

## **RESOLUTION TITLE**

### **Standing in Solidarity: Antiracism and Racial Justice Formation in Local Churches**

Submitted on September 2, 2020 by the Justice and Witness Team, Northern California Nevada Conference, United Church of Christ.

## **SUMMARY**

This resolution asks local churches within the conference to commit to engaging one of several curriculums on racism and racial justice as part of their spiritual formation as a community. Recognizing that the work of challenging white supremacy and creating racial justice is always ongoing, it also invites local communities to commit to broadening and deepening their engagement with the best practices for becoming antiracist communities.

## **BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL, HISTORICAL and ETHICAL GROUNDING**

As followers of Jesus we understand ourselves to pursue our individual and collective vocations in the liminal space between the “already” of God’s new realm of love and justice and the “not yet” of our human experiences in this world. Therefore we are always striving both to understand the ways in which human flourishing is limited and to dream our way to liberation.

As followers of Jesus we also embrace the divine giftedness of bodies, demonstrated in the incarnation of God in flesh. The task of discipleship then becomes honoring and celebrating the unique belovedness of each body, and witnessing the wisdom, joy and resilience of those who our society deems less valuable.

Because of our eschatological calling and our incarnational affirmation, “the United Church of Christ, in collaboration with the World Council of Churches and many other denominations, has declared racism to be a sin.<sup>1</sup> To affirm that racism is a sin has a radical implication for the churches: the radical commitment to overcome it.”

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<sup>1</sup> “Racism is a sin because it: denies the very source of humanity, the image of God in humankind; destroys God’s likeness in every person and thus repudiates creation and its goodness; assumes that human beings are not equal before God and are not part of God’s family; is contrary to biblical teaching; denies basic justice and human dignity; is a blatant denial of the Christian faith; is incompatible with the Gospel; is a flagrant violation of human rights; separates us from God and from other human beings; makes us blind to the reality of people’s suffering and perpetuates racist attitudes, practices and institutional racism. We have confessed that racism is a sin, not only as individual Christians, but also as churches.” *Transformative Justice: Being Church and Overcoming Racism, Resource Guide*, World Council of Churches 2004

The covenantal theology of the United Church of Christ compels us to address the sin of racism and become anti-racist in our policies and practices.

“O God, as people of faith, we covenant with you, with one another and our churches to<sup>2</sup>:

- become better informed about people of other races and cultures, that we may overcome the fears and misconceptions that exist;” and delight in the fullness of who God created each of us to be as image bearers of the Divine;
- “consider how issues of racial prejudice and privilege affect each person with whom we come in contact;”
- discover and acknowledge practices and structures that are racist in our churches and communities;
- “work to erase the sins of racism and injustice where they exist in our churches and communities” and join in the collective ministry of co-creating God’s new realm of love and justice on earth;
- “prayerfully heed Your call to embrace people of all colors, faiths, economic and social backgrounds as our kin.”

## **MOTION**

WHEREAS in the UCC we understand racism to be a sin and are called to conspire to create God’s new realm on earth; and

WHEREAS congregations in our Conference are seeking to live ever more fully into our call to be progressive and anti-racist Christians; and

WHEREAS we understand that accountability is required to acknowledge where racist systems, attitudes and oppression exist in our churches and to actively work against them;

THEREFORE, we, the members of the Northern California Nevada Conference of the United Church of Christ resolve to encourage all congregations and ministries within our Conference to take immediate action toward becoming more antiracist. This work may include focusing on antiracism in worship, faith formation, spiritual practice, and activism; participating in trainings focused on antiracism; utilizing various antiracism curricula<sup>3</sup>; inviting guest speakers or leaders

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<sup>2</sup> Covenants articulated here are written in collaboration with the covenant submitted by the Dismantling Racism Task Force, St. Louis Association, Missouri Mid-South Conference, United Church of Christ.

with expertise in antiracism; conducting an antiracism evaluation or audit; or other pertinent activities. We further resolve to encourage all congregations and ministries within our Conference to set measurable goals with regard to becoming more anti-racist.

BE IT RESOLVED that we charge the Justice and Witness Ministries, in collaboration with Committee on Ministry, Section D, with forming a task force to develop an “Antiracism Accountability Tracking Database” for congregations to track and report their antiracism/racial justice work on an annual basis, and to establish processes and protocols for measuring the Conference’s work and progress toward acting in antiracist ways.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this database include measurable indicators of work that is focused on faith formation and education (for children, youth, and adults), worship, leadership roles and representation, financial practices and commitments, advocacy and justice work, etc.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this database assist the Conference in knowing what work is taking place in each congregation, help to foster connections between congregations, and know what work is required for further resourcing and support.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this structure of reporting encourage congregations to take an active role in setting goals and priorities for their congregations regarding racial justice work each year, and engage in evaluation and reflection at the end of each year, demonstrating that antiracism/racial justice is an ongoing commitment that must be continually re-visited. Through this work, we strive to become an antiracist Conference.

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<sup>3</sup> Curricula and resources your congregation could engage with include:

- "Diversity and Welcome in our Faith Communities in the United Church of Christ: Racism Toolkit" by Proyecto Encuentros Advisory Committee, the Rev. Elivette “Elly” Mendez Angulo, and the Rev. Rhina Ramos - [https://www.ucc.org/proyecto\\_encuentros\\_de\\_gracia\\_y\\_bienvenida](https://www.ucc.org/proyecto_encuentros_de_gracia_y_bienvenida)
- "Imagining Beyond Empire: Spiritual Practices for Unlearning Oppression" by Dr. Sharon R. Fennema. Contact Sharon at [sharonfennema@yahoo.com](mailto:sharonfennema@yahoo.com) for more information.
- "Sacred Conversations to End Racism" by UCC - [https://www.ucc.org/sacred\\_conversations\\_to\\_end\\_racism](https://www.ucc.org/sacred_conversations_to_end_racism)
- “Let’s Talk About Race: A Candid Discussion That Needs to Take Place in The Church” by Rev. Cheryl Denise Ward. Contact Rev. Cheryl Denise Ward at [cheryl@cherylwardministries.com](mailto:cheryl@cherylwardministries.com) for more information.
- “White Privilege: Let’s Talk—A Resource for Transformational Dialogue” by UCC - <http://privilege.uccpages.org/>
- United Church of Christ Racial Justice Resources 2020 - [https://www.ucc.org/racial\\_justice\\_resources\\_2020](https://www.ucc.org/racial_justice_resources_2020)

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