

Anti-Racism and Anti-Discrimination Policy

First Presbyterian Church of La Grande (FPC)

F-1.0403 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” (Gal. 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, ability, geography, or theological conviction. There is therefore no place in the life of the Church for discrimination against any person. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) shall guarantee full participation and representation in its worship, governance, and emerging life to all persons or groups within its membership. No member shall be denied participation or representation for any reason other than those stated in the Constitution.

Racism is the opposite of what God intends for humanity. It is the diminishment or rejection of the other, and is entirely contrary to the Word of God incarnate in Jesus Christ. 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. Because of our biblical understanding of who God is and what God intends for humanity, the PC(USA) must stand against, speak against, and work against racism. ¹

As Presbyterians we know something about work. While aspects of the Protestant work ethic may be problematic, to the degree that it signifies our determination, persistence, and stubborn strength, we embrace it in this regard: we commit ourselves to DO THE WORK of countering racism and discrimination in our witness to the Gospel. In our affirmation that God loves variety, we will honor diversity as a good in which God delights. In our conviction that God desires justice, we will learn from others to broaden our understanding of equality. In our humility as sinful people, we will listen openly to diverse voices regarding how racism functions in our society and repent from our failings. In our gratitude for God’s grace, we will turn again and again toward the vision of community found in the Word of God. In our joyous response to God’s love, we will love one another.¹

The task of dismantling racism must be a partnership effort that involves all levels of the church. Since institutions vary in their social reality, it follows that the approach to dismantling racism must be flexible and adaptable to changing situations. Nevertheless, there can and must be continuity in the general approach so that resources can be developed and shared to support antiracism work across the church and in ecumenical relationships.¹

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

As a presbytery/congregation within the PCUSA we will:

1. Seek to welcome and be open to all people.
2. Educate ourselves to seek awareness of our own behavior, blindness, and biases and the impact on our community of faith and the wider community.
3. Seek resources (curriculum, worship, preaching, music, and literature) which are reflective of all ethnic and racial backgrounds.
4. Study Matthew 25 materials, (<https://presbyterianmission.org/ministreis/matthew-25/matt-25-resources>), the Churchwide Antiracism Policy (2016), and materials advised by the Committee on Mission, Program, and Peacemaking to increase our awareness of systemic racism and its impact.
5. Together seek within the congregation and the community those whose experience and expertise can be instructive and inspiring, and for partnerships that increase cooperation and understanding.

This policy was approved by FPC's Session on 10.27.24. The policy will be reviewed every three years and changes will be made as necessary to fulfill the requirements of the Book of Order. Each Session member will be provided with a copy of this policy.

¹ Excerpted from Facing Racism: A Vision of the Intercultural Community, Churchwide Antiracism Policy as approved by the 222nd General Assembly (2016).