

Frequently Asked Questions: Crossroads Antiracism Contract

February 8, 2022

The Anti-Racism & Equity Team is thrilled that our presbytery is beginning a new contract with Crossroads Antiracism Organizing & Training. Our presbytery's journey with Crossroads began in 2018—but the work of furthering racial justice and reconciliation was not new to our presbytery in 2018. Indeed, the Presbytery Church (U.S.A.) has been engaging in this work since the 1950s when we were in another season of great racial injustice and inequity.

Since 2018, with the help Jessica Vazquez-Torres and the larger Crossroads team, our presbytery has grown in intentionality and a shared sense of purpose in our walk with Christ *to proclaim good news to the poor, freedom to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, to set the oppressed free, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.* (Luke 4:18-19). It takes deep heart work, theological exploration, prayer, community, and the work of our hands and feet to explore what good news God wishes us to share. To what are we held captive? Where do we need to see, when we formerly were moving without Christ's vision? Where do we need to be set free? Where is oppression at work in the bounds of our presbytery? How do we further this harm? How do we suffer from it? What new ways is God calling us towards? These questions are vast. These are not expedient and the "answers" are not self-evident. And yet, this is our Christian way: *to ask, seek and knock* (Matthew 7:7).

In service of our desire to serve Christ faithfully, the Anti-Racism & Equity Committee has sought to be faithful to the Presbytery's mandate set before our body, namely:

To work towards the creation of an inclusive, equitable, antiracist culture within the PSNE that will be attractive 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.

We are grateful for Crossroads' guidance; and we are grateful for everyone who has joined us in big ways and small. We have been humbled by the deep personal commitment so many of our membership have taken in their individual and communal lives of faith to serve, learn, and seek transformation together.

The journey continues, and we couldn't be more eager to begin again. Below are a few answers to frequently asked questions that have come up in the life of our presbytery.

How can I get involved?

There are three main ways to get further involved in our committee's work. First, we would like to encourage everyone to join us for the Presbytery-Wide Series 1 Training this fall. Whether thinking about anti-racism is new to you, or if you have been engaging in this work throughout your life, we would love for you to join us. The series is titled: "What is antiracism and what does it require of us?" The training will be on Zoom, with opportunities for education and connection with the other participants. The sessions will be from 6-8pm ET on Zoom October 5 and 19th, and November 2nd and 16th. Following this

initial series, there will be two follow up cohorts, a “Become a White Co-Conspirator” cohort and a “Building a People of Color Community of Solidarity” cohort, that will meet in early 2023. These cohorts are open to individuals who participated in Series 1.

Secondly, we encourage you to reach out to Nominations and join one of our Presbytery’s committees. All of our committees are using tools Crossroads has shared to engage in the life of our presbytery. Reach out to Rev. Chris Tate (tatecg@yahoo.com) the Chair of the Nominating Committee.

Finally, the Anti-Racism & Equity Team would love to hear from you. We are currently holding one on one conversations with people throughout the presbytery to hear about what you are seeing and thinking in relationship to racism and anti-racism in our bounds. What is troubling you? What makes you curious? What do you think our team should be thinking about? We would love to hear from you. To connect, reach out to the Anti-Racism & Equity Team Co-Chairs, Kirk Louis (kirk.louis@upsem.edu) and Rev. Jenny Peek (jennifer.peek@yale.edu).

What is the timeline for this new contract and the work that will be occurring within the Presbytery?

This Spring and Summer our Presbytery leaders will be engaging in small group conversations, training and a summer retreat. Many committees within the presbytery have open spots. If you are interested in getting more involved email Chris Tate (tatecg@yahoo.com), Chair of the Nominating Committee.

Next fall we will open up training for anyone in the Presbytery. Clergy, elders, church members, church staff, church sessions, new visitors at your church—anyone and everyone is invited to join us for this training.

Following this Presbytery-Wide training, there will be an opportunity for additional involvement in Series 2 and 3. (Series 2 and Series 3 are cohorts of 25 presbytery members each on “Becoming a White Co-Conspirator” and “Building a People of Color Community of Solidarity.”) Participation in Series 1 is a prerequisite for participating in Series 2 or 3.

Can you help me understand the budget?

Absolutely. In a vacuum, our financial investment in this work might seem daunting. (Or, it may seem as if it is not enough.) As a Christian institution, we are charged with considering how all that we do can reflect the joy, wisdom and life of the kingdom of God. As much as we tend to think of our year-end budgets as financial documents, they are also moral documents. *For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.* (Matthew 6:21) Roundtable and the Anti-Racism and Equity Team were prayerful in thinking through what work and support is needed in our presbytery and how we can equitably pay the Crossroads trainers for their time and the content of their personalised, PSNE-specific trainings. Sometimes, investing in our own edification can seem like a

temporary or intangible investment. And yet, Christ spent much of his time working to change the hearts and minds of his followers first, which could then guide their actions. As individual team members, we have seen the fruits of engaging in this work in our family life, personal relationships, professional work, and our relationship to our communities. We have also been amazed by the many ways the Spirit has clearly been at work in the many layers of our work as a Presbytery during the challenging times throughout the pandemic. Heart-opening work can feel intangible, and yet one of God's greatest gifts to us has been the softening of hearts of stone, the renewal of weary spirits, and the inspiration of new and creative ways of following Christ in unprecedented times.

Funds for this work come from already previously set aside funds, investment from the Trustees and gifts/bequests.

If you have further questions, we are also happy to share further details about all of the above. Reach out to the Anti-Racism & Equity Team Co-Chairs, Kirk Louis (kirk.louis@upsem.edu) and Rev. Jenny Peek (jennifer.peek@yale.edu) with any questions or ideas you might have.