

Presbytery of Florida Anti-Racism Guidelines

Revised September 2, 2021, Approved October 23, 2021

Rationale

“Then God said, ‘Let us make humanity in our image, according to our likeness’” (Genesis 1:26).

“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).

“God has created the peoples of the earth to be one universal family. In God’s reconciling love, barriers between brothers and sisters are overcome and every form of discrimination based on racial or ethnic difference, real or imaginary, are overcome.” (The Confession of 1967, paraphrased from Section 4).

For centuries, the church and its people have been both complicit in and wounded by the racism that infects our nation and the world. A great majority of us who are members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) have accepted the lie of white supremacy. We have not been obedient to God’s Word incarnate and in scripture. Those of us who are white have failed to acknowledge the advantages we reap from a prevailing, systemic racism. Faithfulness to Jesus Christ, Head of the church and Lord of life, leads the Presbytery of Florida to adopt anti-racism guidelines.

Approach

Presbytery’s approach begins with anti-racism training.

- Anti-racism training will be provided in the Spring of 2022 and annually thereafter for all Ministers of Word and Sacraments, educators, Commissioned Ruling Elders, Candidates for Ministry, Presbytery committee chairs and staff.
- Anti-racism training is to be grounded in scripture and in theological principles inherent in the Reformed tradition and versed in social and historical perspectives.
- Anti-racism training is to be provided by the “I Stand with You” sub-committee of the Committee on Mission and Outreach using trained consultants.

Actions

Additional actions are needed in response to God’s Word that calls us to “be doers of the Word and not merely hearers who deceive themselves” (James 1:22). Presbytery’s actions include the following:

- Proclaiming and practicing the Word of God in scripture and in the life and ministry of Jesus through preaching and teaching at Presbytery meetings and events.
- Supporting anti-racism activities by encouraging and offering guidance to congregations to conduct listening sessions, workshops, book/video discussions, educational group studies, and field trips.
- Challenging congregations to offer hospitality through inclusive gatherings for worship, meals, Bible studies, and open conversations about racism.
- Publicizing denominational and ecumenical hands-on mission trips and ministries with neighboring congregations of differing majority ethnic constituents.
- Supporting bias and de-escalation training for law enforcement personnel by informing congregations of community groups already engaged in dialogue with law enforcement agencies and encouraging them to ally with them.
- Fostering adequate and non-discriminatory funding of public schools by encouraging participation in school board open meetings and alliances with state and local advocacy groups.
- Advocating for re-integration programs for those leaving incarceration by identifying existing advocacy groups.
- Working for adequate healthcare, food, housing, and environmental justice by engaging with agencies such as “Feeding the Gulf Coast.”

- Encouraging congregations to engage in public action for justice, compassion, and humility in society by sending email, letters, or telephoning.
- Continuing to discover ways to address the root causes of racism, pursuing equal justice, and promoting the recognition that there is only one race – the human race – by establishing relationships with people of all colors and allying with advocacy groups such as the Florida Council of Churches.

Administration

Administration of these guidelines will be the responsibility of the Committee on Mission and Outreach and the Committee on Education and Resources. Funding for anti-racism training and action will be provided to those committees through the annual budget of the Presbytery.