

Becoming the Beloved Community: Our Covenant Against Racism

A Covenant of the Susquehanna Conference Cabinet

We acknowledge racism is sin. It is the opposite of the commandment Jesus identified as the greatest of all: to love God and to love our neighbors as ourselves. Racism contradicts love, causing great harm and a profound disconnect with others and with God.

We acknowledge our failing as a church and as disciples of Christ in not taking sustained and deliberate action to eradicate the sin of racism that continues to oppress African Americans and people of color in our country and around the world.

We understand that commitment to this covenant is essential and a critical part of our personal discipleship, our role as members of the Coordinating Cabinet and leaders of the Annual Conference.

Therefore, as members of the Cabinet of the Susquehanna Conference, we covenant with God and with each other to take the following steps to correct our errors of faith and practice:

- We humbly acknowledge our roles in perpetuating the sin of racism within ourselves, our families, our churches, and our world.
- We lament the harm our actions and inaction have brought to millions of people Christ called us to love as our neighbors.
- We commit to gracefully support and hold each other accountable for taking actions that dismantle racism and join with God in growing the Beloved Community. We commit to prayerfully encourage each other, and to offer and receive honest feedback as siblings in Christ. We also will include critical reflection in our annual one on ones, as well in our yearly goal setting and evaluation as a Coordinating Cabinet. We also commit to evaluate our progress towards specific goals towards Becoming the Beloved Community at each Coordinating Cabinet meeting.

In Mark 12:30-31, Jesus counsels:

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'*^[b] *There is no commandment greater than these."

Lamentations:

As people of faith, we acknowledge our lack of love and failure to respect the dignity of every human being. Often, we have fallen short of the glory of God, corporately and individually. We now honestly name aspects of our lament:

Some of us have benefitted greatly from our nation's founding which included the genocide of Native American and the suffering of enslaved people. Generations of white Americans have enjoyed unparalleled freedom and prosperity, while generations of descendants of African American slaves have faced unspeakable brutality and oppression. This system of racial domination has hurt many people of color, including Asian Americans and those of Hispanic heritage.

- Our history clearly shows some of us have courageously worked to eradicate slavery, segregation and oppression, risking ridicule, condemnation, injury and death. But, we lament that too often we have stood by or helped to perpetuate a system that hinders a fullness of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for people of color. Too many of us have benefitted and continue to benefit from a system that blocked generations of African Americans and other people of color from enjoying quality education, decent housing, employment, and access to healthcare without taking any real action to address those inequalities. Too many of us still do not want to examine or acknowledge the ongoing damage caused by our tolerance of racial injustice within our communities, our churches, our families, and within our own hearts.
- We lament our Church's history in denying the value and humanity of people of color by disparaging their language, cultures, and achievements. And too often, we joined others in deliberately placing obstacles to block their success.
- We lament our history that shows too few church leaders displayed the moral courage to stand with persons and communities who are marginalized and oppressed, when it meant they had to share in the suffering to change what was happening. We lament that is still true today.

³⁵ ***For I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you invited me in . . . Matthew 25:35***

- We covenant to meditate on the life and teachings of Jesus, who called on His followers to stand with those in need; to stand with those who are suffering and with those who are oppressed.
- We covenant to attend to our own growth in anti-racism and building the Beloved Community by spending time in each Coordinating Cabinet meeting in follow up on recommendations based on the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) process.
- We covenant to re-examine the full history of our nation, our communities, and our church to educate those in our communities about the role white communities of faith have played in hurting others, so we can see and intentionally turn in the direction of love.
- We covenant to reject willful ignorance and to educate ourselves on how some have benefitted from a system that has oppressed millions of people from the founding of our country.
- We covenant to create and implement within the Cabinet and in our districts standards, policies, programs, and relationships that make our commitment to fighting racism a visible reality.
- We covenant to use whatever privilege we have to work with and for people of color to overcome systems of institutional racism that continue to deny them equal access to a more bountiful life offered to white citizens.
- We covenant to show courage and to devise loving ways to counter the daily acts of racism and exclusion many of us regularly witness, including within our Cabinet and within our social circles.
- We covenant to use the influence of our office to encourage pastors and laity under our charge to work against racism and to welcome people of all races, cultures and ethnicities by providing them full equality, value and voice within our congregations and within the body of Christ.

This covenant is made in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior . . . and in keeping with our pledge to make disciples of Christ for the transformation of the world.