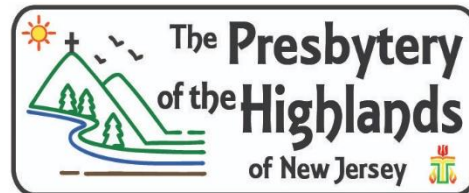


Anti-Racism policy for the Presbytery of the Highlands Fall 2024



*We cannot move forward without looking back.
Repair begins when reconciliation and truth telling begins*

Timeline info

In 2016, the 222nd General Assembly of the PC(USA) approved a new churchwide antiracism policy titled: *Facing Racism: A Vision of the Intercultural Community*. This policy began as a review of the earlier 1999 statement on racism in America, and began by noting that, "...the realities of racism in the United States have not improved significantly..." Several years later, acting on the recommendation and report of various committees, the 225th General Assembly revised the Book of Order (G-3.0106) to require all church councils to adopt and implement an antiracism policy.

Theological/Biblical Foundation

The Bible insistently reveals that God loves diversity and justice. This is seen in the wide variety of creation in which God delights. It is heard in the words of the prophets, who reject oppression and commend justice as true worship. It is embodied in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, who resists the power of empire and values all persons, regardless of status, as children of God. Jesus gathered a community of people around him that crossed over every social and cultural boundary. Those who had been set apart were brought together: poor and rich, male and female, Gentile and Jew, centurion and tax collector, Canaanite, Galilean, and Syrophonecian. Jesus called this community together in anticipation of, and participation in, the coming of the new creation. –From *Facing Racism*

The Bible testifies that humanity is diverse and yet one, unique but together created in the image of God.

The words of the Apostle Paul remind us of the common identity we share as members of God's family. *"As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves*

with Christ. 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 3:27-28

The vision of John in Revelation shows us a multitude gathered from every nation worshiping God together. *“After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice, saying, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne and to the Lamb!’” –Revelation 7:9-10*

Faith challenges us to acknowledge the distance between God’s vision for humanity and our present reality. Faith also calls us to action, building up things which help that vision to flourish, and removing obstacles and stumbling blocks we encounter along the way (John 10:10, 1 Thessalonians 5:11, Romans 14:13). **One of the largest stumbling blocks that persists in our culture today is racism.**

Confession/acknowledging our complicity/role

Recognizing that sin exists in our world at both an individual and a corporate level, in both intentional and unintentional harm, and echoing the words of Paul, who reminds us that, *“all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God,”* we confess our participation in a society and culture that allows racism to persist (Romans 3:23). **As a response to our confession we affirm our desire to lean into uncomfortable conversations, to promote growth, and embody a faithfulness that works to dismantle racism within and beyond our communities.**

We Commit Ourselves to Accountability

We hold ourselves accountable for working consistently and purposefully towards racial justice and equity in our synod, our presbytery and our congregations.

We commit to take steps as a presbytery to participate in the ongoing process to dismantle racism in our churches, communities and our own lives through the following and other ways we may not be aware of at this time:

- Engage with resources and conversations to help us grow and learn through training events or other similar opportunities
- Create opportunities to invite people into conversations about dismantling racism.
- Provide for worship experiences at presbytery gatherings that work toward dismantling racism.

- Commit to self-reflective truth-telling concerning actions and experiences where our actions or inactions perpetuated racism or continue to perpetuate racism.
- Listen to voices long silenced

ACTION STEPS

The Presbytery of the Highlands commits to the following:

- At least one presbytery-wide annual training/workshop on racism
- Work with congregations to implement Matthew 25
- Provide at least one worship service annually that focuses on dismantling racism
- Engage the Presbytery in conversations about racism through workshops, small groups, seminars, or book study.
- Work alongside the Committee on Representation to assure that diversity is expressed in Presbytery committees and teams and that the environment in which we serve and gather provides for open and affirming dialogue and action
- Provide resources and communications about dismantling racism.
- Annually review the Anti-racism policy and recommend updates

Definitions and other resources from the PCUSA Committee on Racism, Truth and Reconciliation can be found on the Presbytery of the Highlands webpage.