

Clarifying Confusion Regarding the Reparative Justice Fund

From the Presbytery of Baltimore Dismantling Racism Team

September 1, 2026

As the Reparative Justice Fund (RJF) moves from vision to implementation, we recognize that questions and some misunderstandings have arisen about its purpose, funding, and relationship to the historically and predominantly Black congregations of the Presbytery of Baltimore. We offer these clarifications in the spirit of transparency and shared understanding.

1. This Reparative Justice Fund did not appear suddenly.

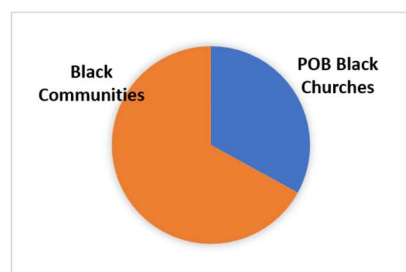
The RJF grows out of **more than a decade of racial justice work within the Presbytery of Baltimore**. Following the death of Freddie Gray in 2015, the Presbytery expanded its commitments to racial reconciliation and dismantling racism. In 2022, the Presbytery concurred with the General Assembly overture *An Apology to African Americans for the Sin of Slavery and Its Legacy*, and the Dismantling Racism Team formed the Reparative Justice Working Group. That group spent approximately three years researching the Presbytery's history, studying models of repair, consulting Presbytery leaders and congregations, and developing the proposal ultimately approved by the Presbytery in September 2025.

2. The Fund was not created solely for the Presbytery's Black congregations.

The RJF was created to begin repairing historical harms committed by or connected to the Presbytery of Baltimore and their continuing effects on African American communities. The Dismantling Racism Team's research identified harms including direct financial benefits connected to slavery, historic underinvestment and neglect, inequities in the management of church properties, and violations of trust involving congregations and communities of color. The Presbytery's Black congregations are an important part of this work of repair—but they are not its sole purpose or beneficiaries.

The RJF has a broader purpose: to support **historically and predominantly Black congregations, Black-led community organizations and nonprofits, and efforts addressing the continuing effects of racial injustice within the geographic region of the Presbytery**.

3. The designation for the Black churches does not mean that each congregation will automatically receive an equal share—or any predetermined amount.



At least **25% of the RJF** is designated for the six historically and predominantly Black congregations of the Presbytery and Mt. Paran Presbyterian Church, which shares a unique but similar history of harm. This is a **set-aside for this group of congregations, not seven individual guaranteed allocations**. There is no predetermined amount assigned to any congregation and no provision for simply dividing the designated funds equally among them.

The independent RJF Board will establish criteria and determine how funds are awarded. Congregations seeking funding will apply according to that process, just as all eligible applicants.

4. The Reparative Justice Fund is not a church emergency or sustainability fund.

The RJF is intended for **reparative purposes tied to historical harm and its continuing effects**. It is not intended to replace the Presbytery's existing responsibilities, processes, or resources for congregations facing financial distress, property concerns, possible closure, or other institutional challenges.

A congregation experiencing an immediate financial or sustainability crisis should continue to work directly with the appropriate Presbytery leadership and structures. The future availability of RJF resources should not be understood as a substitute for that support.

5. The Presbytery has already committed these resources to an independent Reparative Justice Fund.

Approximately **\$2.3 million** has been designated to establish the RJF. While the funds currently remain under the management of the Presbytery Trustees as the new organization is legally established, they have been designated for transfer to the independent Board being created to administer the RJF.

The Presbytery did **not** create one fund to be distributed internally by the Presbytery and another to be administered externally. The Fund was intentionally structured so that decisions about reparative funding would ultimately be made by an **independent Board**, rather than remaining under the control of the Presbytery.

This independence reflects a central principle of reparative justice: **repair involves relinquishing control and trusting communities affected by historical harm to help determine what repair should look like.**

6. The independent RJF Board—not the Dismantling Racism Team —will make individual funding decisions.

The Dismantling Racism Team developed the proposal and is helping establish the legal and organizational structure necessary to launch the Fund. The **DRT cannot and will not be distributing any funds.**

As stated earlier, the independent RJF Board will develop funding criteria, establish application and review processes, and determine eligible projects or organizations to receive support and in what amounts. This means that questions such as *“How much will a particular church receive?”* *“Which community organization will receive funding?”* or *“Will this particular project qualify?”* cannot presently be answered—and should not be promised by anyone.

What remains unchanged

The Reparative Justice Fund is an act of **repair**, not simply another grant program. As followers of Jesus Christ, we understand repair as part of our call to confession, accountability, reconciliation, and justice. Financial repair cannot undo the past, nor can it address every need facing our congregations or communities. It can, however, acknowledge real harms, relinquish resources connected to those harms, and begin building relationships marked by greater trust and justice.

The RJF is one concrete step in that larger and ongoing work.