



PRESBYTERY OF NORTHERN NEW YORK

Policy Title : Anti Racism Policy - Draft

Reason for Policy

The Presbytery of Northern New York affirms that “racism is the opposite of what God intends for humanity.

G-3.0106 requires each Council to adopt an anti-racism policy.

Racism is a system of racial prejudice exerted by those in power — institutionally and individually, consciously and unconsciously — that is deeply ingrained in the history of our country, community and churches.

F-1.0403 states, *Unity in Diversity*:

“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. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to the promise” (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.

Being formed to look more like Jesus and to serve in the world like Jesus should be a never-ending approach. Being a person who sees the world potentially whole, sees everyone as a child of God, and chooses to be in relationship with everyone that you encounter -- individually or in groups -- with eyes that are like Jesus. This is demonstrated by looking upon that neighbor as one who one loves and looking upon that neighbor as one that he or she has a sibling relationship with.

Definitions:

The following definitions have been adapted from the Government Alliance on Race and Equity at www.racialequityalliance.org

Anti-racism: the practice of identifying, challenging, and changing the values, structures, and behaviors that perpetuate systemic racism.

Individual racism: pre-judgment, bias, or discrimination by an individual based on race. Individual racism includes both privately held beliefs, conscious and unconscious, and external behaviors and actions towards others.

Institutional racism: occurs within institutions and organizations that adopt and maintain policies, practices, and procedures that often unintentionally produce inequitable outcomes for people of color and advantages for white people.

Structural (or systemic) racism: encompasses the history and current reality of institutional racism across all institutions and society. It refers to the history, culture, ideology, and 1 of 2 interactions of institutions and policies that perpetuate a system of inequity that is detrimental to communities of color.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is an institution founded and historically run by white people that remains approximately 87.85% white. Closer to home, our Presbytery is 98% white, and many of our churches have 100% white/ Caucasian active memberships.

These are numbers that we must understand for the work and ministries we are called to do as we worship, work, and serve others in a culture that had been imbedded in structural and systemics racism for centuries.

Racism persists despite our expressed values and intentions. If we are to create an anti-racist church where all persons are treated with respect, all gifts are valued and encouraged, and diversity is a gift to be valued we must understand the root causes.

Therefore, our anti racism policy must challenge the Presbytery of Northern New York and the churches of our judicatory to

1. Understand the story of racism within our judicatory, churches and communities and how structural and systemic racism have existed and continue to exist in all forms. It is important that we learn what “race” is and how race categories shape people’s life experiences.
2. Begin to evaluate the unexamined assumptions of race, how racism works at individual and societal levels, and how predominantly white culture influences theological understandings.
3. Confess that our sin has led us to erect religious, cultural, and economic, barriers along racial and ethnic lines and that these barriers have separated us from one another and deprived many of the right to develop their own personal identities
4. The Presbytery of Northern New York must seek ways to normalize conversations about race and racism as part of spiritual formation. This may include but not be limited to creating yearly training for all church leaders that deal specifically with race and anti-racism.
5. Respect the rights and freedom of all people of color regardless of race, ethnicity, or nationality where the cries of people who have become victims of racial injustice and/or discrimination are to be taken seriously and are given full voice and opportunity to make

their complaints, without retaliation, to their appropriate judicatories; and inform the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of Northern New York.

6. Support all local organizations and faith partners who speak out against persons and systems that perpetuate racial injustice.
7. Commit to dismantling racism in its attitudes and structures in all meetings of the body and Committees of the Presbytery of Northern New York and its churches.
8. Initiate a sustained and coordinated effort to dismantle racism and promote collective action to work toward racial justice by
 - a. prioritizing education and awareness-raising about systemic racism.
 - b. actively engage with diverse communities to build coalitions
 - c. support grassroots activism, advocate for systemic change through policy initiatives, and continuously monitor progress and evaluate effectiveness.

The Presbytery of Northern New York shall prioritize full participation and representation in its worship, governance, and emerging life to all persons or groups within its judicatory.

No member shall be denied participation or representation for any reason other than those stated in the Book of Order.

As we seek to dismantle the racism and cultural biases in our structure, policies, and practices, we will also continue to work to create an environment in which all people are respected and welcomed.

The Presbytery of Utica will not tolerate any acts or communications intended to intimidate, demean, annoy or insult an individual on the basis of his/her race, national, or ethnic origin. We prohibit behaviors that contribute to the creation of a racially hostile and offensive church or work environment.

- Using racial slurs
- Making offensive or derogatory remarks about a person's race or color
- Displaying racially offensive symbols
- Excluding someone from normal church/Presbytery conversation, meetings, fellowship or worship
- Making verbal threats or insults
- Making racist jokes
- Encouraging others to commit racist acts

The Presbytery of Northern New York affirms that to be the church today requires prayerful, consistent, and deliberate policies, and actions dedicated to racial justice.

To be the church today requires an effort to overcome racism through actions to transform society and its structures of power and exclusion.

To be the church today requires transformation into church communities which fully live the diversity of their peoples and cultures as a clear reflection of God's Creation and Image in humankind. To be the church today calls churches to make a costly commitment to overcome their own division on racial-ethnic lines.

To be the church today means overcoming racism by re-establishing right relationships with the churches' own people: women and men, indigenous people including, Native Americans, African American, Hispanics/Latino-as as well as Asian Pacific, and all ethnic minorities.

To be the church today is to be healing communities, transformed by the lives, gifts and spirits of their own people.

As a Presbytery we need to take time to discern the best way forward by continuing our call to dismantle racism and become a more antiracist community and institution within all of the communities and in churches located in the geographic boundaries of the Presbytery of Utica and beyond.

As a Presbytery we will continue to work towards the creation of an inclusive, equitable, antiracist culture that will be attractive to all people- particularly those who have been systematically excluded from full participation in the Presbytery, as we seek to be co-creators with Christ of a just, peaceful and healed world/creation.

May God keep watch over our actions and remove from us any barriers to His grace that may oppress and offend any of our brothers and sisters. May our minds be made clear and used for the glory of God and may we be the peacemakers for "they shall be called Children of God".