

Presbytery of St. Augustine Antiracism Policy and Statement  
Adapted from the “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<sup>[c]</sup> 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.”<sup>1</sup> 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.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is an institution founded and historically run by white people that remains approximately 88% white. Closer to home, The Presbytery of St. Augustine is largely white, while the communities in which many of us live and serve are much more diverse. We must come to terms with those numbers and their implications for the work we do, and the audiences we reach.<sup>2</sup> 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.

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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,”<sup>3</sup> 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.

- 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.
- 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. To that end, we will offer educational workshops to better understand biases and deepen our cultural competency.
- 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 four to five years. Further, the presbytery commits to requiring of itself that such antiracism training will be offered on an annual basis.<sup>4</sup>
- 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.<sup>5</sup> Recognizing that oppression can come from both external and internal forces we will work to dismantle oppression in the church and in the world in all its forms, including working against internalized oppression.

(WHAT IS INTERNALIZED OPPRESSION? When people are targeted, discriminated against, or oppressed over a period of time, they often internalize (believe and make part of their self-image – their internal view of themselves) the myths and misinformation that society communicates to them about their group.)

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Racial Equity,” on the Presbyterian Women’s website, [https://www.presbyterianwomen.org/what\\_we\\_do/build-community/antiracism](https://www.presbyterianwomen.org/what_we_do/build-community/antiracism)

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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.”<sup>6</sup> Because of our biblical understanding of who God is and what God intends for humanity, the Presbytery of St. Augustine commits to seeking God’s Kingdom for all people.

When we gather as a Presbytery, we will lift up the names of the groups which originally occupied the land through corporate land acknowledgements. We will strive to structure our meetings so that they celebrate the fullness of humanity within our bounds. To that end, we will celebrate the culture and history of our diverse heritages. Normally our February meeting will include the celebration of African, Caribbean or both. Our May meeting will normally include the celebration of Pan Asia, Pacific Islander or both, and our October meeting will include the celebration of LatinX, Native American/Indigenous or both.

## Additional Material

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### Appendix A:

#### Illustrative (but not exhaustive) List of Potential Topics for Anti-Racism Training

##### Biblical and Theological Grounding for Anti-Racism Work

Examine such texts as those mentioned in this policy, as well as other biblical and theological examples of how anti-racism work is foundational to ministry practice and community ethics for Christian congregations.

##### Definition of Anti-Racism:

The active process of identifying and eliminating racism by changing systems, organizational structures, policies and practices and attitudes, so that power is redistributed and shared equitably.<sup>6</sup>

##### Definition of Intersectionality

The ways systems of oppression overlap to create distinct experiences for people with multiple identity categories.

"If you're standing in the path of multiple forms of exclusion, you're likely to get hit by both." - Dr. Kimberle Crenshaw<sup>8</sup>

##### Four “I’s” of Concern

(1) Ideological—beliefs, values, and culture; (2) Interpersonal—individual behavior; (3) Institutional—policies and practices; and (4) Identity—self-reflection of inferiority.<sup>7</sup>

##### Cultural Competency Continuum

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(1) Cultural destructiveness; (2) Cultural incapacity; (3) Cultural Blindness; (4) Cultural Pre-Competency; (5) Cultural Competency; and (6) Cultural Proficiency.<sup>8</sup>

Implicit Bias toward Assuming Primacy of White Culture / Cultural Practices

(1) Focus on perfectionism, (2) Sense of urgency, (3) Defensiveness, (4) Quantity or quality, (5) Worship of the written word, (6) Only one right, (7) Paternalism, (8) Either/or thinking, (9) Power hoarding, (10) Fear of open conflict, (11) Individualism, (12) I'm the only one, (13) Progress is bigger or more, (14) Objectivity, (15) Right to comfort.<sup>9</sup>

Zones / Distinctions in Allyship

(1) Fear Zone, Learning Zone, Growth Zone; (2) White Fragility vs. Weaponized White Fragility; (3) Performative Allyship vs. Authentic Allyship.

Overt vs. Covert Racism

Overt: Lynching, Hate Crimes, Blackface, the N-word, Swastikas, Neo-Nazis, Racist Jokes, Racial Slurs, KKK, Cross Burning

Covert: Weaponized Whiteness, Expecting BIPOC to Teach Whites, Believing We Are "Post-Racial," "But We're All One Big Human Family," "There's Only One Human Race," Housing Discrimination, Bootstrap Theory, School-To-Prison Pipeline, Police Murdering BIPOC, Virtuous Victim Narrative, Higher BIPOC Infant/Maternal Mortality Rate, "But What About Me?," "All Lives Matter," BIPOC as Halloween Costumes, Racial Profiling,

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### **A Partial list of Resources for Churches as they offer Training.**

[Trouble the Water: Conversations to Disrupt Racism and Dominance – PMA/OGA film series](#)

[At The River: Struggle and Grace in the Segregated South](#)

[Sarah Augustine, The Land is Not Empty: Following Jesus in Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery](#)

[Jemar Tisby, The Color of Compromise: The Truth About the American Church's Complicity in Racism](#)

[Carolyn Helsel, Anxious to Talk About it: Helping White People Talk Faithfully About Racism](#)

[Resmaa Menakem, My Grandmother's Hands](#)

[The Book of American Negro Poetry edited by James Weldon Johnson](#)

[Margaret Musgrove Ashanti to Zulu](#)

[Carol Beckwith and Angela Fisher, African Ceremonies](#)

[Daniel Banks, A Mighty King in Battle](#)

[Daniel Banks, Letters to Mr. Davis](#)

[The African Heritage Bible, edited by Dr. Cain Hope Felder](#)

[James H. Cone, A Black Theology of Liberation](#)

[Ibram X. Kendi, How to be Antiracist](#)

[Amanda Gorman, Call Us What We Carry](#)

[Ta-Nahesi Coates, Between the World and Me](#)

[Ibram X. Kendi, How to be an Anti-Racist](#)

[Ibram X. Kendi, Antiracist Baby](#)

[Bryan Stevenson Just Mercy](#)

[Bryan Stevenson Legacy Museum](#)

[Dr. Babara J. Brooks, One House, Block, Street, Community](#)  
[Charles Eady, Hidden Freedom](#)  
[Jeanne Theoharis, The Rebellious Life of Mrs. Rosa Parks](#)  
[Dr. Carol Anderson, White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide](#)  
[Dr. Carol Anderson, The Second](#)  
[Danisha Huntley, Lost Land](#)  
[Gilbert King, Devil in the Grove](#)  
[Michelle Alexander, The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness](#)  
[Wilkerson, Isabell The Origins of Our Discontents](#)  
[Origin 2023 A film Based on the life of Isabell Wilkerson](#)

Visit YouTube and look for the Blue Eyes/Brown Eyes experiment.

\*\*There is a plethora of valuable material available for increasing one's knowledge and insight in this area, this list is just a sampling of some of the resources that others have found to be beneficial.\*\*

- 1 Facing Racism: A Vision of the Intercultural Community, 222nd General Assembly (2016) <https://facing-racism.pcusa.org/item/40835/>
- 2 "Black Lives Matter," on the Presbyterian Historical Society's website, <https://.history.pcusa.org/blog/2020/06/black-lives-matter>
- 3 See Appendix A on page 3 for 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.
- 4 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.
- 5 Samantha Davis, presentation to the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board, May 2023. 8 Samantha Davis, *ibid*.
- 6 Facing Racism, *ibid*.
- 7 Josefina Ahumada, presentation to Presbytery de Cristo Leadership Commission, June 2021.
- 8 Tema Okun, "White Supremacy Culture," DRworks, [www.dismantlingracism.org](http://www.dismantlingracism.org).

