

SJU RESPONSE TO OUR DENOMINATIONS' CALLS TO ACTION FOR ANTI-RACISM

Debbie Parker, Chair of Council

On August 31, 2020, the SJU Council affirmatively voted to accept, on behalf of St. John United Church, our parent denominations' invitations to commit to being an anti-racist church in keeping with two tenets of our Mission Statement:

- To respect and celebrate our rich diversity and promote inclusiveness for all regardless of race, culture, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, economic status, or different theological positions;
- To be partners with and advocates for victims of social injustice.

See the commitment statements and links to more information below. They will also be posted on the SJU website.

Several small groups have already begun to read and discuss books on anti-racism as published in previous editions of the SJU NewsFlash. Additional groups are welcome to form. Look for more opportunities to work on these important anti-racism commitments as we move forward into 2021.

Presbyterian Church (USA) Matthew 25 Church Commitment

As a Matthew 25 Church, SJU commits “to dismantling structural racism by advocating and acting to break down the systems, practices and thinking that underlie discrimination, bias, prejudice and oppression of people of color.”

For more information:

<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/matthew-25/racism/>

<https://www.pcusa.org/racial-justice-resources/>

Baltimore Washington Conference United Methodist Church Commitment to be an Anti-Racist Church



DISCIPLES SEEK JUSTICE Our mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Our shared history includes a primary emphasis on Christian living, on putting faith and love into action.

Live: Our church commits to include the spiritual discipline of justice as a part of our understanding of discipleship and congregational vitality. John Wesley's Rule of Discipleship needs to be understood and resurrected today: *“(T)o witness to Jesus Christ in the world and to follow His teachings through acts of compassion, justice, worship, and devotion under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.”*

Resist: Our church will regularly uplift our shared baptismal vows to encourage believers to a) repent of the sin of racism; b) resist evil, injustice, and oppression as it relates to racism; so that, c) we might be able to live into the vow to be in union with people of all ages, nations, and races.

Organize: Our church commits to directly engage with our local leaders and officials to work toward ending racism, poverty, and violence based upon the liberating Gospel of Jesus Christ, our United Methodist Social Principles, and Book of Resolutions. Specifically:

- Resolution 5031: Humanizing Criminal Justice;
- Resolution 3378: Racism and Economic Injustice Against People of Color in the US;
- Resolution 3422 Speaking Out for Compassion: Transforming the Context of Hate in the United States;
- Resolution 3371: A Charter for Racial Justice in an Interdependent Global Community;
- Resolution 3376: White Privilege in the United States

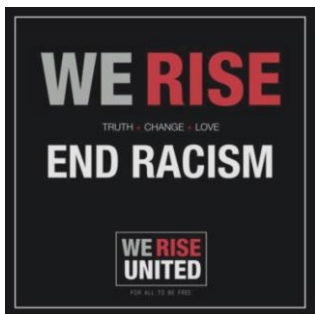


DISCIPLES DO THE WORK necessary that results in naming and addressing racism when they witness it and working toward becoming a racial justice change agent. Each church's leadership needs to engage in doing the work.

Listen: We will build relationships across lines of difference as we listen deeply and get to know someone who doesn't look, think, or act like us. Download this resource sheet for help. Listen to the pain, experience, hopes, and shared humanity and consider how you might be an agent of love and healing. Pray for what God is calling you to do as a result.

Learn: Our leaders will educate themselves on how to have conversations about race. This resource from the National Museum of African-American Culture and History includes the following topics: Bias, Being Antiracist, Community Building, Self-Care, Race and Racial Identity, Social Identities and Systems of Oppression, Whiteness, Historical Foundations of Race.

Lead: Our leaders, once they know better, do better by exposing and eradicating racist stereotypes, naming microaggressions, and speaking up. They will help others learn how to have conversations about race and use their power to talk about racial justice in worship, small groups and service ministries; include more voices at the table; and create more equity.



DISCIPLES END RACISM because racism is a sin. Our church acknowledges that perfect love casts out fear and will persist in the work of ending racism. We will seek to love all people as Jesus loves, whatever their racial and ethnic heritage, and work together to restore the broken body of Christ. These deep wounds can be healed but the healing process is delicate and will require humble involvement from those who have previously remained silent.

Truth: Our church will discover and tell the whole truth about our church's history with regards to racism. This may include looking at the language in our deeds, tracing our churches' role during the time of slavery and segregation, and looking at the historical accuracy of how the images in our churches depict Jesus. Truth-telling also includes confronting our racism and affirming that Black lives and all lives of color really do matter.

Change: During a season of prayer and fasting, our church will repent and identify what change is needed to be intentionally anti-racist given the uncomfortable truths we have discovered. We will persist even when we don't want to.

Love: Our church will participate in vital conversations in cross-racial and/or cross-cultural groups followed by a discerned, collective action in the wider community.

For more information: <https://www.bwcumc.org/ministries/advocacy-action/racial-justice/>