

Leadership Cabinet
Tuesday, November 12, 2024

Yellowstone Presbytery Leadership Cabinet met via Zoom for its scheduled meeting on Tuesday, November 12, 2024, beginning at 1:00 p.m.

Cabinet members present:

RE Melissa Bell
MWS Ashley Birk
RE Russ Kline, Moderator
MWS Karolee Larson
MWS Dave Thompson

Members excused:

MWS Jamie Schmeling

Others present:

General Presbyter Kathy Goodrich, Stated Clerk Caroline Fleming, Treasurer Ric Tieman

1. **Opening:** Moderator Russ Kline called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. Kathy Goodrich led members in prayer.

2. **Dwelling in the Word & Spirit Sightings:** Dave Thompson led members in Dwelling in the Word, having several members read II Corinthians 9:6-8 from different Bible versions. The passage deals with generosity and encourages us to give from the heart. It is the spirit with which one gives that counts, but none of us can outgive God. The question was raised, “how much do we trust in God to provide?”

Spirit Sightings and Prayer Concerns:

Russ shared that he is with his brother and enjoying time with him. Dave told of a man who was compelled to give 75 meals to the rescue mission. Ashley shared that a man in the congregation who has struggled now has a job at Burger King and was compelled to donate kid’s meals to the church auction. Kathy shared meeting with Beth McCaw about the CRE courses, the Dubuque accreditation process, and the fact that George is working with Dubuque on the CRE spring class on Christian formation.

Prayers requests included prayers for Jamie Schmeling and her daughters going through a difficult time, for Freeman McCall who fainted last Sunday, for Russ’s brother who has dementia, and for out time together in this meeting.

Caroline concluded our time of sharing by reading the Presbytery Vision Statement.

3. **Quorum:** A quorum was declared present.

4. **Minutes of Previous meeting:**

- **Action:** A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of October 8 as printed. The motion passed with one abstention.

5. **General Presbyter’s report:** Kathy has been “marinating” in Paul’s Epistles and noted that LC talked of trying to include visioning into every meeting. She asked what members wanted to hear from her, and consensus was members wanted to hear things that related to their work and LC. PC (U.S.A.) is going through change, including some staff lay-offs which leaves some things at the Synod and Presbytery levels in flux. Question to ask ourselves:

- What are our strengths and passions that we can share with others?

- Where does God want us to head?
- What about our presbytery culture is working?
- Do folks understand presbytery's role?

“Less meetings, more parties” and perhaps a destination presbytery meeting in the future would perhaps excite some who haven't attended presbytery in a while.

We should consider another retreat in the new year and include Rep/Nom and Camping teams in the retreat. Dave, Russ, and Karolee will seek ways to party at presbytery.

- 6. Feedback from November Presbytery meeting:** The sound did not work well for those on the Zoom link. Dinner Church was much appreciated. The meeting went too long on Friday. We should try to finish by 7:30 p.m. Perhaps less workshop time and break at 4:30 with people returning for dinner at 6:00 p.m. We could build mission into free time, like making sandwiches for the homeless, for shelters, etc. We need to sync better with the kitchen help.
- 7. Required Policies (Attachments A, B & C):** Members reviewed comments received concerning the policies against racism and harassment and made some amendments to the proposed policies. Discussion included the fact that the presbytery policy need not be the same policy that a church adopts, knowing that many churches have limited time and resources. It was suggested that Associated Employers of Montana be asked to review them.
 - **Action:** A motion was made and seconded to recommend Yellowstone Presbytery adopt the Policy against Harassment and the Policy Against Racism as amended at the special meeting on November 21. The motion passed.
- 8. Personnel Report:** The personnel subcommittee has re-scheduled Kathy's annual review.
- 9. Treasurer's report:** The financial report has not changed since the November presbytery meeting. Ric has signed the contract with CCB Technology. They will train in Office 365 and provide 4 licenses for \$84.00 per year per user. It is suggested we delay training until early in 2025. Caroline and Ric must meet in early December about cloud storage and the website.
- 10. Rep/Nom Team nomination:** JP Carlson has offered to serve on the Rep/Nom Team.
 - **Action:** A motion was made and seconded to nominate JP to the class of 2027 on the Rep/Nom Team at the November 21 special meeting of the presbytery. The motion passed.
- 11. Stated Clerk report:** Caroline reported she is requesting annual reports from ministers who haven't sent them in yet, has asked clerks for a 2-year review of Session minutes with accompanying form, and is working on certificates of attendance for those who attended boundary training November 9. She will be sending letters to all clerks about annual statistics reporting by the end of November.
- 12. Future Meeting Dates:**

Special meeting of Yellowstone Presbytery **November 21 at 12 noon**
 Next LC meeting: **December 12**
- 13. Closing:** Dave Thompson closed the meeting with prayer at Russ' request.

Respectfully submitted, Caroline Fleming, Stated Clerk

Leadership Cabinet Action Items		
Responsible Person(s)	Action Item	Due Date
Ongoing Action Items		
Personnel committee	Update Presbytery's Personnel Policy	Ongoing
Jamie, Dave, Caroline	Create a monthly presbytery newsletter to communicate regularly with our churches and pastors.	No date set
LC members	Seek people with a passion for earth care who would work with St. Andrew in bringing concerns/ideas to LC and presbytery	Ongoing
Caroline	Create and send information on mission pledges and where the money goes to churches	No timeline
LC members	Think about possible equipping topics including how to recognize gifts in others and help them share those gifts, doing evangelism that builds on Ron Pyle's storytelling workshop.	Ongoing
Ric	Complete contract with CCB Technology to set up long-term storage in the cloud and retention policies for presbytery.	Ongoing
Ric	Work with Deb Jackson and Caroline Fleming, teaching them to post items on the website.	ASAP
All Members	Send Kathy stories of spirit sightings	As they arise
New Action Items		
Dave, Russ, Karolee	Discuss and plan ways to party at presbytery meetings	Ongoing
Caroline	Submit proposed harassment and racism policies to Associated Employers for review	Before 11/21

ATTACHMENT A

Comments received concerning the two proposed policies

Concerning the Anti- Harassment policy: This policy only seems to address employee to employee harassment. Is there a perceived need to address the potential for harassment between presbytery commissioners or between staff and commissioners?

There are some words left out of first sentence of second paragraph on second page. Suggest: If a threat to the personal safety of a staff person or others,...

In the statement of sexual harassment, it seems to just be in regard to Pastors and other employees in the workplace. What about parishioners who also are tempted to harass persons in the workplace. I think this statement should be broadened to include members & friends of the church in connection to employees in the workplace. (Example: Working as a CNA where Leon and I lived, the housekeeper's husband came in the hospital one morning and literally knocked her around a bit, then turned around and walked out of the building. I saw it happen and ended up having to give a defamation witness in court.)

Under Procedure, second paragraph, it reads "The incident must be reported to the Executive Presbyter..." My question is: if, God forbid, the Executive Presbyter is the alleged perpetrator, who must the incident be reported to? (The Stated Clerk? The Moderator of the Leadership Cabinet or the Personnel Committee? Someone at the Synod staff level?)

Under the very last paragraph under Procedure, it states "Every employee is expected to attend awareness-raising classes concerning harassment within one year of employment." My question is: are we aware and do we have easy access to such awareness-raising classes?

Concerning the Anti-Racism policy: As with the harassment policy, the anti-racism policy seems to pertain to staff but not to the ethos of the presbytery itself. Would suggestion a paragraph including John 13:34-35 as a primary motivation for our loving across racial lines, or Christ's command to love our enemies. But might not be as necessary in this legal document, which does include references to "our biblical understanding..."

Bullet 7 on restoration and reparation seems unclear. And too openly stated.

Possible new wording: "To consider engaging in acts of r and r where the presbytery or its churches are shown to have created disparities of wealth through racist action or assertion of power. "

Thoughts: we cannot take responsibility for white supremacy injustices where ever they may be found.

Further, "white supremacy" is a hot button term that may be difficult prove and we have not defined it in this document.

Bullet 10- seems to assume all racism these days is perpetrated by whites against people of color. Might this be more generally stated?

First sentence under "How we will respond," Might we remove "anti-racist" and frame it more positively? Insert "welcoming and inclusive"

From the viewpoint of the clerk of session and a ruling elder of a small church, the 10 bullet points of response to anti-racism, while valid, are also overwhelming. Many of our churches have only part-time pastors with limited time, and very few congregation members who are able to help spearhead training and implementation of these anti-racism efforts.

At this point, education and conversations regarding racism, would be a necessary starting point in our small rural congregations. Bullet Point 1 (Examining our practices for influences of racism) and Bullet Point #3 (using prayer, being mindful, and being guided by the Spirit) are also easy to implement. This remainder of the list needs to be pared down to be more manageable but yet effective in combatting racism.

In the anti-racism statement, the 4th paragraph up from Policy Review, where it says, "Yellowstone Presbytery will not tolerate" refers back to the harassment statement. Otherwise the total statement is talking about racism: why the inclusion of the "Yellowstone Presbytery will not tolerate . . ." concerning harassment rather than a "Yellowstone Presbytery will not tolerate . . ." concerning "racism". Perhaps I'm misreading the statement -- perhaps discrimination is referencing racism. It just doesn't seem quite fitting for the rest of the page referring to racism.

General comments:

- I support the adoption of anti-harassment and anti-racism policies. I have carefully read both of the draft documents and I have no suggestions for improvement. However, I believe that a legal review is imperative before we vote to adopt these documents.

- I read over both documents, the policy against harassment and the anti-racism policy. My experience with such topics is limited but both of these policies seem complete. I have no suggestions for improvement or change.
- I think the look fine. I am glad the presbytery is addressing these issues.

Anti-Racism Policy

From the viewpoint of the clerk of session and a ruling elder of a small church, the 10 bullet points of response to anti-racism, while valid, are also overwhelming. Many of our churches have only part-time pastors with limited time, and very few congregation members who are able to help spearhead training and implementation of these anti-racism efforts.

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Policy Against Harassment

This policy is more defined and seems to be easy to understand and implement.

ATTACHMENT B

YELLOWSTONE PRESBYTERY POLICY AGAINST HARASSMENT

The Presbytery of Yellowstone, including all members, commissioners, committee members, and staff, is committed to maintaining a presbytery free from harassment in the workplace, at meetings of the presbytery, or at any of its committee meetings. Therefore, Yellowstone Presbytery will not tolerate any form of harassment or discrimination based on any of the following characteristics: race, color, gender, gender identity, national origin, age, sexual orientation, sex (including pregnancy), religion, national origin, disability, veteran status, or other characteristic protected by law. Such behavior can be a form of employment discrimination that violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, or the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Anti-discrimination laws also prohibit harassment against individuals in retaliation for filing a discrimination charge, for testifying, or participating in any way in an investigation proceeding or lawsuit under these laws, or against individuals who oppose employment practices that they reasonably believe discriminate against individuals, in violation of these laws. The presbytery will not tolerate intimidation, humiliation, physical or mental abuse toward one another. Those found to engage in this behavior will be disciplined, up to and including termination of employment or duties.

DEFINITION

For purposes of this policy, harassment is defined as any unwelcome or offensive conduct that targets one or more of the characteristics listed above and has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment or that interferes with an individual's work

performance. It becomes unlawful when enduring offensive conduct becomes a condition of continued employment, and/or the conduct is severe or pervasive enough to create a work environment that a reasonable person would consider intimidating, hostile, or abusive.

Offensive conduct may include, but is not limited to, offensive jokes, slurs, epithets or name calling, physical assaults or threats, intimidation, ridicule or mockery, insults or put-downs, offensive objects or pictures, and interference with work performance. Harassment can occur in a variety of circumstances, such as:

- **The harasser can be the victim's supervisor, a supervisor in another area, a co-worker, or a nonemployee.**
- **The victim does not have to be the person directly being harassed, but can be anyone affected by the offensive conduct, also known as third-party harassment.**

TYPES OF HARRASSMENT

- **Physical or threatening behavior toward a person or property. In its extreme, such behavior can be considered assault.**
- **Personal/Psychological harassment can include bullying, where the victim is subjected to unwanted remarks, insults, offensive and derogatory statements.**
- **Discrimination is directed at someone's race, age, sex, or other form of protected class (as listed above), who is subjected to offensive remarks.**
- **Cyberbullying is threatening or offensive conduct on social media. It spreads quickly and can easily get out of hand.**
- **Sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature including display of sexually explicit images or texts on the part of supervisors, employees, and nonemployees. (See separate policy against sexual harassment in Yellowstone Presbytery's Administrative Manual.)**
- **Third-party harassment is when a person witnesses harassment in the presbytery and is adversely affected by it.**

PROCEDURE

At the time of hire, all new employees will receive a copy of the most current presbytery Policy Against Harassment. Employees have an obligation to report any behavior that they reasonably believe violates the presbytery's anti-harassment policy. Persons who believe they have been subjected to or have witnessed harassment or discrimination are strongly encouraged to inform the harasser that the conduct is unwelcome and must stop and report their experience to either the Executive Presbyter or the Moderator of the Leadership Cabinet.

If a threat to the personal safety of a staff person or others is determined to exist, the offender can be removed from the meeting or premises. The incident must be reported to the Executive Presbyter or the Moderator of Leadership Cabinet and may be followed by an investigation and possible termination.

If serious harassment is observed or reported, such as assault, verbal or written threats, steps should be taken to separate the parties, with or without the aid of police. The incident must be reported to the Executive Presbyter or the Moderator of the Leadership Cabinet who may take immediate steps as deemed appropriate. If the harassment continues and the staff person wishes

to formally document the harassment, a formal letter of complaint must be sent to the Stated Clerk who then initiates an investigation committee according to the Presbytery’s policies.

The investigating committee will conduct a fair and thorough investigation into the allegations of harassment while respecting the privacy of the complaining employee and the alleged harasser to the fullest possible extent.

Yellowstone Presbytery will not tolerate any form of retaliation or retribution against any person who, in good faith, reports acts of harassment and/or discrimination or who participates in an investigation of allegations of harassment.

Intentional harassment is a major violation of presbytery policy and will be dealt with accordingly by corrective action, such as counseling, suspension, or termination, depending upon the severity of the violation.

It is the intent of Yellowstone Presbytery to provide an environment free from verbal, physical, and visual forms [e.g., signs, posters, or documents] of harassment and an environment free of harassment, intimidation, or coercion in any form. Displaying sexually explicit images or text on presbytery property or at meetings of Yellowstone Presbytery or its committees is a violation of presbytery policy. No one is allowed to download, archive, edit, or manipulate sexually explicit material from the Internet while using presbytery resources. Any sexually explicit material sent by anyone associated with the presbytery or received from outside sources should be given to the Executive Presbyter or the Moderator of the Leadership Cabinet.

All persons are expected to be sensitive to the individual rights of others.

POLICY REVIEW

This policy shall be reviewed every three years for improvements and/or updates.

I have read and understand the Yellowstone Presbytery Policy Against Harassment and agree to abide by it.

Signature

Date

Witness

Date

A copy of this agreement is available to you.

A copy was _____ **given to me** _____ **refused by me.**

Yellowstone Presbytery Policy Against Racism

The Presbytery of Yellowstone acknowledges the sin of racism and believes that racism, marginalization, and discrimination are sins against God and humanity that are inconsistent with our Christian values. As our PC(USA) denomination states, "[R]acism is the opposite of what God intends for humanity... [It] is a lie about our fellow human beings, for it says that some are less than others." Therefore, racism in any form is unacceptable within the Presbytery of Yellowstone.

Definition

We define racism as the combination of social power and racial prejudice to create systems that treat people differently, based on their defined racial group. Privileges are provided for some while dehumanizing, excluding, or oppressing others.

Christ breaks down all the divisions we create. As members, commissioners, committee members, and staff of Yellowstone Presbytery, it is counter to the faith we proclaim to bolster divisions between God's children, including those based on race and other social inequities. Therefore we, the people, congregations, and body of the Presbytery of Yellowstone stand against racism in any form and pledge to work toward transformation, not just within our Presbytery, but also within the communities in which our congregations reside.

We acknowledge that anti-racism work is and will be difficult, uncomfortable, and ongoing. However, as our denomination affirms: "Because of our biblical understanding of who God is and what God intends for humanity, [we] must stand against, speak against, and work against racism. Anti-racist efforts are not optional for Christians. They are an essential aspect of Christian discipleship, without which we fail to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ."

How We Will Respond

As we strive to become a more welcoming and inclusive Body of Christ, we call ourselves to action, in ways that include, but are not limited to the following efforts:

- **To continually examine our practices (written, spoken, formal and informal) for influences of racism and acknowledge and remedy those practices when found.**
- **To continually educate ourselves about racism, through the Presbytery's leadership, congregational studies, and children's & youth programs.**
- **To use prayer, mindfulness, and the Spirit's guidance, to transform our hearts and souls from the inside out.**
- **To continue to repent of the role that we individually and collectively have played and continue to play in establishing and maintaining systemic racism.**
- **To work toward racial equity in recruiting, installing/hiring, training, and retaining employees and leaders.**
- **To encourage the management of presbytery investments and finances in ways that**

acknowledge the presence of racial injustice through financial systems, including support of minority-owned or minority-led businesses.

- **To engage in acts of restoration and reparation where the presbytery or its churches are shown to have created disparities of wealth through racist action or assertion of power.**
- **To support peacemaking movements that address racism within a spectrum of other intersectional identities.**
- **To cultivate postures of curiosity, humility, shared humanity, and delight in interactions with all people who have been marginalized.**
- **To actively listen to, rather than speak at, people of all races, colors, and national origins.**

PROCEDURE

At the time of hire, all new employees will receive a copy of the most current presbytery Anti-Racism Policy. Employees have an obligation to report any behavior that they reasonably believe violates the presbytery's anti-racism policy. Persons who believe they have been subjected to or have witnessed racism are strongly encouraged to inform the other person that the conduct is unwelcome and must stop, then report their experience to the Executive Presbyter or the Moderator of the Leadership Cabinet.

If serious racism is observed or reported, such as assault, verbal or written threats, steps should be taken to separate the parties, with or without the aid of police. The incident must be reported to the Executive Presbyter or the Moderator of the Leadership Cabinet who may take immediate steps as deemed appropriate. If the racist action continues and the person wishes to formally document the problem, a formal letter of complaint must be sent to the Stated Clerk who then initiates an investigation according to the Presbytery's policies.

The investigating committee will conduct a fair and thorough investigation into the allegations of racism while respecting the privacy of the complainant and the alleged harasser to the fullest possible extent.

Yellowstone Presbytery will not tolerate any form of retaliation or retribution against any person who, in good faith, reports acts of racism and/or discrimination or who participates in an investigation of allegations of racism.

Intentional racism is a major violation of the Presbytery's policy and will be dealt with accordingly by corrective action, such as counseling, suspension, or termination, depending upon the severity of the violation.

It is the intent of Yellowstone Presbytery to provide an environment free from verbal, physical, and visual forms [e.g., signs, posters, or documents] of racism and an environment free of harassment, intimidation, or coercion in any form. Displaying racist images or text on presbytery property or at meetings of Yellowstone Presbytery or its committees is a violation of presbytery policy. No one is allowed to download, archive, edit, or manipulate racist material from the Internet while using presbytery resources. Any racist material sent by anyone or received from outside sources should be given to the Executive Presbyter or the Moderator of the Leadership Cabinet.

All persons are expected to be sensitive to the individual rights of others.

POLICY REVIEW

This policy shall be reviewed every three years for improvements and/or updates.

I have read and understand the Yellowstone Presbytery Policy Against Racism and agree to abide by it.

Signature

Date

Witness

Date

A copy of this agreement is available to you.

A copy of the policy was _____ **given to me** _____ **refused by me.**