR) and the Committee on the Status and Role of Women (COSROW), began its collaboration with GNJ Conference Secretary, Rev. Shelley Smith, and the GNJ Communications Coordinator in December 2021. Led by Rev. Miso Park, chair of CoRR, an Implicit Bias Review Team, including members from CoRR, COSROW, the Committee on Local Ethnic Church Concerns, and the Board of Church and Society, recommended a timeline for the submission of legislation and reports. Rev. Smith determined the deadline to recommend submitting reports and legislation would be January 31, 2022.

This year there were two rounds of Implicit Bias Review for legislation and reports to accommodate the large number of reports, as well as several complex pieces of legislation which needed approval by several agencies (for example, the 2023 budget). All legislation and reports were reviewed by the Implicit Bias Review Team, with feedback provided to the authors. Final copies with revisions were sent to Rev. Smith for inclusion in the PreConference Workbook.

Implicit bias is defined by Merriam Webster as “a bias or prejudice that is present but not consciously held or recognized.” Everyone has preferences and prejudices of which they are not aware. The purpose of an implicit bias review is for a diverse group of leaders to identify and remove these biases so that systems of privilege and inequity are not reinforced in the work of GNJ. This is part of Journey of Hope’s work to end the sin of racism.

During this year’s review period, there were several recurring indicators of bias:

1. The use of language for God and people. When referring to God, authors were asked to use inclusive language so that we do not limit God to male pronouns or reinforce patriarchal language. When referring to people, authors were asked to change pejorative language such as “those people” (substituted as “individuals”) or “foreign language churches” (substituted as “to reflect the diversity present in GNJ”).
2. The use of general information rather than specific details. In some cases, the Implicit Bias Review asked questions for additional information from authors. In other cases, exact numbers were requested rather than round numbers. Finally, on reports regarding progress on strategic goals, such as Journey of Hope, specific details about how goals are being worked toward were requested rather than simply giving the current metric.
3. Diversity in leadership. The Implicit Bias Review worked very closely with the Nominations Committee to give feedback and ensure that GNJ has a diverse and inclusive representation throughout its boards and agencies.

All of the legislation and reports included in the PreConference Workbook were reviewed for bias. The following reports and legislation did not make changes that were recommended by the Implicit Bias Review: “Address Rule 64 To Address Inclusivity in A Workable Way” submitted by Creed Pogue.

After the review, the review team has identified several next steps and recommendations:

1. A group will develop a template and recommendations for reports to be submitted to the Annual Conference so that there is consistency and bias is removed.

2. The Implicit Bias Review team will continue to work with the conference secretary and communications team to provide a PreConference Workbook that reflects our commitment expressed in the Journey of Hope legislation.

We are proud of GNJ's commitment to work toward ending the sin of racism, including a thorough Implicit Bias Review. Thank you to the review team, authors of legislation and reports, and all GNJ for your good work on this.

Submitted by Miso Park, Chairperson, Commission on Religion and Race (CoRR), Marissa van der Valk, Chairperson, Committee on the Status and Role of Women (COSROW)