



ANTI-RACISM POLICY

October 26, 2024

Scriptural and Theological Framework for Anti-Racism Training

The Presbytery of Genesee Valley, NY of the Presbyterian Church (USA) seeks to form disciples whose lives and behaviors conform to the teachings of Jesus Christ. Jesus sets a high standard for personal conduct which may be summarized in his commandment “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matthew 22; 37-39)

There are several Biblical arguments against any form of racism and our call to a Beloved Community (*All scripture quotes are from the NRSV Updated Edition*)

1. Creation (Genesis 1)

We receive our existence as a gift from God. When humanity elevates one group over another, or falsely declares particular groups less good than others, we usurp God’s place as creator of all that is. We deny our interrelation and proclaim our judgment more powerful than God’s.

2. God’s own image (Genesis 1:27):

*God created humans in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.*

While humans have many differences, we are all children of God, made in the image of God, and therefore of equal worth, value, and dignity. It is therefore falsehood and deception to deny the full humanity of any group of people.

3. God loves diversity (1 Corinthians 12:12-13)

*For just as the body is one and has many members,
and all the members of the body, though many, are one body,
so it is with Christ.
For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—
Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.*

While focusing on the image of God emphasizes how all human persons are fundamentally the same, the differences between persons are also valuable. And the grace of God does not erase differences, but rather invites unity among them.

4. God loves justice (Jeremiah 9; 24)

*I am the Lord; I act with steadfast love, justice,
and righteousness in the earth,
for in these things I delight, says the Lord.*

The prophets of the Hebrew Bible continually proclaim God's care for those who are oppressed and God's demand for just action. God delights in justice. Racism, as systemic inequality, is fundamentally unjust and therefore against the will of God.

5. What God Requires (Micah 6; 8)

*He has told you, O mortal, what is good;
and what does the Lord require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?*

From cover to cover, scripture portrays God's vision of equality, equity, fairness, and justice. To fully live into this vision and love our neighbor as ourselves, we must seek to know and understand the effects of racism on our neighbors of color. Understanding racism and its traumatic effect on those who experience it, is of paramount importance if divisive racial barriers are to be torn down and structural racism is to be dismantled.

The church and its people have been wounded by centuries of racism. The vestiges of racism are ever-present and continue to impact and impede joyful relationships, honest dialogue, thoughtful cooperation, and intentional inclusion in our churches and among its members.

As members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), we are part of an institution founded and historically run by white people, one that remains approximately 88% white. We must come to terms with those numbers and their implications for the work we do, and the audiences we reach. We are undeniably implicated in the entrenched legacies of racism and white supremacy that continue to shape the United States and our church.

We are mandated in *Facing Racism* to "embrace antiracism as a major part of our corporate identity." To this end, 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 agencies and entities. We understand that each of our agencies and entities "must unlearn and undo existing racist values and structures" that persist 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."

As we strive to be an antiracist church, we commit to:

- repenting of the role we collectively and individually have played and continue to play in creating and maintaining white supremacy and systemic racism
- providing antiracism and cultural humility training for employees as directed by the church wide antiracism policy
- developing and implementing practices and strategies to disrupt and dismantle racism and oppression in the church and the world
- striving for racial equity in recruitment, hiring, and retention of employees
- managing church investments in ways that increase our witness to racial justice and equity
- taking steps of reparation and restorative action in response to disparities of wealth created and sustained by white supremacy
- working in partnership with mid councils in their antiracism ministries
- acting courageously and creatively against police brutality, voter suppression, educational and healthcare inequity, and other acts and practices of systemic racism on federal, state, and local levels
- putting into practice General Assembly directives to build an intercultural church where justice and equity prevail

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 PC(USA) 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.”

Approach

The Stated Clerk shall maintain a record of persons who complete training. This requirement shall be included in all terms of call.

1. Anti-Racism training shall be required at least once every three years for:

- a. All Ministers of the Word and Sacrament who are serving as pastors to a congregation or otherwise engaged in a Validated Ministry are required to participate in a training program approved by the Racial Justice Peace and Advocacy Working Group (RJPAWG), within one year after this policy is adopted or within one year of assuming the role. This requirement shall be included in the terms of call.
- b. All Certified Christian Educators are required to participate in a training program approved by RJPAWG, within one year after this policy is adopted or within one year of assuming the role.
- c. All Commissioned Pastors (CPs), ruling elders serving as “New Faith Community Leaders” and all ruling elders elected to serve on the Transitional Leadership Team, the Committee on Ministry (COM) or the Commission on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) are required to participate in a training within one year of being commissioned (CP) or elected (COM or CPM).
- d. All members of the Racial Justice Peace and Advocacy Working Group, Permanent Judicial Commission, and Personnel Committee are required to participate in a training program approved by the RJPAWG within one year after this policy is adopted or within one year of assuming the role.
- e. All Candidates for Ministry are required to attend an anti-racism training program approved by the RJPAWG. If an alternative training is incongruent with the anti-racism mission and policy, it shall not be accepted as having met the requirement.
- f. All Presbytery staff are required to attend training within one year of the adoption of this policy or within one year of hire/election.
- g. The Presbytery **strongly encourages** honorably retired teaching elders, ruling elders serving in leadership roles in the Presbytery, session members, youth directors, Christian educators, music leaders, and other congregational staff leaders to participate in approved anti-racism trainings.

2. Required Training Schedule and Locations

- a. Required anti-racism training shall be provided by the Presbytery four times per year at locations across the presbytery e.g. at Presbytery meetings, Congregational Learning Day, via Zoom etc.
- b. Approved alternate training shall be allowed for those unable to attend scheduled required training held within the perimeter of the Presbytery.

3. Recommended Anti-Racism Activities

Anti-racism activities are recommended at least annually for churches and members throughout the Presbytery (including but not limited to listening sessions, workshops, book/video discussions, presentations involving speakers or panels, and field trips)

4. Recommended Anti-racism activities schedule and locations

Due to the size of the presbytery, anti-racism training activities should be offered four times a year in various regions of the presbytery including but not limited to Presbytery meetings, Congregational Learning Day, youth retreats, churches or other locations to accommodate geographic church clusters based on the size of the attendance.

Suggested Material

1. “What LIES between us” by Dr Lucretia Berry

A 5-Week self-paced, anti-racism educational Course from brownicity.com (\$67 per person?)
About the Course: Anti-race/ism Curriculum Specialist, Dr. Lucretia Berry and Team Brownicity designed the **What LIES Between Us** series to guide, support, and equip ‘new comers’ with an analytical framework for examining race and racism in the United States.

Learners will be equipped with a historical, political, and social context for understanding race/ism and how it is sustained. The content will allow participants to build a sound knowledge base and develop a perspective beyond popular discourse and uninformed opinions. With a practical understanding of contributing ideologies—like white supremacy, meritocracy, colorblindness—and interpersonal and systemic dynamics—like unconscious bias, and power and privilege—participants will have a broadened awareness of themselves, “others,” and our interconnected society.

2. Next Church: Anti-Racism as a Way of Being

https://nextchurch.net/product/antiracism-as-a-way-of-being/?mc_cid=1d1564f101&mc_eid=35ba0f18a5#toggle-id-8

This package is designed for groups who want to engage the course as a collective and have a leader to facilitate discussion and reflection. The course will be delivered on NEXT Church’s e-learning platform (Teachable) to each member of the group. This will require each group member to create their own account, unless videos are only shown in a group setting. Each group will have a [NEXT Church coach](#) that will accompany the group leader during implementation.

3. Facing Racism: A Vision of the Intercultural Community, 222nd General Assembly (2016) <https://facing-racism.pcusa.org/item/40835/> with the accompanying study guide ([facing-racism-study-guide.pdf](#))

This is a free 6-week course produced by PCUSA. It is designed as a group study with a moderator guiding discussion and is not suitable for individual study.

Suggested Reading

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

How to Be an Anti-Racist by Ibram X. Kendi (Penguin Random House)

The New Jim Crow by Michelle Alexander (The New Press)

Report of the Task Force to Study Reparations, 216th General Assembly (2004)

<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/resource/report-task-force-reparations/>

Caste: the Origins of Our Discontents by Isabel Wilkerson (Random House)

White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism by Robin DiAngelo (Beacon Press)

White Too Long by Robert P. Jones (Simon and Schuster)