



Creative Antiracism Policies

for congregations



The Challenge

a.k.a. what the heck is an “antiracism policy”?

Types of Policies

[Aspirational] - describe wide commitments but without specific goals or metrics for assessing whether the vision is being achieved or not. *Solely* aspirational “policies” often fail to use the tool of “policies” in a helpful way

[not technically a policy - better to call this a mission statement or vision]

Provisional - describe the definition of or process for delivering certain benefits, practices, or processes within an institutional space.

Family Leave policies, conflict/dispute resolution policy

Types of Policies

Prohibitive - describe prohibited behaviors or actions and possible consequences

Sexual Misconduct policy, Harassment policy

Obligatory/Benchmark - describe requirements or standards (e.g., benchmarks) and creates accountability and backup practices for when standards are unable to be met

RE/TE balance, parts of Sexual misconduct policy that require training

When it comes to antiracism:

Primarily **aspirational** “policies” and **prohibitive** policies may not do what we want

- Lack of clarity or punitive tone may undermine our strategic efforts

When it comes to antiracism:

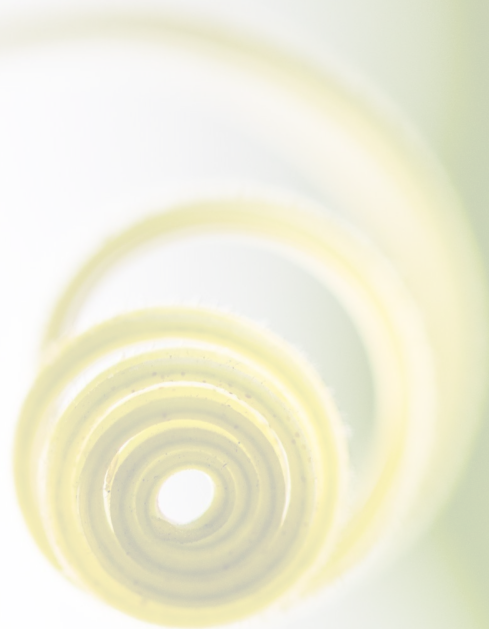
Obligatory policies *could* be helpful, but understanding the research/human nature around “requirements” is good

- **“Requiring” antiracism/diversity (anti-bias) training has been shown to REINFORCE bias in those who have any resistance**
- Setting completely UNrealistic benchmarks causes frustration and eventually tuning out

What do *you*
want to foster?



Examples



“Aspirational” or visionary *components* of AR policy

Brief words to rally energy and vision: A short statement laying out *an inspiring/convicting and clear vision* for your particular congregation’s engagement with antiracism, around which you want to work directly to engage your whole congregation

- Could be the “messaging” part of a policy (help the whole congregation own and understand the “why”)
- Relative brevity will keep this from becoming words that no one revisits or uses

“For instance”

While “our norms and systems are not serving people of color, they are also not serving anyone in this [congregation] well.”

We therefore choose to pursue intersectional antiracist spiritual growth (which includes attention to disability, gender and sexual orientation and more) with *a zeal born of our deep conviction: antiracist spiritual formation is core gospel-led practice that leads toward healing and wholeness for us all.*

Provisional AR policies

Start a new process: A policy that rethinks or redefines *how* certain things in your congregation happen undergirded by antiracist values

“For instance”

- Shifting decision-making process for Session or committees to include an antiracist tool like **Equity Primes**
- New or improved process for how **dissent** is engaged around leadership decisions (versus relying on gossip or individual complaints) - *informed by antiracist values*
- Detailing additional process for **use of church financial resources**: how Board of Trustees or Session deals with new bequests, church property, etc. to include antiracist values

Prohibitive AR policy elements

Accountability for actions that do clear harm: A policy element that calls out actions that could possibly happen, are relatively possible to “prohibit,” and are clearly harmful to the goals of antiracism in congregational spaces

- employed with *great care* this could clarify new directions

“For instance”

- “Prohibiting” **gifts or bequests that are narrowly defined** (e.g., gifts that only or primarily improve aesthetic elements of a church space/experience) and naming antiracist reasoning behind it
- “Prohibiting” use of church space, mission dollars, or volunteer partners promoting **exclusionary beliefs**, racialized poverty narratives, or narratives of objectification
 - **!! Care should be taken** in creating *any* policy to not unduly affect capacity to work collaboratively and be in *good, courageous conversation* with communities of color themselves

Obligatory/Benchmark AR policies

Set a bar for striving: A policy that sets helpful goals for transforming the feel and representation in your community – and considers ways to realistically practice them

“For instance”

- Commitment to **minimum quarterly or yearly engagement around antiracism** education and formation (e.g., twice per quarter minimum engagement in worship adult education, etc.)
- **Benchmark of 50% of yearly mission giving** going to benefit communities of color in antiracist organizations (e.g., beyond crisis “charity” care)

Build in a *realistic*
review process

What do *you*
want to foster?

