

April 2021

“The Sin of Racism”



Presbytery of Lake Michigan
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)



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Welcome and Opening Prayer

Communication Guidelines for a Brave Space

01

Welcome multiple viewpoints

Speak from your own experience by using “I statements.” Ask questions to understand the sources of disagreements.

02

Own your intentions and your impacts

Respect each other’s experiences and feelings by taking responsibility for the effects of your words. On the other side, if you have a strong reaction to something, let the group know. Be open to dialogue.

03

Work to recognize your privileges

Use this space to recognize and investigate your privileges (for example: class, gender, sexual orientation, race, ability). Honor the different experiences we all bring to this space.

04

Take risks: Lean into discomfort

We are all in process. Challenge yourself to contribute even if it is not perfectly formulated.

05

Step Back

Share speaking time and try to speak after others who have not spoken.

Communication Guidelines for a Brave Space

06

Notice and name group dynamics in the moment

We are all responsible for this space. Be aware of how others are responding or not responding. Ask for a “time out” or dialogue if needed.

07

Actively listen

Use your energy to listen to what is said before thinking about how to respond. Notice when defensiveness and denial arise.

08

Challenging with care

Find ways to respectfully challenge others and be open to challenges of your own views. Think about how to question ideas without personal attacks.

09

Confidentiality

Share the message, not the messenger.

10

Break it down

Use simple language and background information when necessary. Ask for clarification if needed.

Scripture: Theological Foundations



CREATION

Genesis 1:1-31
Psalm 104

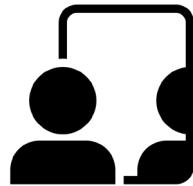


IMAGE OF GOD

Genesis 1:26



GOD LOVES DIVERSITY

Acts 10:9-23



GOD LOVES JUSTICE

Jeremiah 9:23-
24

Background: How We Got Here



“The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ - Jesus (Mark 12:31)

“Love is an action, never simply a feeling. If we claim to love our neighbor, ... , we are called to action. We have said a lot and not done enough.”

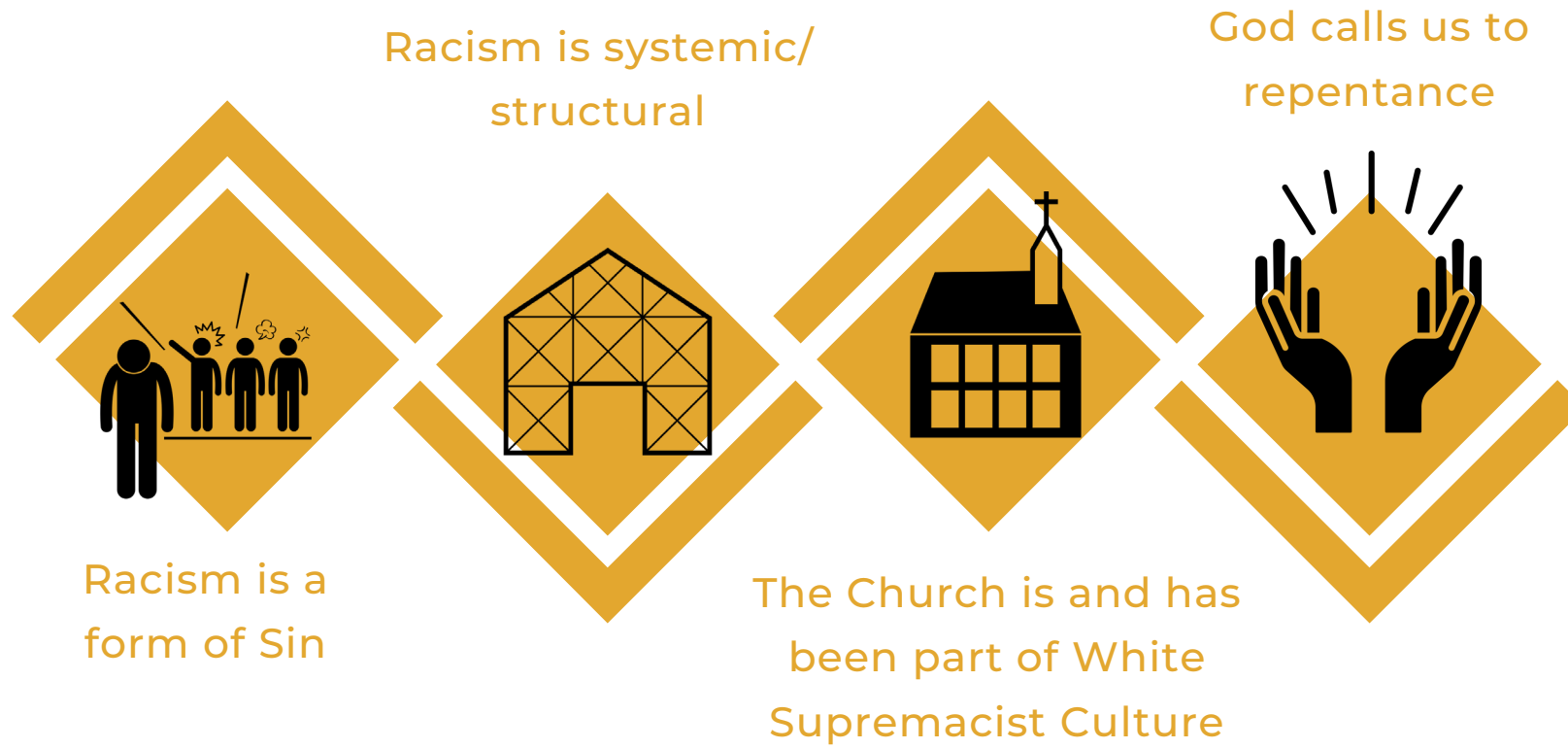
- bell hooks



Assumptions: Framework for Discussion



Statement Assumptions: Framework for Discussion



Working Definitions

...caused by technology eliminating jobs...
 ...in the text...
 ...in making...
 ...technological...
 (Robert D. Patton).
technologist (tek nol o jist) technology.
technologize (tek nol o jize) to make technological...
 ing. to make technological...
 cety or an industry.
technology (tek nol o jē), science of the mechanical and applied science: He studied electricity of technology. 2 the body of tools, materials, techniques, and processes produce goods and services and needs: Science has contributed much technology. 3 a particular application; any method, process, or system of tools and techniques to achieve a goal technology. To reach the ... conditions for a net release of fusion power it is to first develop many new technologies as used in an art or terminology or nomenclature. [< Greek]

...and using...
 ...scored in a...
 ...of physician de...
 ...to con...
 ...has not been knocked...
 ...in a technical...
 ...terms; in a tech...
 ...technical meth...
 ...an indus...
 ...research,
 ...ed officer
 ...a staff
 ...master sergeant.
 ...an expert in...

WORKING DEFINITIONS

RACISM



Racism is a system in which one race maintains supremacy over another race through a set of attitudes, behaviors, social structures, and institutional power.

Racism is a “system of structured inequality where the goods, services, rewards, privileges, and benefits of the society are available to individuals according to their presumed membership in” particular racial groups. (Barbara Love, 1994)

WORKING DEFINITIONS

BIPOC



The acronym BIPOC means:

Black, Indigenous, People Of Color

This term is used to emphasize the historic oppression of Black and Indigenous people.

- Black: here encompasses African Americans whose ancestors were formerly enslaved and whose descendants are disproportionately affected by racism in the U.S.
- Indigenous: here encompasses all Native People in the Americas and U.S. territories.
- People Of Color: here is intended to include all other non-white people, especially as they face racism and discrimination in a white dominant culture, I.E. Latin American, Asian, Middle Eastern.

WORKING DEFINITIONS:

WHITE PRIVILEGE



White privilege gives advantages, favors, and benefits to white people at the expense of members of marginalized groups.

Privilege operates on personal, interpersonal, cultural, and institutional levels.

WORKING DEFINITIONS:

WHITE PRIVILEGE

White privilege is characteristically invisible to people who have it. White people often believe that they have earned the privileges that they enjoy or that everyone could have access to these privileges if only they worked to earn them.

When in fact, privileges are unearned and they are granted to people in this dominant group whether they want those privileges or not.

WORKING DEFINITIONS:

SYSTEMIC RACISM



The ways in which the structures, systems, policies, and procedures of institutions in the U.S. are founded upon and then promote, reproduce, and perpetuate advantages for white people and the oppression of BIPOC communities and people.

The ways in which institutions legislate and structure reality to advantage white people and oppress BIPOC communities and people.

The ways in which institutions -- Housing, Government, Education, Media, Business, Health Care, Criminal Justice, Employment, Labor, Politics, Church – perpetuate racism.

WORKING DEFINITIONS:

SYSTEMIC RACISM

Examples: BIPOC communities and people under-represented and misrepresented on television, racially biased standardized tests used to determine who will be admitted to higher education programs and institutions, historic and ongoing breaking of treaties with indigenous Native American communities, reliance on low-paying undocumented immigrant labor by farms and factories.

WORKING DEFINITIONS:

WHITE SUPREMACY

The ideology that white people and the ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions of white people are superior to People of Color and their ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions.

Most people associate white supremacy with extremist groups like the Ku Klux Klan and the neo-Nazis, however white supremacy is ever present in our institutional and cultural assumptions that assign value, morality, goodness, and humanity to the white group while casting people and communities of color as worthless, immoral, bad, and inhuman and "undeserving."

WORKING DEFINITIONS:

WHITE SUPREMACY

The term "white supremacy" also refers to a political or socio-economic system where white people enjoy structural advantage and rights that other racial and ethnic groups do not, both at a collective and an individual level.

Statement: The Sin of Racism



Communication Guidelines for a Brave Space

01

Welcome
multiple
viewpoints

02

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intentions and
your impacts

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recognize your
privileges

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Break it down

Presbytery of Lake Michigan – The Sin of Racism

Purpose: to respond to the call of the 2020 GA by specifically adopting the following portions of “The Sin of Racism” as specific commitments by the Presbytery of Lake Michigan and as recommendations to its congregations for actions.

On the Church in This Moment in History —Responding to the Sin of Racism and a Call to Action

“Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.” -Isaiah 58:12 (NRSV)

The Presbytery of Lake Michigan of the PC(USA) declares that Black lives matter; that our country’s most important institutions have been built to sustain white privilege, to protect white lives and white property at the expense of our siblings of color; and that the church, through ignorance, denial, and in some cases deliberate action, has participated in this injustice. We have been slow to face the reality of systemic racism. We have been slow to acknowledge the pain of our fellow Presbyterians, of our fellow Christians, of our fellow citizens, and of those who have come to America for a better life, whose value has been judged by the color of their skin. We pledge to join hands and hearts with our BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) siblings to actively confront and dismantle systemic racism in our church and in society at large, and to work for a more just, merciful, and peaceful country that allows all of God’s children to flourish.

Presbytery of Lake Michigan

Discussion

What about this statement do you support?

What hinders your support?



Presbytery of Lake Michigan – The Sin of Racism

The Presbytery of Lake Michigan supports the following actions:

1. Call all Presbyterians to hear and heed the Gospel imperative to love God, neighbor, and self by living out a deeper commitment to active participation with Jesus Christ in the work of building God's kingdom through

- a) Personal and corporate repentance, spiritual renewal, and devotion to the Great Ends of the Church. Repenting, both personally and corporately, for the role we as individuals and as a predominantly White-dominated church played in history and continue to perpetuate today, even if unknowingly, in systemic racism and White Supremacy, especially in terms of our own local silence, silencing those who attempt to speak or act, and our failure to act regarding police brutality, voter suppression, educational and healthcare inequality, and other acts of systemic racism on federal, state, and local levels.
- b) Listening and responding to the voices of peoples long silenced, through participation in programs such as *Hands and Feet: Presbyterians Engaging in Communities*, and the Poor People's Campaign, and *Freedom Rising*, approved by the 222nd General Assembly (2016).
- c) Energetic, intelligent, imaginative, and loving involvement in the Matthew 25 Initiative and its intertwined foci: building congregational vitality, dismantling structural racism, and eradicating systemic poverty.

Presbytery of Lake Michigan – The Sin of Racism

2. Recommend that the Presbytery of Lake Michigan congregations develop and adopt an antiracism policy in their bylaws by engaging Item 02-137, “On Amending G-3.0106 to Add an Antiracism Policy with Suggested Training for All Members of Each Council.” This work can be done now at all levels, even in advance of the 225th General Assembly (2022), at which time that General Assembly can act on setting a constitutional requirement to do so if it chooses.

3. Honoring the spirit of Item 02-034-INFO—the Progress Report from the Special Committee on Racism, Truth, and Reconciliation and its conclusions regarding the need to address “institutional racism and oppression within the church” and “to call the church to do the hard work of repair necessary for reconciliation.”

4. Recommend to the congregations of the Presbytery of Lake Michigan the poem included in the rationale and retyped here for reading, reflection, meditation.

A knee on a neck
laying bare for all to see
the evil of
callous, soulless, entitled power
choking the life from
God’s beloved
just because.

We know what must change.
Will we, church?

We have written many
true, significant,
sometimes even sincere words.

We have confessed:
Belhar, C’67, Barmen...

Enough words?
Never enough witness.

We know we must change.
Will we, church?

Kairos.

Presbytery of Lake Michigan – The Sin of Racism

We believe that the work of attending to the pain, suffering, and long-standing oppression of our BIPOC siblings in Christ is central to our work of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ. When Black Americans are killed at twice the rate of white Americans (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/investigations/police-shootings-database/>) we have much to lament. We, in particular white people, and as a predominantly white denomination, must confess our complicity in perpetuating systems of oppression against our BIPOC siblings. The Presbytery of Lake Michigan – The Sin of Racism 3 church must be the first place seeking racial justice and reconciliation, the dismantling of structural racism, and the healing of our marginalized communities. It has, unfortunately, not often been so. We must have our own denominational and congregational houses in order. We must dare to be an image of hope for those around us.

While we recognize and honor the work towards justice that has been happening and continues at every level of the PC(USA), we also name that in this time it is not enough. We must become actively antiracist in our theology, policy, and practice. When our colleagues, siblings, and neighbors protest in the streets to say that being Black should never be an excuse to be targeted and killed, when so many stand in solidarity to say #BlackLivesMatter, and when our own communities are weighed down in grief and anger, it is the time to stand alongside our BIPOC siblings in voice and in action.

bell hooks, an American author and social activist says this, 'Love is an action, never simply a feeling.' If we claim to love our neighbor, especially our BIPOC neighbors, we are called to action. We have said a lot and not done enough. Acknowledging the grief of our siblings in Christ and naming that the church has a primary calling to be repairers of the breach means nothing without moving towards action. We cannot wait until the 225th General Assembly (2022) to begin again to take action.

Presbytery of Lake Michigan

Discussion

What about this statement do you support?

What hinders your support?



Presbytery of Lake Michigan – The Sin of Racism Resources



Congregations and sessions within the Presbytery of Lake Michigan are encouraged to review items of business referred from the 224th General Assembly (2020) to the 225th General Assembly (2022) and prayerfully consider the call of God to work and witness for the goals and values expressed therein, in particular the following items as starting points for developing plans for action in dismantling structural racism at every level of the PC(USA):

- a. 02-020, “Disparities Experienced by Black Women and Girls Task Force Report”
- b. 02-034-INFO, “Special Committee on Racism, Truth, and Reconciliation Progress Report with Recommendation”
- c. 02-041, “Lazarus Is Walking in Baltimore—From the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy”
- d. 02-084, “A Resolution Addressing the Lack of Installed Pastoral Leadership in People of Color Congregations in the PC(USA) - From the Racial Equity Advocacy Committee”
- e. 02-100, “Approval of Part 1 of the 2021–2022 Mission Work Plan for the Presbyterian Mission Agency—From the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board,” especially the sections on dismantling structural racism

Presbytery of Lake Michigan

Next Steps

