

From the 225th PCUSA General Assembly, Committee on Race and Gender Justice

RGJ-08 – *On Offering an Apology to African Americans for the Sin of Slavery and Its Legacy* - <https://www.pc-biz.org/#/search/3000895>

The Leadership Team recommends that the Presbytery of Lake Michigan adopt the statement approved by the 225th GA as our own and that the White Christians will read the Litany of Apology to African Americans:

That the Presbytery of Lake Michigan offer an apology to African Americans for the sin of slavery and its legacy and to approve the following statements:

- 1. That the Presbytery of Lake Michigan and its members, in the spirit of the Confession of Belhar (1986) as a framework for considering matters of truth, unity, and reconciliation, acknowledge that:**
 - a. White supremacy is a conscious, calculated effort to perpetuate and institutionalize white supremacy and privilege through legal systems as well as economic and physical intimidation. After the Civil War, white Americans controlled economic and political systems that resulted in lynching, Jim Crow laws, Black Codes, white citizens' councils, slavery through incarceration, poverty, racial profiling, the school-to-prison pipeline, and mass incarceration, all intended to harm or further enslave African Americans. Even today, we continue to prolong racial inequality through codifying white supremacy. As a denomination with a majority white membership and historically Eurocentric institutions, we apologize for being complicit for the last 400 years in perpetuating these injustices.**
 - b. We, as a people of faith, recognize that the only appropriate path to healing and reconciliation is to acknowledge the wrongs that we, the Presbytery of Lake Michigan as part of the Presbyterian Church, and as part of the institutional church structure, were and are complicit in perpetuating. This was done through interpretation of selected scriptures and rationalization to justify human bondage and perpetuate white supremacy and privilege. We apologize for this transgression.**
 - c. Black lives have been devalued beginning with slavery, and their human dignity continues to be circumvented through the economic and legal systems that are racist as institutions. We apologize for benefiting from and continuing to be part of this social, economic, and legal construct. We recognize that the presence and persistence of racism in ourselves and our institutions is the result of the sin of slavery.**
 - d. We recognize the necessity of building a trusting relationship between white Americans and African Americans. A first step to healing and reconciliation can only be done by acknowledging that slavery, and the justification of and financial**

benefit thereof, is inseparable from the economic, artistic, and religious foundations on which this country is built.

- e. **The PC(USA) apologizes to African Americans both in the church and outside of the church for all the wrongs that have been done throughout our history and those that are ongoing.**
2. **That the Presbytery of Lake Michigan, in the spirit of Christ in John 13:35, “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another,” and 1 John 4:12, “No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us,” adopt and use:**

A LITANY OF REPENTANCE

As white Christians we repent of our complicity in the belief in white supremacy: the belief that people of European descent are superior in intelligence, skills, imagination, and perseverance. We acknowledge that this belief in white supremacy has been the foundation of, and an excuse for, atrocities against people of African descent in the United States and in the world.

We repent of our failure to recognize and take responsibility for the legacy of slavery.

We repent of the injustice, pain, humiliation, and suffering imposed on African Americans by our ancestors and ourselves through actions and inaction. We repent of our complicity in failing to act in mutual loving relationship.

We repent of closing our eyes to the degradation and injustice forced upon African Americans who were enslaved, segregated, terrorized, and imprisoned.

We repent of covering our ears to the crying of families torn apart, to the sound of human flesh being struck, while songs of freedom and heavenly grace flow from our lips.

We repent that we have failed as an institution and as individuals to use our voices to abhor and end lynching, segregation, and racial profiling. We regret our generations of silence on these issues so that we could maintain a comfortable life in our churches, homes, and communities.

We repent of shutting our hearts to the experiences of fellow humans whose stories of pain, suffering, hardship, struggle, love, and joy mirror our own life journeys, yet are deprived of privilege and marred by racism. We have turned our backs and walked away pretending not to see, yet we saw, pretending not to know, yet we knew, and convincing ourselves that we were not complicit, yet we are.

We now know that we as white Christians have benefitted directly and indirectly from these injustices. We name ourselves as complicit and repent.

Finally, we repent of our violent actions to suppress Black agency. African Americans, since the time of slavery, have actively pursued their freedom ... built this country ... laid foundational structures ... and demonstrated their capacity to fully participate in the construction of this American society in spite of white supremacy.

As repentance means turning and going the other way, with Christ's help we seek to do so. At the same time, we commit ourselves to walking with people of African descent toward the goal of healing, reconciliation, and eliminating racism as we seek to dismantle white privilege.

- 3. Direct the Presbytery of Lake Michigan to share this apology with all of the congregations and committees, commissions, and teams on behalf of the denomination.**
- 4. Therefore, we recommend that the Presbytery of Lake Michigan act on the following concerns:**
 - a. Direct the Presbytery to refute arguments and new laws that prohibit the teaching of a fully inclusive history of the United States. God commanded the people to remember the difficult times in their history, the mistakes they would rather forget: "Tell your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation" (Joel 1:3).**
 - c. Encourage congregations to prepare a history of their community to facilitate and deepen their study and understanding of these issues and to share the resources they find helpful in that preparation with the larger church.**
 - d. Commit the Presbytery to restorative justice/reparations and direct congregations to seek the resources provided by the Presbyterian Mission Agency and the Office of the Stated Clerk tools to enact restorative justice measures in their communities that will close gaps in economics, health, education, environmental well-being, and the criminal justice system created out of the legacy of slavery and white supremacy. These gaps have existed since our development as a country and still exist today.**
- 5. Direct the Presbytery of Lake Michigan to share this apology with its congregations.**
- 6. Direct the Presbytery to share this apology to with its congregation in all its expressions for their use in the work of reconciliation among all peoples.**

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