

Assembly's Reparations-Inspired Initiative

2023 Report

After years of study and discussion, we (the Assembly congregation) decided to respond in tangible ways to the longstanding call from Black and Indigenous communities to address the legacy of White supremacy. In October 2022 we adopted a reparations-inspired plan to pay on the debt this history of oppression has wrought.

We collected money on the first Sunday of each month as part of our "Two-Percent offering," and we empowered the Reparations Committee* to explore how and where to make our payments. Their discernment was enhanced by two Sunday morning worship services organized by the committee: one featuring Cyneatha Millsaps, executive director of Goshen College's Center for Community Engagement; and one featuring Nekeisha Alayna Alexis, AMBS Intercultural Competence and Undoing Racism (ICUR) coordinator. Also, Assembly's Repair Ministry Team (focusing on harm done to Indigenous Peoples) organized a five-week worship series and advised the Reparations Committee on where payments could be made.

The congregation responded strongly to this initiative, contributing **\$30,107 in 2023!** The Reparations Committee then made the following payments:

- **\$13,800: Tolson Center for Community Excellence (Elkhart)**
 - Rooted in the historically African-American Benham West neighborhood, this new community center is an important hub for providing programs aimed at revitalizing a proud but devastated and neglected community. In the past, Black people were barred from living in Goshen and shunted into this southcentral Elkhart neighborhood.
- **\$8,800: Miami Nation of Indians in Indiana**
 - This nonprofit organization consists of people who continue to live on part of their original homeland and whose federal recognition was "illegally taken from [them] in the late 1800s." Their mission is "to protect, promote, record, and share the Miami of Indiana's history, language, culture, and heritage;" and they are currently focused on regaining their federal status and restoring their tribal complex in downtown Peru.
- **\$4,400: Miami Tribe of Oklahoma**
 - This is the federally recognized Native American tribe of Miami Indians, which was forcibly removed in the 19th century from their traditional territory in present-day Indiana, Michigan and Ohio. Our payment supports their efforts at reclamation of culture, language, and education for tribal members living in Indiana.
- **\$1,100: Misc. reparations programs**
 - This includes payments to reparations programs of the Committee for the Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery (\$900), and AMBS reparations payments in the Elkhart African American community (\$200).

We can further our support for the well-being and empowerment of marginalized peoples by making voluntary payments to the Reparations/Two-Percent offering in 2024. And as we are reminded each month, we do this in order to become more of who we are created to be: **a community of repentance ...**

"We wouldn't have a racial crisis in America if the church had not consistently failed to deal with racism as the severe sin it is"

Fannie Lou Hamer (1917-1977; leading civil, women's and voting rights activist)

... and **a community of repair.**

"The first thing for the church to do is to wake up to the fact that it can do something"

Rev. Francis Grimke (1850-1937; Presbyterian minister, helped found the NAACP)

Karl Shelly

* Reparations Committee: Glenn Gilbert, Deb Johnston, Jason Kauffman, Arden Shank (chair), Meribeth Shank, Karl Shelly