

Support for concurrence of OV-1 Dismantling Racism Team

Like the Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley, the Presbytery of Baltimore and its Dismantling Racism team know all too well *“the pain of our racist history and the difficulty of changing behavior.”*

Members of Baltimore Presbytery recognized the need to deal openly and honestly with the pain of racism and its persistence in our churches, denomination and society. In 2018, a Dismantling Racism Team was formed, and the presbytery approved that training in dismantling racism be mandated for our presbytery’s staff, council, and pastors. We have recognized that training is a necessary step toward the difficult task of changing hearts and lives and behavior. Providing safe space and encouraging open and difficult conversations is a first step toward having systemic racism become as recognizable and as objectionable as sexual harassment.

Training in the reality and dynamics of systemic racism fosters knowledge. Knowledge creates consciousness of individual and collective racism. Consciousness opens eyes to see racist attitudes, beliefs, and practices embedded in self and in systems, including the church, while providing freedom to choose to act in non-racist or anti-racist ways. We understand these universal trainings as an important foundation to enable us to believe and act in ways that seek racial justice, actively work against personal, institutional, and structural racism, pave the way toward dismantling racism, and lead us toward becoming the beloved community in which there is no longer Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female, for we have recognized that truly all of us are one in Christ. (Galatians 3:28)

Many people fail to recognize the ways in which racism persists in our culture and institutions and are unaware of the harm that can be wrought by white privilege. Training that focuses on the issue of racism and brings together whites and people of color can increase understanding. It can provide a space in which people can push beyond unproductive feelings of white guilt and move toward fostering empowered advocacy, bringing together all the children of God in a joint effort to deracialize every part of the church and community.

True, racism will finally and fully be dismantled only by the grace, love, and power of our triune God. But even if it is never completely destroyed on this earth, we are called to do everything in our power to bring the kingdom of heaven into our life here and now.

God created us all in God’s own image. Christ has already made us one in him. The Spirit continues the work of breaking down dividing walls. We have been commanded to love one another as Jesus loved us. By that love, the world will know that we are his disciples.

*In a broken and fearful world the Spirit gives us courage to pray without ceasing,
to witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior,
to unmask idolatries in church and culture, to hear the voices of peoples long silenced,
and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace.*

*In gratitude to God, empowered by the Spirit, we strive to serve Christ in our daily tasks
and to live holy and joyful lives, even as we watch for God’s new heaven and new earth,
praying, “Come, Lord Jesus!”*

A Brief Statement of Faith