

A Statement Affirming Redwoods Presbytery's Commitment to Anti-racism

With hearts broken by the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and all others known and unknown to us, the Redwoods Presbytery affirms that, because of our biblical understanding of who God is and what God intends for humanity, we must stand against, speak against, and work against racism. Antiracist effort is not optional for Christians; it is an essential aspect of Christian discipleship, without which we fail to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ.

While recognizing that racism victimizes many people of color, we acknowledge its unique impact on the Black community. Anti-Black racism is deeply embedded in the history, culture, and society of the United States. The original Constitution defined Black Americans as three-fifths of a person. The economic foundations of the United States were built on slave labor, introduced into America in 1619. Black men in America could not vote until after the Civil War. The Jim Crow legal system and many other laws have perpetuated the oppression of Black Americans. Today, anti-Black racism finds expression in mass incarceration, instances of police brutality, barriers to voting, economic and wealth inequality, and acts of race-based violence and hate.

We do not always live the basic Christian truth that, just as God loves all of us without exception, we are called to love all people. We also recognize that white privilege and systemic racism permeate the ways we do church. Our choice to align ourselves with love requires that we actively and tirelessly work against anti-Black racism wherever we can, however we can.

A commitment to confronting anti-Black racism reflects our Presbytery's values statement. First, it expresses our commitment to inclusivity: "We are all children of God. We proclaim that all are one family in Christ and seek to live like we mean it." Second, it affirms our commitment to justice: "We challenge ourselves to see systems and structures that disadvantage and oppress others – that stand in the way of God's kingdom coming 'on earth as it is in heaven,' and are willing to take part in seeking solutions." [For further theological affirmation of our denomination's commitment to racial justice, please refer to the Confession of 1967 in our Book of Confessions.]

Redwoods Presbytery, and all Christians, must recommit to the struggle for racial justice. We are one in Christ: if others are in pain, we are in pain. Churches must provide a moral compass for the nation by helping to shape public policies that will move the nation towards justice, peace, and reconciliation.

We continue to recognize and dismantle racism and unconscious bias in our own hearts and minds, in the institution of the church, and in the broader culture. We call all congregations to take action toward these goals.