

CENTRAL FLORIDA PRESBYTERY POLICY ON ANTI-RACISM

Adopted 6-1-2023

Biblical Background

Scripture in many places calls on the people of God to be a blessing to all peoples, to be reconciled and reconcilers. *Believing that we have been created in God's Image, we commit to the reconciling work necessary until all peoples find themselves integrated into the whole of society and treated with dignity and righteous justice.* The texts below are two that undergird this anti-racism policy:

Galatians 3:26-28 – So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 2:14-16 - For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.

We, a diverse and complex community of believers, set forth and commit to operate under this policy. We will undertake this discipline individually and collectively as a church.

1. PRAY with an open mind and heart, and respond to God's leading.
2. LEARN:
 - to share the history, dynamics, and consequences of racism as power;
 - to listen empathetically to the hurts and hopes of people of color;
 - to listen to and hear the lived realities and stories of people of color without blaming, deflecting, or changing the subject.
 - to recognize the ways historic acts and attitudes of oppression continue to affect our view of society, culture, and racial tensions
 - to respect, with humility, marginalized people, including when or how they peacefully protest their mistreatment;
 - to recognize implicit bias (attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions and decisions in an unconscious manner) and the resulting habit of ingrained prejudice;
 - to avoid racially charged words and dehumanizing phrases.
 - study with others the Central Florida Presbytery's Statement on Racial Injustice
3. REPENT and ATONE:
 - for personal acts of racism or colorism, acknowledging that we can veil racist or prejudiced thoughts and behaviors, even from ourselves
 - for our failure to hear the cries of our marginalized kindred;
 - for power imbalances and undercurrents of racism that limits access to leadership and control of faith institutions;

- for valuing law and order and property above the lives of people of color;
- for being silent in the face of racial injustice.

4. AFFIRM:

- inclusion in leadership in the Central Florida Presbytery and Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), while acknowledging that more work is necessary;
- that we sin before God and against humanity when we refer to any person as “other” or as “them”;
- our accountability to all people, regardless of color;
- the need to reform racialized aspects of our criminal justice system;
- the importance and value of a truth and reconciliation process for our faith traditions and nation;
- that faithfulness demands working for restitution and restorative justice from our faith institutions and our nation for Black, Indigenous, and other People Of Color (BIPOC)⁷ communities because, “Repairing what’s broken is a distinctly biblical concept, which is why as people of faith we should be leading the way into redemption, restoration, and reconciliation.”⁸

5. ACT:

- by practicing Christ’s love and acceptance of all people and all faiths by leading with love because we can never expect others to believe what we believe if we do not extend love to everyone.
- by bringing our prophetic voices into the public arena;
- by leading our congregations to recognize and confront racism;
- by calling for appropriate discipline, up to and including prosecution and/or termination of employment, of law enforcement officers who commit racist or brutal acts;
- by working to transform our system of policing, criminal justice, immigration, and mass incarceration systems that are decimating BIPOC communities;
- by working to eliminate inequities inflicted on non-white communities from health care to employment, from education to wealth, from the criminal justice system to housing;
- by taking responsibility for our part in the struggle for racial justice in all arenas of life;
- by making amends for our silence by speaking truth with humility and listening with deeper conviction to those we have offended.

As a Presbytery, we shall:

- provide opportunities for all members of the presbytery and our congregations to participate in educational events that promote understanding and discussion about racism and our racial history;
- encourage all committees, ministries, members and congregations to engage in efforts to end racial injustice by promoting equal access to leadership opportunities including a place and voice at the table with the Nominating Committee and the Committee on Representation taking the lead here.
- require Ministers of Word and Sacrament, Certified Christian Educators, Commissioned Pastors and presbytery staff to engage in anti-racism training on an ongoing basis; (triennially). Council, the Committee on Ministry and the Leadership Development Committee will take the lead to plan and offer this training. ⁹

³ Language changes over time and this reference is to all non-white people in our society including persons of Asian, Latin and other racial ethnic descent.

⁸ LaTasha Morrison, *Be the Bridge: Pursuing God's Heart for Racial Reconciliation*. 2019, WaterBrook, Crown Publishing Group. p.154

³ Recommendation to Council: Approve the Spring Stated Presbytery Meeting be changed to include an in-service training event for the Ministers of Word and Sacrament, Certified Christian Educators, Commissioned Pastors and presbytery staff in the morning. (thus, making it an all-day meeting)
Rationale: this would allow trainings such as anti-racism and boundaries to be elevated in importance and a date each year for planning purposes.

- urge the leadership, staff and members of the presbytery's congregations to participate in the same recurring anti-racism training events;
 - provide resources/ training videos on the presbytery website for congregations to use for additional
- encourage Administrative Commissions and councils to consider designating a portion of the proceeds from any sales of property to further anti-racism work, such as:
 - support BIPOC ministries and congregations
 - establish and fund scholarships for BIPOC members of the presbytery's faith communities, leaders and youth to include camps, conferences, college, seminary, continuing education or training opportunities
- recommend that all individuals at every stage and age learn about racism in age-appropriate ways;
 - provide an anti-racism page on the website where individuals can find resources and training opportunities.
- promote storytelling events and intercultural experiences that help us understand our collective narrative as people of faith and the ways we are transformed by the Gospel and by intentional conversations with our racially diverse siblings;
 - capture stories from the storytelling events on video and/or other media to allow as many people as possible to have access to these. ¹⁰
 - Send a copy of any videos/ media to the Presbyterian Historical Society for an even greater reach
- communicate the presbytery's awakened convictions, repentance, and commitment to a new awareness, utilizing:
 - Presbytery Newsletters
 - Presbytery Meetings
 - Social Media
 - Website
 - Podcast
- commit to be active and to publicly proclaim our new understandings as we express our faith through civic engagement.¹¹
 - sponsor events for the purpose of educating and informing the general public, such as: Forums/ Debates/ Critical Conversations/Activists/ Movie Screenings;
 - promote the diverse leadership of the Presbyterian Church in a way that highlights the greater efforts of the denomination;
 - support efforts to eradicate cash bail (the Bail Project);
 - write guest columns in the newspaper or blogs;
 - use our Podcast as a platform
 - At least annually, acknowledge and state the original land use at a presbytery meeting as was recommended by the 223rd General Assembly (2018) of the PC(USA)¹² regarding the Doctrine of Discovery to all mid-councils.⁶

¹⁰ The budget implications for this are unknown at this time. Scott Prewitt and people at Full Sail can help us discover the costs involved.

¹¹ Historically this has included works for the abolitions of slavery, marches for civil rights, non-violent protest, sit-ins, communicating with elected officials, etc.

¹² Doctrine of Discovery: A Review of Its Origins and Implications for Congregations in the PC(USA) and Support for Native American Sovereignty
https://facing-racism.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/facing_racism/doctrine-of-discovery-report-to-the-223rd-ga-2018-finalized-copy_as-approved.pdf

As a Presbytery, we adopt the following procedure for filing allegations and complaints of policy violations:

Preventing discrimination, harassment and retaliation based on race is everyone's responsibility. Central Florida Presbytery and the sessions of local congregations cannot prevent or remedy discrimination, harassment, and retaliation based on race unless they know about them. This policy applies to allegations and complaints arising at the presbytery level that may occur at events such as: presbytery meetings, committee meetings, council, presbytery sponsored training even, Presbyterian Youth Council (PYC), Camps, etc.

An allegation is a written description of behavior of an individual that is suspected to be a violation of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA). A complaint is a written description of behavior of a council, or entity of a council that is suspected to violate the same standards through action in error or failure to act.

- **Reporting an Allegation– against an individual**
 - All allegations shall be submitted to the Stated Clerk, following the guidelines in D-10.0101.
 - Although individuals are encouraged first to choose have conversation with the person who has offended about what was offensive and resolve the matter; however a written summary of the incident is required to begin the formal disciplinary process.
 - Allegations should be reported in as timely of a manner as possible.
 - Upon receipt of a written allegation, the Stated Clerk shall determine whether the allegation involves a member of presbytery.
 - If it involves a member of presbytery, the Stated Clerk shall follow the procedures for the initiation of an investigation for disciplinary process in D-10.0103.
 - If the complaint involves a member of a congregation, it shall be referred to the congregation's session.

- **Reporting a Complaint – against the presbytery** (committee, entity, or the presbytery itself).
 - Complaints alleging an irregularity or delinquency shall be handled as follows.
 - If the alleged irregularity or delinquency occurred during a meeting or event overseen by a committee or entity of the presbytery, the Stated Clerk shall forward the complaint to the presbytery's Permanent Judicial Commission, which shall handle it in accordance with D-6.000 and D-7.000 of the Rules of Discipline.
 - If the alleged irregularity or delinquency was committed by the presbytery itself, the complaint shall be sent to the Stated Clerk of the Synod of South Atlantic.