

Presbytery of Yellowstone Anti-racism Policy

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 Christians, 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 ~~strongly~~ against racism in any form and pledge ~~to uncover our unconscious biases that lead to marginalization and oppression and~~ 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 anti-racist 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, as a response to disparities of wealth established and maintained by white supremacy.
- 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, those of us who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.

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. Employees 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, the Moderator of the Leadership Cabinet, the Moderator of the Personnel Committee, or any member of the Personnel Committee.

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 and the Moderator of the Personnel Committee who may take immediate steps as deemed appropriate. If the racist harassment continues and the staff person wishes to formally document the problem, 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 racism 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 an employee who, in good faith, reports acts of harassment and/or discrimination or who participates in an investigation of allegations of harassment.

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 a work 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. Employees are not allowed to download, archive, edit, or manipulate racist material from the Internet while using presbytery resources. Any racist material sent by a fellow employee or received from outside sources should be given to the Executive Presbyter.

All employees are expected to be sensitive to the individual rights of their co-workers.

POLICY REVIEW

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