

The Report of the Anti-Racism and Equity Committee
Presbytery of Southern New England
January 29, 2021

For Presbytery Information:

The Anti-Racism and Equity Committee has been meeting monthly with Jessica Vasquez-Torres, the National Program Director of Crossroads Antiracism Organizing & Training. Jessica's leadership has been invaluable as she has helped our task force discern our work within PSNE. The work thus far has been very rewarding, if not slower than we anticipated. Whenever we think we have uncovered one layer of processing, we realize there are a few layers deeper than we need to uncover before continuing.

Our mandate as a committee is:

To work towards the creation of an inclusive, equitable, antiracist culture within the PSNE that will be attractional to all people in particular those who have been systematically excluded from full participation in the presbytery, as we seek to be co-creators with Christ of a just, peaceful and healed world/creation.

In seeking to serve this mandate, we have realized just how much we need to learn and unlearn within our own journeys. One of the most rewarding elements of our work thus far has been one on one conversations we have each had with the other committee members. In our conversations, we have explored and shared our own racial and ethnic journeys, reflecting not only on who we are and where we come from, but also how it is that God has called each of us to this work. Within a few of the meetings we have split into caucuses spaces for the people of color and white people within the committee. This practice has allowed all of our committee members to reflect on the distinct yet interconnected nature of the way forward. We can feel the streams of our work becoming clearer as we have grown closer together as a committee, learning to trust one another so that we might have genuine, vulnerable, and truth telling conversation about where we feel God is calling us.

It is striking that this work is both highly individual and deeply communal (much like the walk being a Christian is.) Moving through this process with Jessica and one another has helped us imagine what our Presbytery can continue to do to facilitate further relationship building, trust, and truth telling about issues of race and racism within the bounds of our presbytery. It has also helped us begin to conceptualize the various areas within our life together that Christ is moving us towards reconciliation and change—in our worship, polity, culture, and more.

The way ahead is not yet clear, but we can feel the Spirit moving us towards greater clarity. We appreciate the trust and faith the Presbytery has placed in our hands to discern the way forward and we invite the feedback, ideas, and prayers of each of you in this process. We take heart in the work so many of you are already doing around issues of racism and antiracism within your own churches, workplaces, communities and individual lives. Feel free to reach out to the co-chairs, Kirk Louis and Jenny Peek, or any of the committee members: Robert Baker, Jenny Davis, Jan Hawkins, Keith Rhoden, Katia Regina, Susan Trucksess, David Van Dyke and Kevin White.

Also, if anyone would like to follow along with some of the reading our committee has been doing together, here are a few resources you might enjoy. If you need help finding the resources feel free to reach out to Jenny Peek or Kirk Louis.

- *Waking Up White, and Finding Myself in the Story of Race* by Debby Irving
- “The Bridge Poem” by Kate Rushin
- *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria: And Other Conversations About Race* by Beverly Daniel Tatum
- “Facing Racism: A Vision of the Intercultural Community,” our Churchwide Antiracism Policy created by the PCUSA Presbyterian Mission and Approved by the 222nd General Assembly (2016)
- “From White Racist to White Anti-Racist: The Life-Long Journey” by Tema Okun
- Various Racial Identity Development Theories from Cross, Helms, Ruiz, and Kim
- *White Supremacy Culture* article by Tema Okun

For Presbytery Action:

There are no current items for Presbytery Action.