

**Presbytery of Long Island**  
**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**

From the beginning of our history recorded in Genesis, 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.... 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 Presbytery of Long Island 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 Presbytery of Long Island acknowledges that racism is contrary to the Scriptures and to the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

## **Biblical and Theological Foundations**

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 (references to the Hebrew Bible are those books traditionally known as the Old Testament):

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 [i.e., universality] 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<sup>1</sup>**

- 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.

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<sup>1</sup> Some definitions adapted from the glossary of the White Privilege Conference.

- Racism – race-based prejudice + institutional power
- Bias – A bias is a tendency, inclination, or prejudice toward or against something or someone. Some biases are positive and helpful—like choosing to only eat foods that are considered healthy or staying away from someone who has knowingly caused harm. But biases are often based on stereotypes, rather than actual knowledge of an individual or circumstance. Whether positive or negative, such cognitive shortcuts can result in prejudgments that lead to rash decisions or discriminatory practices. [*Psychology Today*, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/bias>]
- White Supremacy – a system of beliefs and attitudes that subtly or explicitly more highly esteem those racialized as white and continue to grant advantages
- 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 Presbytery, elder commissioners to the Presbytery, staff, and anyone serving on a Presbytery 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 Presbytery of Long Island 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 presbyteries 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 presbyteries 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 Presbytery of Long Island shall offer prevention measures including, but not limited to:

- Providing antiracism training<sup>2</sup> facilitated by qualified professionals for staff, committees and commissions, and members of the presbytery as part of the presbytery's regular training and education, but certainly not less than once every thirty-six months. Several providers of such training are found in Appendix 3. Compliance will be reported to the Presbytery following each training provided.
- Facilitating awareness of racism's impact through the land and labor acknowledgment at every stated meeting of the presbytery, and at other presbytery gatherings as appropriate.
- Offering resources on antiracism to congregations and ministries within the bounds of the presbytery.
- Affirming the diversity of applicants and candidates for all staff and ordered ministry positions over which the presbytery 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 presbytery, as needed or requested.
- Attending to revelations of systemic racism past and present as perpetrated within the bounds of the presbytery, 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 Presbytery'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

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<sup>2</sup> "Points of Engagement," Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Churchwide Antiracism Policy, approved by the 222<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly, 2016.

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](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 to racial justice.
- Designating a respondent who will speak for the council regarding incidents involving the general public.
- Employing church discipline when appropriate.

## **Responding Procedure**

*“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.”*  
(Matthew 18:15-16) ”

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 (in which case, the Constitution's *Church Discipline* may be appropriate).

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.

### **Review**

This policy should be reviewed annually for relevance and accordance with the Scriptures and the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Adopted by the Presbytery of the \_\_\_\_\_

First Reading on (date): \_\_\_\_\_

Second reading and approval on (date): \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix     Some Providers of Antiracism Training

1. Presbyterian Mission Agency's Office of Gender, Racial and Intercultural Justice [weblink](#)
  - Samantha Davis, Associate for Gender, Racial and Intercultural Justice
  - Contact [training@pcusa.org](mailto:training@pcusa.org) for more information about workshops, trainings and other educational events.
    - Antiracism Training
    - Facing Racism Policy
    - Cultural Humility
    - Intersectional Justice
    - Unpacking Gender
    - Creating a Welcoming and Affirming Space with Our Family in the LGBTQIA Community
    - Power and Privilege
    - Reproductive Justice
    - Radical Welcome
  
2. The Center for Jubilee Practice [jubileepractice.org](http://jubileepractice.org)

The Center for Jubilee Practice seeks to be a bridge between the exciting movements for justice related to gender, sexuality, race, climate change, immigration policies, economic globalization and cultural homogenization on the one hand, and the traditional congregations that desire to engage those justice movements and exemplify biblical justice values on the other. We seek to:

- Help church judicatories and governing bodies rethink their rules of engagement related to the appropriate sale and disposition of property and other assets in order to create intentional opportunities for reparations, healing and new life.
- Support congregations and judicatories to take direct action to accomplish healing, repair and reparations with Black and Brown communities and in direct relation to harm we have caused to creation.
- Create brave spaces of welcome in which those who have been most impacted by historic patterns of oppression can gather to support and encourage one another.

3. Crossroads [crossroadsantiracism.org](http://crossroadsantiracism.org)

Crossroads' mission is to equip institutions with shared language, frameworks, practices and tools that will assist them in:



- Diagnosing how their institutions are structured to uphold white supremacy culture and systemic racism and;
- Deploying strategies aimed at animating antiracist ways of being that result in racially equitable institutional culture and practices.

#### 4. PCUSA’s Center for the Repair of Historic Harms

<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/center-for-repair/>

Director: Rev. Anthony Jermaine Ross-Allam: [Jermaine.Ross.Allam@pcusa.org](mailto:Jermaine.Ross.Allam@pcusa.org)

The purpose of our office is to recognize, acknowledge and repair the harm caused to Indigenous peoples, African Americans and other marginalized groups. We aim to set an example by actively engaging in the work of repair within our denomination while also inspiring others worldwide to join us in this vital pursuit. In collaboration with PC(USA) sister agencies and mid councils, the Presbyterian Mission Agency hopes to initiate this denomination-wide effort to inspire repair and reconciliation both within and beyond the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

#### WHY AN ANTI-RACISM POLICY?

*“God loved the **people** of this world so much that He gave His only Son so that everyone who has faith in Him will have eternal life and never really die.”* Contemporary English Version (CEV)

If we believe Jesus is Lord and that God raised Him from the dead; if we believe that all things are created by, through, and for Him; if we believe He and the Father are One and that He is Creator God who created all things good, then how can we not establish and stand by a policy that unconditionally states all people are to be valued, respected, loved, supported, and validated at all times? To be made in the image of God is to look into the eyes of another and see the divine spark. I should see the Jesus in you as you need to see the Jesus in me.

“The Westminster Confession of Faith”, upheld and endorsed by Presbyterians for over 300 years as our “premiere” confession, admonishes us that we are feeble advocates for upholding and recognizing the light of nature and the works of creation and providence that clearly manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God and His will for our salvation and so the Scriptures have been handed to us as our guide and mainstay. For the moment, *“Now all we can see of God is like a cloudy picture in a mirror.”* 1 Corinthians 13:12 CEV

We are compelled by our faith in the Lord Jesus, the God who was, is and is to come, El Shaddai, the Holy Spirit, who is the author and finisher of our faith, to love all His people as He loves us, to love our neighbors as we love ourselves.

If I love myself, I advocate for myself, look out for my best interests, and seek that which is life-giving for my well-being. I can do no less to and for my siblings near and far for they are made in the same image as I, the image of the Almighty God who kneeled down in the dirt and scooped up a handful of clay, shaping it into His own image, blew His breath into this form in order to breathe life into humankind, not your kind, not my kind nor their kind, but humankind. *“Faith in Christ Jesus is what makes each of you equal to each other, whether you are a Jew or a Greek, a slave or free person, a man or a woman.”* Galatians 3:28 CEV We are all one in Christ Jesus and no part of His body is any less than another part; “you need me and I need you for we are all a part of God’s body. I won’t harm you with words from my mouth, I love you; I need you to survive.”