Policy on Antiracism

(Approved by presbytery 05/14/24)

> *"I hate, I despise your religious festivals; your assemblies are a stench to me.* ***22*** *Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them.* ***23*** *Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps.* ***24*** *But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!"* - Amos 5:21-24

Systemic Racism has eroded the very fabric of humanity which ideally binds our society together.

We stand in solidarity with our black, indigenous, and persons of color siblings in denouncing the historical legacy and destruction caused by institutionalized racism and violence. The deafening silence of dehumanizing and complicit inaction in addressing the systemic ills within our society, including within the Church and our own churches, are palpable. As Christians commanded to love all of God's creation, all people, all races – we listen, we empathize, and we know that when absolute justice is established, peace will follow. We recognize that structural forms of oppression are interwoven. As our attention to racism and our ability to actively participate in the building of God's beloved community grows, we will seek to learn and address other forms of discrimination, bias, and oppression as well.

Scripture in many places calls on the people of God to be a blessing to all peoples, to be both reconciled and reconcilers. Believing that we have been created in God's Image, we commit to this reconciling work, necessary until all peoples find themselves integrated into the whole of society and treated with dignity and righteous justice.

We, a diverse and complex community of believers, set forth and commit to operate under this policy. We will undertake this discipline individually and collectively as a church.

The Presbytery of Cincinnati believes in, stands for, and works for human dignity, respect for all people, the value that diversity brings to our churches and our communities, the attainment of a quality of life for all, empowerment, integrity, equity, and inclusion. In short, we aspire to what Jesus called the abundant life for *all* of God's children.

The Presbytery of Cincinnati will be clear about where we stand and the ongoing actions we will take. As proactive Christian leaders, pastors, scholars, and members, we will break away from this structure of racism and work to support the empowerment and integrity of all people.

Further, we commit to confront, daily, own our stereotypes and biases. We know that change will require prayer, education, and action.

Moving forward, our actions will be based on representing our Christian heritage. We are committed to change. The Presbytery will not stand silent, we will not be complicit with the status quo, and we will not be complicit to the current structures that create and continue racism and injustice in society and

the church. We will stand with the most-impacted communities and we will be accountable to the community, our program participants, and to our mission.

SEEKING TO RECONCILIATION

The Presbytery of Cincinnati and the Sessions of local congregations cannot prevent or remedy discrimination, harassment, and retaliation based on race unless they know about them. This policy applies to allegations and complaints arising at the Presbytery level that may occur at events such as: Presbytery meetings, committee meetings, Presbytery-sponsored training events and gatherings.

An allegation is a written description of behavior of an individual that is suspected to be a violation of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA). A complaint is a written description of behavior of a council, or entity of a council that is suspected to violate the same standards through action in error or failure to act.

Reporting an Allegation – against an individual

- Individuals are encouraged to attempt accountability and reconciliation interpersonally or with a mediator. This could mean calling the behavior to the attention of the person who displayed it, or engaging a mediator to facilitate the conversation. There are times when, due to power and privilege, this option is not viable or healthy. We recognize that too often, people of color are asked to labor to reform the behaviors of people of privilege with a cost to their own wellbeing.
- All allegations shall be submitted to the Stated Clerk, following the guidelines in D-10.0101.
- A written summary of the incident is required to begin the formal disciplinary process.
    - Allegations should be reported in as timely of a manner as possible.
    - Upon receipt of a written allegation, the Stated Clerk shall determine whether the allegation involves a member of Presbytery.
- If it involves a member of Presbytery, the Stated Clerk shall follow the procedures for the initiation of an investigation for disciplinary processing (D-10.0103).
- If the complaint involves a member of a congregation, it shall be referred to the congregation's Session.

Reporting a Complaint – against the Presbytery (committee, entity, or the Presbytery itself)

Complaints alleging an irregularity or delinquency shall be handled as follows:

- If the alleged irregularity or delinquency occurred during a meeting or event overseen by a committee or entity of the Presbytery, the Stated Clerk shall forward the complaint to the Presbytery's Permanent Judicial Commission, which shall handle it in accordance with D-6.000 and D-7.000 of the Rules of Discipline.
- If the alleged irregularity or delinquency was committed by the Presbytery itself, the complaint shall be sent to the Stated Clerk of the Synod of the Covenant.

The Officers of the Presbytery of Cincinnati commit to a **pastoral, caring approach** to incidents of racism. Some incidents may have an impact on an individual or community, but for a variety of reasons, the party may not choose to initiate a formal process. The Officers of the Presbytery of Cincinnati shall offer appropriate care and support to the person who has experienced harm.

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