

Synod of the Trinity Anti-Racism Policy

There is no longer Jew or Greek; there is no longer slave or free; there is no longer male and female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. [Galatians 3:28]

Prologue

The church confesses that without distinction, humanity is created in the image of God. The constitution of the PCUSA further states, “God unites persons through baptism regardless of race, ethnicity, age, sex, disability, geography, or theological conviction. There is therefore no place in the life of the Church for discrimination against any person.” [F-1.0403]

Race is a social construct whose purpose (whether intentional or unintentional) instills a hierarchy of peoples based upon physical traits such as skin color. This hierarchy has no scientific basis. It was used during the 18th and 19th centuries as white Europeans expanded (colonized) their dominance through the use of forced slavery.

“Racism is the opposite of what God intends for humanity. It is the rejection of the other, which is entirely contrary to the Word of God incarnate in Jesus Christ. It is a form of idolatry that elevates human-made hierarchies of value over divinely-given free grace. Through colonization and slavery, the United States of America helped to create and embrace a system of valuing and devaluing people based on skin color and ethnic identity. The name for this system is white supremacy. This system deliberately subjugated groups of people for the purpose of material, political, and social advantage. Racism is the continuing legacy of white supremacy. Racism is a lie about our fellow human beings, for it says that some are less than others. It is also a lie about God, for it falsely claims that God favors parts of creation over the entirety of creation.” - from *PCUSA Facing Racism*

The Synod of the Trinity has adopted this anti-racism policy as part of its administration of mission, as described in G-3.0106 of the *Book of Order*.

G-3.0106 Administration of Mission

*... All councils shall adopt and implement the following policies: a sexual misconduct policy, a harassment policy, a child and youth protection policy, **and an antiracism policy**. Each council's policy shall include requirements for boundary training which includes the topic of sexual misconduct, and child sexual abuse prevention training for its members at least every thirty-six months.*

Prohibiting Racism

The Synod of the Trinity acknowledges that racism is contrary to the Scriptures and to the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Biblical and Theological Foundations

(See Appendix 1 for a fuller excerpt from *Facing Racism*.)

According to the Study Guide to *Facing Racism*:

The Bible provides a firm foundation and compelling imperative to engage in antiracist work....woven throughout the biblical witness.

The following biblical references are representative of themes found throughout Scripture:

Creation — Genesis 1:1-31 (see also Psalm 104)

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.

Image of God — Genesis 1:26

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.

God loves diversity — Acts 10:9-23

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.

God loves justice — Jeremiah 9:23-24

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.

With this biblical imperative to antiracism work, the Foundations of Presbyterian Polity rightly includes such essential elements as

F-1.01 GOD'S MISSION

The good news of the Gospel is that the triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—creates, redeems, sustains, rules, and transforms all things and all people. ... In Christ, the Church participates in God's mission for the transformation of creation and humanity by proclaiming to all people the good news of God's love, offering to all people the grace of God at font and table, and calling all people to discipleship in Christ.

F-1.0302 The Marks of the Church (c) (see also F-1.0404)

c. The Catholicity of the Church

Catholicity is God's gift to the Church in Jesus Christ. In the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, by the power of the Spirit, God overcomes our alienation and repairs our division.

Because in Christ the Church is catholic, it strives everywhere to testify to Christ's embrace of all people of all times, places, races, nations, ages, abilities, genders, conditions, and stations in life. The catholicity of the Church summons the Church to a deeper faith, a larger hope, and a more complete love as it bears witness to God's grace.

F-1.0403 Unity in Diversity

Citing Galatians: 3:27–29

The unity of believers in Christ is reflected in the rich diversity of the Church's membership. In Christ, by the power of the Spirit, God unites persons through baptism regardless of race, ethnicity, age, sex, disability, geography, or theological conviction. There is therefore no place in the life of the Church for discrimination against any person.

F-1.0404 Openness

... In Christ, Church members share with all humanity the realities of creatureliness, sinfulness, brokenness, and suffering, as well as the future toward which God is drawing them. The mission of God pertains not only to the Church but also to people everywhere and to all creation.

Particular Definitions

(Additional definitions from the Special Committee on Racism, Truth, and Reconciliation can be found in Appendix 2. Some definitions adapted from the glossary of the White Privilege Conference.)

- Antiracism is an intentional stance that opposes the sin of racism while affirming the dignity and humanity of those who may hold racist views or benefit from it. It opposes sin not the sinner.
- Race: a socially constructed concept that purports to use characteristics such as skin color, facial features, and body structure as a basis for classifying people for the purpose of installing hierarchies of oppression and benefits. It has no scientific or biological basis. It was introduced during the period of European colonial expansion.
- Racism – race-based prejudice + institutional power
- White Supremacy – a system of beliefs and attitudes that subtly or explicitly more highly esteem those racialized as White and continue to grant advantages

- Internalized White Supremacy – the acceptance of the negative societal beliefs and stereotypes about marginalized racial and ethnic populations by themselves and White persons, and the different impacts on their self-identity.
- (Micro)aggressions – (micro)aggressions are words and behaviors, intentional or unintentional, that dehumanize marginalized groups of people, often excused as innocent or well-intended. We recognize that continuous subjection of pain is trivialized by calling these harms “micro”aggressions.
- Beloved Community – God’s call to share life in freedom and justice together as a family, referenced as kin-dom of God.

Applicability

This policy applies to all members of the **Synod, staff, and anyone serving on a Synod commission or committee.**

Preventing Racism

In our life together, our behavior should reflect the theological affirmations and values held as members of the Church of Jesus Christ as prescribed in our constitutional documents. In particular, (F-1.0302, F-1.0403, F-1.0404). As members of The Synod of the Trinity we acknowledge that we are accountable to one another for our behavior and language.

In section G-3.0103 Participation and Representation, our Form of Government calls for councils to give full expression to the rich diversity of the church’s membership and shall provide for full participation and access to representation in decision-making and employment practices (F-1.0403). In fulfilling this commitment, **councils** shall give due consideration to both the gifts and requirements for ministry (G-2.0104) and the right of people in congregations and councils to elect their officers (F-3.0106).

Section G-3.0103 further calls for **councils** to “develop procedures and mechanisms for promoting and reviewing that body’s implementation of the church’s commitment to inclusiveness and representation.” That commitment is addressed in part by the work of the Committee on Representation, but is in no way exclusive to it.

To further its commitment to dismantling racism, the **Synod of the Trinity** shall offer prevention measures including, but not limited to:

- Providing antiracism training,¹ cultural competence training, and/or intercultural training facilitated by qualified professionals for staff, committees and commissions, and members of the **synod as part of the synod’s** regular training and education, but certainly not less than once every thirty-six months. A demonstration of completion is included as part of your annual records review, with any remedial action determined by synod.

¹ “Points of Engagement,” Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Churchwide Antiracism Policy, approved by the 222nd General Assembly, 2016.

- Facilitating awareness of racism's impact through the land and labor acknowledgment at every stated meeting of the synod, and at other synod gatherings as appropriate.
- Offering resources on antiracism to congregations and ministries within the bounds of the **synod**.
- Affirming the diversity of applicants and candidates for all staff and ordered ministry positions over which the synod has jurisdiction.
- Supporting persons and groups of underrepresented races through intentional representation, caucuses, **and** programming such as retreats or training.
- Adopting or amending policies, practices, standing rules, and the manual of operations to ensure they afford full and inclusive participation of all voices, and publishing them in the languages spoken by members of this **synod**.
- Attending to revelations of systemic racism past and present as perpetrated within the bounds of the **synod**, researching their cause, and offering and implementing appropriate solutions, relief, or reparations accorded by the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).
- Designating persons to speak on matters of racism as they become known within the **synod's** bounds, communicating the sentiments of this policy.

Accountability

We hold ourselves accountable for working consistently and purposefully towards racial justice and equity in our synod/presbytery/congregation:

- Taking responsibility as individuals and as communities of faith for engaging with resources and in conversations that help us to learn and grow, creating opportunities to invite people into those conversations, and recognizing that antiracism work is non-optional as Christians.
- Seeking partners and groups within the church and in ecumenical and community spaces who will help to hold us accountable as we engage antiracism resources and work.
- Establishing explicit norms within our synod/presbytery/congregation for accountable spaces that include sensitivity to how people may experience a conversation differently because of their racial identity.
(https://pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/oga/markers_of_accountability_in_antiracism_work.pdf)
- Maintaining a commitment to self-reflective truth-telling about our experiences with and/or participation in White supremacy in church and society, including an examination of our presbytery's/congregations' history; to honesty, openness, humility, courage, and

grace with one another in our conversations; and to taking responsibility when our words or actions cause harm.

- Listening to voices long silenced within church and community.
- Ensuring intentional follow-through on statements and proposed actions, so that we live fully into our stated convictions and commitments.
- Designating a respondent who will speak for the council regarding incidents involving the general public.
- Employing church discipline when appropriate.

RESPONDING PROCEDURE

Matthew 18:15-17

“If your sibling sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If you are listened to, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If that person refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church, and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a gentile and a tax collector.”

Remembering that Jesus continued to associate and eat with gentiles and tax collectors, the recommended means of response is to focus on grace rather than judgment, and education more than discipline, in all but the most intentional acts of racism.

To err on the side of grace is

- not to dismiss or diminish the offense, but to name the sin, gently rather than in anger;
- to recognize that people come into this subject matter from a variety of backgrounds and history;
- to acknowledge that, consequently, the time, length, and intensity of new understanding will vary from person to person.

This requires mutual conversation, and formal or informal courses of study, designed to equip more than reprimand or punish.

As a final resort one can turn to appropriate measures within the Constitution’s *Church Discipline*. It is incumbent upon us to remember, however, that despite its title, “The power that Jesus Christ has vested in his Church, a power manifested in the exercise of church discipline, is one for building up the body of Christ, not for destroying it, for redeeming, not for punishing. It should be exercised as a dispensation of mercy and not of wrath, so that the great ends of the Church may be achieved, that all children of God may be presented faultless in the day of Christ.” (D-1.01 Power Vested in Christ’s Church).

We trust that, just as Jesus associated and ate with gentiles and tax collectors, so too does he in all of our contemporary failings, including intentional and unintentional demonstrations of racism.

Review

This policy should be reviewed **every thirty-six months** for relevance and accordance with the Scriptures and the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Adopted by the **Synod of the Trinity**

First Reading on (date): _____

Second reading and approval on (date): _____

Appendix 1 Biblical and Theological Foundations

The Bible provides a firm foundation and compelling imperative to engage in antiracist work. There are at least four different biblical themes that can ground and motivate antiracism. While we will read some selected texts, it is important to recognize that these themes are not confined to isolated verses. Rather, they are woven throughout the biblical witness.

The following biblical references are representative of themes found throughout Scripture:

Creation — Genesis 1:1-31 (see also Psalm 104)

We receive our existence as a gift from God. We are all part of creation that God has made and declared good, an intricate interwoven system of life. 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.

Image of God Genesis 1:26 — 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. The 1999 PC(USA) Policy "Facing Racism" calls us to a vision of humanity without racism that is "grounded in our common origin as children of God from which we derive our inalienable worth, dignity, and sanctity." All humans are made in the image of God. It is therefore falsehood and deception to deny the full humanity of any group of people.

God loves diversity — Acts 10:9-23

While focusing on the image of God emphasizes how all human persons are fundamentally the same, the differences between persons are also valuable. The Bible portrays God as delighting in the variety in creation (see Job 38-41). Jesus spoke with and honored all those he encountered, including respectable Jewish men, women, tax collectors, prostitutes, lepers, Samaritans, and Canaanites. People do not have to all be the same in order to be loved by God. There is room in God's grace for vast differences. And the grace of God does not erase differences, but rather invites unity among them.

God loves justice — Jeremiah 9:23-24

Jeremiah says that God "delights" in justice (Jer. 9:24). The prophets of the Hebrew Bible continually proclaim God's care for those who are oppressed and God's demand for just action. In Amos, the LORD calls for the people to "establish justice in the gate" and "let justice roll down like waters" (Amos 5:15, 5:24). The prophet Micah states that what the LORD requires is "to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8). God delights in justice. Racism, as systemic inequality, is fundamentally unjust and therefore against the will of God.

Facing Racism pp 7-9 and the *Facing Racism Study Guide* pp 1-3 and The Foundations of Presbyterian Polity, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) *Book of Order, 2023-2025*

Appendix 2 Definitions from the Report of the Special Committee on Racism, Truth, and Reconciliation to the 225th General Assembly (2022) Some adapted from the glossary of the White Privilege Conference.

- Antiracism is an intentional stance that opposes the sin of racism while affirming the dignity and humanity of those who may hold racist views or benefit from it. It opposes sin not the sinner.
- Race – a social construct based on skin color that operates to install hierarchies of oppression and benefits
- Racism – race-based prejudice + institutional power
- Repair/Reparative Action – an orientation towards prioritizing fixing inequities caused by persisting racism with justice and reallocation of stolen resources
- Reparations – specific acts of reparative action intended to restore intergenerational wealth taken by discrimination, often through the power of the government
- White Supremacy – a system of beliefs and attitudes that subtly or explicitly more highly esteem those racialized as White and continue to grant advantages
- Internalized White Supremacy – the acceptance of the negative societal beliefs and stereotypes about marginalized racial and ethnic populations by themselves and White persons, and the different impacts on their self-identity.
- Black/Indigenous/People of Color – there are a number of ways that people of color identify by race; we will use Black/Indigenous/People of Color in this report, recognizing language limitations, the insufficiency in recognizing the identities of others, and people’s right to self identify.
- Biracial | Multiracial – relating to persons of more than one race or ethnicity.
- White/Whiteness/People Racialized as White– those accorded certain benefits, privileges, and advantages based on the color of their skin because of undismantled White Supremacy that seeks to create social hierarchies by race. We capitalize “White” to emphasize that Whiteness is a particular phenomenon with a specific function.
- (Micro)aggressions – (micro)aggressions are words and behaviors, intentional or unintentional, that dehumanize marginalized groups of people, often excused as innocent or well-intended. We recognize that continuous subjection of pain is trivialized by calling these harms “micro”aggressions.
- Beloved Community – God’s call to share life in freedom and justice together as a family, referenced as kin-dom of God.