

Our Call, Our Work: Anti-Racism to Reparations

Reparations taskforce of the JWM Dismantling Racism Team

Introduction:

The document, *Our Call, Our Work: Anti-Racism to Reparations*, is an evolving document that will continue to transform as the PNCUCC Conference endeavors to do our work through an anti-racist lens.

Many voices were invited to support the development of this document and we know that will continue moving forward.

We ask that you take some time to read, reflect and respond to what is written here as you individually and collectively continue on your anti-racism journey.

You may respond during the small Conversation Gatherings at the PNCUCC Annual Meeting or send an email to the Chair of the Dismantling Racism Team,

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Blessings and peace,

Reparations taskforce of the JWM Dismantling Racism Team

Our Call, Our Work: Anti-Racism to Reparations

PNCUCC Invitation

Reparations Team, Dismantling Racism Team

March, 2021

*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 (RSV)

The Crisis

Black and Indigenous people, who have been under the thumb of white supremacy for 400 years, are enslaved by the institution of white supremacy. **They are still not able to move through this world freely.**

“Thinking about race is very different for nonwhite persons living in the Americas and beyond. People of color, especially First Nation and Black people must always consider their racial identity, whatever the situation, due to the systemic and interpersonal racism that still exists. Whiteness (and its accepted normality) also exist as everyday microaggressions. Acts of microaggressions include verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs or insults toward nonwhites. Whether

intentional or not, these attitudes communicate hostile, derogatory, or harmful messages.” ~ From the [National Museum of African American History and Culture](#)

True understanding of the depth of the pain we have caused people of color will never be known by white people, and now is the time to face our racism and begin the uncomfortable work: naming the wrongs, calling ourselves out / [calling ourselves in](#), listening rather than speaking, moving towards a more humble existence, living an intentional life where we are constantly aware of the impact of our whiteness and the harmful effects we perpetuate in the world. In this way we can lessen the negative impact our actions have on people of color.

Definitions:

Pastors of Color: *for the purposes of this document and the work of the PNCUCC, Pastors of Color include Black and Indigenous Pastors, Latinx, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders Pastors.*

White supremacy: *The system of domination and advantage based on the belief that white people constitute a superior race and should therefore dominate society, typically to the exclusion, subordination and/or detriment of other racial and ethnic groups.*

White Privilege: *Inherent advantages possessed by a white/white appearing person on the basis of their race in a society characterized by racial inequality and injustice.*

Institutional racism: *The term institutional racism was first coined in 1967 by [Stokely Carmichael](#) and [Charles V. Hamilton](#) in [Black Power: The Politics of Liberation](#). Carmichael and Hamilton wrote that while individual racism is often identifiable because of its overt nature, institutional racism is less perceptible because of its "less overt, far more subtle" nature. Institutional racism "originates in the operation of established and respected forces in the society, and thus receives far less public condemnation than [individual racism]."*

In his 2019 book [How to Be An Anti-Racist](#), Ibram X. Kendi believes the term “institutional racism” and the idea that the system’s actions are covert implies that the system is inanimate, invisible, and immortal. Separating overt from covert masks the fact that individuals make the policies that cause the oppression. We as individuals must learn to see the racist policies behind the racial inequities, so that we can change them.

Reparations *“literally means doing repair work. The idea is a biblical one. The community of Israel recognized the need to have a periodic time of repairing the social fabric. One form of reparations was the Jubilee Year (Lev. 25:1-10), when prisoners were freed and debts forgiven. Another was the order to compensate Hebrew slaves when they were released (Deut. 15:12-18)—they were not to be sent away “empty handed.” The people of Israel recognized that reparations is a spiritual issue.” ~ Nibs Stroupe, [The Christian Century](#), September 10, 2019*

Call to Action

As an Institution

“Without true repentance for these historical injustices and communal sin, calls from white Christians for “unity” or “racial reconciliation” are nothing more than

empty mockeries of the true reconciliation that God calls people to embody. This reconciliation comes from justice secured through repentance and reparation. The justice that God commissions people to practice as a reflection of God's character is not an optional side hobby for Christians who care about "social justice." As we've seen throughout redemptive history, justice through reparations is an essential public witness of the people of God and a hallmark of the economic ethics of God's kin-dom. Through Jesus' ministry, the Old Testament economic ethics are ushered into the new covenant in which repentance and faith in Christ leads to reconciled relationships rooted in justice and reparations for wrongdoing." ~Rev. Kathlyn James

We are inviting the PNCUCC to commit to building a roadmap to dismantle the systems of oppression in our institutions and within ourselves. Systemic racism was intentionally constructed, un/consciously replicated/sustained and must be systematically dismantled. We must examine our institutions and identify the ways in which they serve those with power in this culture at the expense of those in the global majority without power.

"For inasmuch as faith is about partnering with God to mend an unjust earth, and thus to move us toward a more just future, then faith communities by *definition* are accountable to that future. This means that for them, reparations should be directed toward building a future where all human beings are respected as the sacred creations that they are and thereby free to live into the fullness of their sacred creation. For faith communities, reparations must not be only an effort to compensate for past harms, they must also chart a pathway to a just future. Otherwise, reparations become little more than a salve for white guilt while the sin of white supremacy continues to thrive." ~ Sojourners, [A Christian Call for Reparations](#) by Rev. Dr. Kelly Brown Douglas July, 2020.

What does Reparations look like for our Conference?

UCC Conferences came together in 2017 to approve the following statement:

Therefore be it resolved, that the [Thirty-first General Synod of the United Church of Christ](#) calls upon all the judicatory and educational settings of the denomination to include the study and training in key principles and best practices of cultural diversity, inclusion and equity as well as anti-racism, unconscious bias and anti-white supremacy trainings in clergy preparation, continuing education, and as an ongoing requirement for maintaining standing for all persons engaged in authorized ministry within and on behalf of the United Church of Christ; Be it finally resolved that the Thirty-first General Synod of the United Church of Christ requests the United Church of Christ's Justice and Witness Ministries, the UCC's Local Church Ministries and the UCC's Ministerial Excellence, Support and Authorization team (MESA) cooperate by collecting best practices to support the implementation of such requirement, study and training as a witness by July, 2019.

Our committees are proposing the following actions be taken by the PNCUCC:

1. Institute broadscale anti-racism training: board, staff, committees, pastors, congregations.

- [Church Development Committee](#) - Will endeavor to support churches with financial resources for anti-racism training.
- [Committee On Ministries](#) - Will work towards requiring anti-racism training for all pastors.

- As a Conference, we will offer training to all congregations, congregational leaders (lay and ordained) to support the work of dismantling racism.
- Board of Directors will consider the establishment of an Equity Advisory body.

2. Provide wide support for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) pastors, chaplains, specialized ministers and MID (Members in Discernment).

- Committee on Ministry -
 - Provide a safe space for Pastors of Color for counseling and support.
 - Provide meaningful mentorship for Pastors.
- Stewardship Committee
 - Create a fund to contribute to an additional financial package for Pastors of Color.
- Churches
 - Decreased time between sabbaticals for Pastors of Color.

3. Promote the hiring of BIPOC people in leadership positions within the PNCUCC.

- Board of Directors
Consider the establishment of an Equity Advisory body to serve with Conference Ministry teams to further the commitment to dismantle all forms of racism in ourselves and in our systems of operation.
- Educational Ministries Committees
Consider the development of programs to prepare predominantly white congregations for hiring Black pastors.

4. Create forums for honest discussions.

- It is our intent to model and provide support for ongoing conversations about issues of racism. The Dismantling Racism Team, a subcommittee of the Justice Witness and Ministry committee, will endeavor to provide ongoing support to congregations as they create spaces for these honest discussions.
- The Educational Ministries Committee or designated body will develop a curriculum that teaches holistic, truth-telling curricula that presents BIPOC content as it relates to the history of the UCC church.

What might Reparations look like for you as a white-presenting individual?

“we need a r/evolution of the mind. we need a r/evolution of the heart. we need a r/evolution of the spirit. the power of the people is stronger than any weapon. a people’s r/evolution can’t be stopped. we need to be weapons of mass construction. weapons of mass love. it’s not enough just to change the system. we need to change ourselves. we have got to make this world user friendly. user friendly.” - Assata Shakur

Deeply reflect on the ways you, as a white presenting individual, participate in racism personally, in your communities and in your church. Acknowledge your personal racism and begin the uncomfortable journey towards anti-racism, knowing that the journey will never end. We as white folks can do this work through education and study, as individuals and in small groups.

Personal inquiry: What might it look like for you to offer reparations right now. Make a list of organizations and individuals doing the work of systemic anti-racism change in your community. Make a commitment to develop deep relationships with those individuals and organizations allowing that relationship to guide your participation in their ongoing work and your financial contributions.

What does Reparations look like for your church?

Each individual congregation knows what is the most urgent next step on the road to reparations for their church community and the area in which they live. Look at the structure and practices of your church with the understanding that the church comes from a white supremacist history. Analyze how white supremacy shows up in the culture of your work so that your congregation can make changes that will allow for your congregation to reframe your place in the world: elevating people of color and diminishing white privilege. Look into your church history and recognize the damage done in the past to people of color. Consider the land your church is on in relation to indigenous peoples. Dig deep and learn the history and practices of your church's story, practices that have been harmful and have hurt others and the environment. Work to correct these injustices. Make past mistakes public, apologize, and make a commitment to continuing the journey of dismantling the racism and racist systems that currently exist.

Develop relationships with people of color in your community. Actively engage in listening and learning to understand how you can best contribute to the collective work for racial justice. Take the time and make it a priority to develop these deep relationships that support the fullness of each person's humanity and our collective humanity.

Encourage members of your congregation and your congregation as a whole to connect with, build relationships with and commit resources of time, energy, and money toward groups working to advance comprehensive reparations demands.

Pastors of color in white churches have huge challenges. They need additional financial support, meaningful mentorship, and more sabbatical time as they walk their truth in a white-dominant culture world.

As a church use all this information to determine what Reparations would look like for your church. This new path needs to be deep. It may include changes in your bylaws so your governance is inclusive. It may include changes in the way you do church, changes in the service, changes in the way your church looks, changes in the way your church is seen by the community. Incorporate this work into your church's mission so it becomes part of your culture and your future as a faith organization.

“We value the ability of individuals and systems to change in ways that make racial justice possible. We seek lasting, positive change that redefines personal/relational/systemic ways of being and behaving. We support ourselves and others through the inevitable discomfort, tension, and uncertainty that precedes

change and rebirth. We understand and support the developmental process of individuals, communities, and systems.” - [Eastside For All](#)

Conclusion

As members of the PNCUCC, we invite you to begin the work of anti-racism and move towards reparations, where you are, on this day and at this time.

Repentance is not enough. Zacchaeus was a collaborator with the occupying Roman authority, and by adding his own extortionary fees, he plundered the wealth of his neighbors and enriched himself. Jesus encountered him and shocked the crowd by going to his home. Salvation came to the house of Zacchaeus on that day. He proclaimed, Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, “Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much” (Luke 19:8).

Zacchaeus had not personally designed the unjust system of Roman taxation. But he had not denounced it either; he had participated in it and profited from it. So Zacchaeus did not merely repent of his ways; he made restitution. He set up what we might call a “Zacchaeus fund” in order to restore what belonged to his neighbors. Are we willing to do the same?

Appendix

National:

[A resolution from National Synod 2017](#)

Letter from UCC Council of Conference Ministers

October 2020

Dear Members of the United Church of Christ:

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Savior Jesus Christ.

In August the National Setting of the UCC committed to hire a consulting firm to lead them through “an objective racial equity assessment” to hold the national setting of the church accountable to the ideals the church has espoused regarding racial equality and inclusion.

We recognize that the history of the UCC includes a wide array of narratives: those of myriad immigrants, formerly enslaved persons, colonists, indigenous communities, and more. Our predecessor bodies included abolitionists as well as slave owners; those who believed that racial inequality was established by God, and those who affirmed God-given racial equality with passion and fervor. Our predecessor bodies included those who pressed for the forced assimilation of indigenous peoples as well as those who stood in solidarity with and advocated on behalf of indigenous people. Our history contains the very best of American history regarding racial equality and it contains some of the worst. As a body made up of myriad traditions, theologies, languages, and geographies, our predecessor bodies reflected the society and time around them. Yet out of that complexity and contention arose something new: a movement of unity in the face of difference, our United Church of Christ.

The tragic events we have witnessed in 2020 have magnified awareness of the disparities in our church and society based on race. The Council of Conference Ministers affirms the commitment of the national setting to racial equality and inclusion and recognizes the need to engage in our own process of critical self-reflection. Therefore, in this moment, the Council of Conference Ministers invites the congregations and members of our conferences to recognize and affirm our call to:

- Consider anew how racism has divided us, damaged and at times destroyed our siblings in Christ, and broken the bonds of peace;
- Ask for forgiveness for our silence in the face of racial injustice;
- Take responsibility for our part in the struggle for racial justice;
- Recognize the political, theological and spiritual diversity of our congregations and to heed the great commandment of Matthew 22:37 to love God with all our souls and with all our minds and to love our neighbors as ourselves;
- Witness to the transforming power of Jesus Christ by engaging in deep self-reflection to “remove the log from our own eye” (Matthew 7:5) so that we may become more aware of our own racism and repent of it;
- Build processes of racial inclusion and equity in church membership, leadership, and service; and
- Engage in the sacred work of dismantling racist structures and white supremacy where we find them in the church and the community.

As Conference Ministers, we are on this journey with you; and will facilitate and support this work by providing resources that will enable reflection, dialog and action in addressing systems of institutional racism and white supremacy. The reflection and engagement will be different in each conference depending on its unique histories and narratives.

Our covenant is that we will move into self-reflection and clear-eyed conversations with open hearts to hear one another without fear or judgment. We understand that talking about racism, white supremacy and privilege in the church is difficult. However, due to our shared commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and in response to God’s invitation to unity, we are empowered to engage in these daunting and uncomfortable conversations. May we do so, as we are led by the Holy Spirit as God’s people.

With Grace and Gratitude,
The Council of Conferences Ministers
United Church of Christ

Statement from the PNCUCC Board of Directors June 2020:

The Board of Directors is committed to dismantling racism while expanding our understanding and awareness of the impact of racism and other intersectional oppressions such as classism, homophobia/homophobia, transphobia, and misogyny. White supremacy and dominant culture are realities in our Conference, and as an expression of equity, the Board is committed to developing and using an anti-racist lens in our work.

Anti-Racism Resources

- [People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond Anti-racist Principles](#)
- [Organizations to build relationships & support](#)
- [Reading/book group discussion list, and here.](#)

Resources from the National UCC website:

- [A New World-A New Church: Anti Racism Training](#) (revised 2007)
- [Financial Reparations: A Just Response to the Persistent Economic Effects of Slavery, Segregation, Discrimination and Racism](#)
- [Pastoral Letter on Racism 2008](#)
- [Sacred Conversation on Race Resource Guide](#) (NEW)

Multi Racial Multicultural Resources

- [Becoming a Multiracial and Multicultural Church](#)
- [Multiracial and Multicultural Glossary of Terms](#)
- [Pronouncement Calling Upon the UCC to Be a Multiracial and Multicultural Church](#)
- [A Church for All People: Becoming a Multiracial and Multicultural Church Bible Study](#)

Learn more about our [Sacred Conversation on Race](#) and [racial justice](#).

- [White Privilege, Let's Talk curriculum](#) (UCC)

Contributors: UCC Board, Reparations Team, Dismantling Racism Committee, PNC UCC Committee members, Jubilee members, Rev. Nathaniel Mahlberg, Rev. Kathlyn James, (will be more people added as time continues)
