

POLICY STATEMENT ON DISMANTLING RACISM and its STRUCTURAL LEGACIES

Whitewater Valley Presbytery

To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice. — Proverbs 21:3

There is no longer Jew nor Greek, There is no longer slave nor free; There is no longer male nor female; For all of you are one in Christ. — Galatians 3:28

God has created the peoples of the earth to be one universal familyIn reconciling love (God) overcomes the barriers between brothers (sisters) and breaks down every form of discrimination based on racial or ethnic differences, real or imaginary. — Confession of 1967, 9.44

In sovereign love God created the world good and makes everyone equally in God's image, male and female, of every race and people. — A Brief Statement of Faith, 10.3, 1990

God sends the Church to work for justice in the world: exercising its power for the common good; dealing honestly in personal and public spheres; seeking dignity and freedom for all people... — Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Book of Order, W-5.0304

The biblical witness, the modern confessional statements, and the pronouncements of the General Assembly remind us that racism has no place in the Body of Christ.

Definition:

Racism is more than individual acts of bigotry or prejudice. Racism is any system, institution, or cultural practice or tradition, which protects or prefers the lives, property, and status of White people-- or any group which takes power over another, at the expense of our siblings of color or other marginalized persons or groups.

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to acknowledge the pervasive sin of racism in our society and our church and commit Whitewater Valley Presbytery (WVP) to the work of confronting and dismantling racism and its structural legacies.

Strategy:

We will take steps that lead to systemic change by:

Reframing the Cultural Narrative

It is essential that we find ways to name the reality of a culture in which structural racism does exist. As we work to reframe that reality, we will explore the pitfalls and injustice of a culture that continues to perpetuate racism in policies and practices that affect the lives of Black People and other People of

Color in every existing social structure, including education, health care, economic opportunities, housing, criminal justice, food availability, environmental care, and more. As a presbytery, we commit ourselves to engaging in regular and consistent conversations that work to reframe the cultural narrative every day of the year.

Role-modeling and Communicating the Desired Change

Replacing the current reality of structural racism with a new reality requires more than naming what is wrong. Replacing the existing structure also requires articulating beliefs and demonstrating behaviors that contribute to a new structure. Establishing change in our culture will require us to role-model actions that are consistent with our goals. As a presbytery, we commit ourselves to communicating the necessity of change by word and deed. As leaders within the Church, we commit ourselves to acting in ways that will demonstrate that structural racism can be dismantled, and racial equity and justice upheld. These commitments will shape how the presbytery operates, how it does its business, the kinds of programs we offer, the priorities upon which we choose to focus every day of the year.

Reinforcing a New System of Beliefs

Through every stage of the cultural changes to come, it will be important to continue to communicate our beliefs and our expectations, and to articulate explicitly and consistently reinforce our commitment to dismantling structural racism. As a presbytery, we commit ourselves to this ongoing work of the people of God for the people of God, every day of the year.

WVP shall seek to accomplish the missional work of building the body of Christ by requiring anti-racism training for our clergy and making available credible, trusted resources to enable and better equip our congregations as they examine and confront the issues of racial injustice, systemic racism, restorative justice, and racial healing.

Implementation:

1) The first component of the policy is structured education. WVP shall create a Dismantling Racism Team. The Dismantling Racism Team will receive funding to provide training and resources for this essential work. This team will offer training for our clergy, lay leadership, and member congregations on racial and social justice. The Dismantling Racism Team will facilitate the creation of training by utilizing resources including but not limited to non-profit organizations dedicated to catalyzing social justice through service and “allyship” to offer this training.

- a) Attendance at a workshop is **mandatory** for all minister members of WVP and WVP staff once every three years. All minister members of WVP and WVP staff must participate fully. The cost of the training will be paid from WVP funds. The Commission on Ministry will maintain a roster of those needing and those who have completed the training and will report the list to the Stated Clerk annually.
- b) Attendance at a workshop is **encouraged** for: Chairs of WVP committees and commissions, church staffs, including directors of music, education, and youth, as well as members of WVP congregations, so that WVP may learn more about the work of identifying and ending racism and its historical legacies.

- c) WVP invites and encourages clergy and lay members to embrace this discipline of training and commit to the work of confronting and ending racism. The training will provide information and insights into anti-racism efforts; **however, a workshop is only a beginning. Ongoing prayer, study, conversation, discernment, and practice by and among WVP members will be essential.**

2) The major work within the Presbytery of dismantling racism, of restoring right relationships with God and each other, will be done within the member congregations of WVP.

- a) WVP, through its Dismantling Racism Team, will identify educational resources for our congregations, some of whom may just be starting to explore the issues of racism and racial injustice while others have already begun to study and take actions toward increased racial justice and healing. The Dismantling Racism Team will maintain on the WVP website a compendium of trusted resources (written, visual, or experiential) to illuminate and guide this work wherever our congregations may be on this journey.
- b) Financial assistance in the form of training grants may also be available to congregations. Applications for financial assistance may be directed to the Chair of the Mission and Partnership Working Team of the Coordinating Commission Council.
- c) These tools are intended to aid our member congregations as they seek a deeper awareness of the sin of racism and its historic and systemic corrosive effects and discern how they may become agents of racial justice and reconciliation.

Conclusion:

Our mission as members of the church of the Triune God is to be agents of salvation, justice, and reconciliation. These training workshops and educational resources are an opportunity and a means for our body to turn away from the sin of racism and its historical legacies, to act as faithful disciples of Christ in ministering and caring for the marginalized in our world, and to witness God's love for all creation. We humbly undertake this work, trusting that God's Holy Spirit will be our guide and inspiration.

GLOSSARY of TERMS

1) RACIAL EQUITY

- a) Racial equity refers to the condition that would be achieved if one's racial identity, in a statistical sense, did not determine how one fares.
- b) Racial equity is also a commitment that resources are distributed based on need, recognizing that "equal" treatment, opportunities, and resources are not enough within the context of historical and structural racism and discrimination that continue to manifest in our society.
- c) This includes the elimination of policies, practices, attitudes, and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes or fail to eliminate them.

2) DEFINITIONS

- a) For the purposes of this policy and norming language across the organization, the following terms shall have these meanings:
 - i) **Race** – A false classification of human beings, created during a period of worldwide colonial expansion, by Europeans using themselves as the model for humanity for the purpose of assigning and maintaining white access to power and advantage. This classification developed into a social construct that has real life implications for all individuals within a society.
 - ii) **Ethnicity** – Groups that share a common identity-based ancestry, language, or culture. It is often based on religion, beliefs, and customs as well as memories of migration and colonization.
 - iii) **People of Color** – Refers to individuals who may identify as Black or African – American, Asian, South Asian, Middle Eastern, Pacific Islander, Latinx, Indigenous, and multiracial. Often used interchangeably with the term "black and brown."
 - A. Latinx** – Relating to people of Latin American origin or descent (used as a gender-neutral or non-binary alternative to Latino or Latina).
 - iv) **Racism** – Social and institutional power combined with racial prejudice. It is a system of advantage for those considered white, and of oppression for those who are not considered white. It is a white supremacy system.
 - A. Color-blind Racism** – A present day racial ideology that holds the belief that people, institutions and policy makers should try to ignore race in order to claim a desire to treat all persons equally but having the effect of justifying oppression. Color-blindness uses a set of ideas, phrases, and stories to discount racial oppression. Furthermore, color-blindness plays on the myth that the social realities of race and racism have all but disappeared as a factor shaping the life changes of all Americans.
 - B. Institutional Racism** – Policies and practices in institutions or organizations that result in oppressing people of color while maintaining white supremacy regardless of the intent or consciousness of individuals in the institution.
 - C. Structural Racism** – Systems (e.g. educational, economic, criminal justice, healthcare, etc.) that oppress people of color while maintaining white supremacy.

- D. Anti-Racism** – Efforts and ideas that challenge and resist racism of all types with an emphasis on institutions, structures, and systems rather than primarily focusing on individuals who are socialized in a society built on racist ideologies, policies, and practices.
- v) **White Supremacy** – A historically based, institutionally perpetuated system of exploitation and oppression of continents, nations, and peoples of color by White peoples and nations originating from the European continent for the purpose of maintaining and defending a system of wealth, power, and advantage.
 - vi) **Privilege/Advantage** – Unintentional advantage a person has by being a member of the dominant group in any given environment (race, class, able bodied, gender, sexual orientation, etc.)
 - vii) **Bias** – The attitudes or stereotypes that affect one’s understanding, actions, and decisions in a conscious or unconscious manner (e.g. feelings about other people based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, age and appearance).
 - A. Implicit Bias** – Refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner.
 - viii) **Oppression** – A relationship of dominance and subordination between groups of people in which one benefits from the systematic abuse, exploitation, and/or injustice directed toward the other.
 - ix) **Intersectionality** – Framework that explores the dynamic between co-existing identities (e.g. black, woman, poor, lesbian) and connected systems of oppression (e.g. racism, sexism, classism, homophobia).
 - x) **Racial Disproportionality** – The ratio between the percentage of persons in a racial or ethnic group at a particular decision point or experiencing an event (e.g. maltreatment, incarceration, school dropouts, suspensions/expulsions, etc.) compared to the percentage of the same racial or ethnic group in the overall population.
 - xi) **Racial Disparity** – Unequal outcomes experienced by one racial or ethnic group when compared to another racial or ethnic group (in contrast, disproportionality compares the proportion of one racial or ethnic group to the same racial or ethnic group in the population).
 - xii) **Educational Equity** – Increasing academic achievement for all students while narrowing the gaps between the lowest and highest performing students.
 - xiii) **Opportunity Gaps** – Refers to the ways in which race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, English proficiency, community wealth, familial situations, experience of homelessness, technological proficiency or other factors contribute to or perpetuate lower educational achievement and attainment for certain groups of students.