

Proposed Presbytery Antiracism Statement and Policy
The Presbytery of Carlisle

Adapted from “Antiracism Statement” of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) A Corp

Our biblical and theological heritage calls us to love and serve all people, for we are equally beloved of God, with each person possessing the divine image within them. Our shared humanity calls us to live and work together toward God’s shalom. In Scripture we read,

So, God created humankind in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:27) And,

Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. (1 Corinthians 12:12-13)

In the Confessions we read,

God's reconciling love breaks down every form of discrimination based on racial or ethnic difference. (Confession of 1967) And,

We believe...that God’s lifegiving Word and Spirit has conquered the powers of sin and death, and therefore also of irreconciliation and hatred, bitterness and enmity, that God’s lifegiving Word and Spirit will enable the church to live in a new obedience which can open new possibilities of life for society and the world.... (Belhar Confession)

In *Facing Racism: A Vision of the Intercultural Community*, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) affirms that “racism is the opposite of what God intends for humanity. ... [it] is a lie about our fellow human beings, for it says that some are less than others.”¹ We state unequivocally that racism and all forms of discrimination and marginalization are sins against humanity and God, inconsistent with our Christian and corporate values and unacceptable within our congregations and presbyteries.

Racism is a practice or system of racial prejudice exerted by those in power — institutionally and individually, consciously and unconsciously — that is deeply ingrained in the history of the United States. Racism benefits people in the dominant culture socially, economically, and politically while disadvantaging people of color and people from minority cultures. However, for all persons, any racism corrupts the image of God within us. The task of dismantling racism must be a partnership that involves all levels of the church.

¹ *Facing Racism: A Vision of the Intercultural Community*, 222nd General Assembly (2016) <https://facing-racism.pcusa.org/item/40835/>

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is an institution founded and historically run by white people that remains approximately 88% white. Closer to home, our Presbytery is 96% white. We must come to terms with those numbers and their implications for the work we do, and the audiences we reach.² We worship and work in a culture whose implicit, often unconscious bias assumes the primacy of white culture: its patterns of behavior and cultural assumptions regarding values and human vision.

We understand that we may need to unlearn existing habits of thought and behavior that form our speech and our social interactions as well as reform our ecclesial structures and policies, for racism persists despite our expressed values and intentions. If we are to create an antiracist church where “all persons are treated with respect, all gifts are valued and encouraged, and diversity is a gift to be valued,”³ we will be open to courageous self-reflection, confession, and repentance that leads to transformed persons, relationships, policies, and habits of interacting with one another.

We recognize the strides we have made, even as we acknowledge there is more work to do. As we strive to be an antiracist church, we vigorously commit ourselves to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in our life together. Such a commitment to DEI requires that we commit to repent, review, require, and repair.

G-3.0106 requires each Council to adopt an anti-racism policy. As a presbytery (congregation) within the PCUSA we will:

1. Seek to welcome and be open to all people.
2. Educate ourselves to seek awareness of our own behavior, blindness, and biases and the impact on our community of faith and the wider community.
3. Seek resources (curriculum, worship, preaching, music, and literature) which are reflective of all ethnic and racial backgrounds.
4. Study [Matthew 25 materials](#), the [Churchwide Antiracism Policy \(2016\)](#), and/or other materials as advised by the presbytery or [PC\(USA\)](#) to increase our awareness of systemic racism and its impact.
5. Together seek within the congregation and the community those whose experience and expertise can be instructive and inspiring, and for partnerships that increase cooperation and understanding.

This policy takes effect when it is approved by the session/presbytery council.

- We commit to repenting of the role we collectively and individually have played and continue to play in creating and maintaining systemic racism that implicitly biases white cultural practices.

² "Black Lives Matter," on the Presbyterian Historical Society's website, <https://.history.pcusa.org/blog/2020/06/black-lives-matter>

³ Racial Equity," on the Presbyterian Women's website, https://www.presbyterianwomen.org/what_we_do/build-community/antiracism

- We commit to reviewing annually the presbytery’s own practices and implementing strategies to disrupt and dismantle systemic bias that presumes the primacy of white culture within our life together.
- We commit to requiring antiracism training of all Ministers of Word and Sacrament in permanent and temporary pastoral relationships, validated ministries, as well as members-at-large. This training is required to be taken once every three years. Further, the presbytery commits to requiring of itself that such antiracism training will be offered on an annual basis.⁴
- We commit to repairing the damages caused by racist policies by creating and investing in new strategies to ensure the church’s continuous advance away from past practices.⁵

We acknowledge that this work will not be easy, but, as our church wide antiracism policy affirms: “Because of our biblical understanding of who God is and what God intends for humanity, the PCUSA must stand against, speak against, and work against racism. Antiracist effort is not optional for Christians. It is an essential aspect of Christian discipleship, without which we fail to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ.”⁶ Because of our biblical understanding of who God is and what God intends for humanity, Carlisle Presbytery commits to seeking God’s kingdom for all people: “to proclaim good news to the poor...and the year of Jubilee.” (Luke 4:18-19)

The content of this policy is adapted from Antiracism policies from Lake Erie, Grand Canyon, and DeCristo Presbyteries.

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⁴ The Presbytery of Grand Canyon and De Cristo Presbytery policy has a list of potential topics to address in that training. The list of topics is illustrative, not exhaustive, and represents the scope and focus of training topics to be offered. It is understood that future years and challenges may necessitate a different list of potential training topics.

⁵ As an example, the Civil Rights movement established the following: the 1965 Civil Rights Legislation and the 1964 Voting Rights Legislation, which include policy changes and investments to sustain the work of moving toward diversity, equity, and inclusion. As an example taken from the context of our Native congregations, the General Assembly has acted to encourage mid-councils to consider donating a portion of funds received whenever a property is sold go to Native congregations for their benefit and rehabilitation.

⁶ *Facing Racism*, *ibid.*

