

Draft Proposal: Anti-Racism Policy

Presbytery of Yellowstone

(January 21, 2025)

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 the 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.

Jesus modeled valuing those different from ourselves in multiple stories in scripture. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus presents the Christian ideal of crossing racial lines to lovingly serve others (Luke 10:25ff). When Jesus encounters the Samaritan woman at the well, he embraces her with dignity and respect, opening the reign of God to her (John 4). As followers of Jesus, the Presbytery of Yellowstone empowers all to live lives that embrace this model of relationship with each other.

Definition

We define racism as racial prejudice, interpersonally and systemically, that treats people differently in a negative manner, 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 Yellowstone Presbytery, it is counter to the faith we proclaim to bolster divisions between God's children, including those based on race. Therefore the Presbytery of Yellowstone stands against racism in any form, 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-racism 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 be the Body of Christ following his teaching and example, we love and care for all God's children in ways that may include, but are not limited to the following efforts:

- Use prayer, mindfulness, and the Spirit's guidance, to transform our hearts and souls from the inside out.
- Cultivate postures of curiosity, humility, shared humanity, and delight in interactions with all people.
- Actively listen to, and form relationships with, people of all races, colors, and national origins.
- Educate ourselves about racism, in partnership with Presbytery's leadership, offering transformational discipleship programs, respecting the God-image in all people.
- When convicted of our own racism, repent of the role that we individually and collectively have played and reconcile relationships with the other, where possible.
- Examine our practices (written, spoken, formal and informal) for racist implications/expression, and acknowledge and make amends for those practices, in the church and/or in the community we reside.
- Support peacemaking movements, particularly those adopted by Yellowstone Presbytery congregations, that address racism in the communities in which we reside. (Matthew 5:9)
- Work toward racial equity in recruiting, installing/hiring, training, and retaining employees and leaders, when applicable to the community and the demographics we reside.
- Proclaim and live the Gospel in unity as the Body of Christ: that all of us were created by God, bear the image of God and the saving work of Christ is sufficient for all of every race (Galatians 3:28)

Procedures

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. With the assistance of Session and/or church

leadership, 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.

If continuation of racism is observed or reported, and parties are unable to reconcile relationships, 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 victim 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.

Yellowstone Presbytery will not tolerate any form of retaliation or retribution against any person who reports acts of racism or who participates in an investigation of allegations of racism.

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. 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. 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.

Conclusion

The Yellowstone Presbytery believes all people, regardless of race, are created in the image of God. As followers of Jesus, we are expected to be respectful of the individual rights and humanity of others. We know that situations and communities change continuously, and therefore our response to racism and policy are a living document that is shaped and adapted as we live as witnesses in God's world.