

MISSION STATEMENT ON COMBATTING RACISM

Presbytery of Greater Atlanta, October 28, 1997

There is no longer Jew nor Greek,
There is no longer slave nor free;
There is no longer male nor female;
For all of you are one in Christ. Galatians 3:28

God has created the peoples of the earth to be one universal family....In reconciling love (God) overcomes the barriers between brothers (sisters) and breaks down every form of discrimination based on racial or ethnic differences, real or imaginary. *Confession of 1967, 9.44*

In sovereign love God created the world good and makes everyone equally in God's image, male and female, of every race and people. *A Brief Statement of Faith, 10.3, 1990*

The biblical witness, the modern confessional statements, and the pronouncements of the General Assembly remind us that racism has no place in the Body of Christ.

1. Racism is a sin that is pervasive and world-wide. Racism is a pernicious disease that constantly recurs and is resistant to conventional treatment. It is complex and ambiguous, but always demonic – vaunting its power against the power of God. It has particularly destructive consequences in the United States because of our power and position in the world. From the beginning of our nation, modern racism has been directed by White Americans against Native, Black, Hispanic, and Asian Americans. Today it infects all of us, and is particularly difficult to combat when fortified by political and economic power.
2. Racism scandalizes our Christian witness in the church and society. In the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), it manifests itself through discrimination in the call process and new church development, and through tokenism in committee appointments, offices, and the allocation of resources. In society, racism manifests itself in all areas, such as public school integration, judicial process, health care, housing and education policy, and the move to abolish affirmative action.
3. Equally insidious is the escalating sentiment toward documented and undocumented immigrants, many of whom are Hispanic persons. Fueled by fears of economic disaster and encroaching cultures, there is a current reaction against the poorest members of humanity, it has led to legislation which denies human beings health benefits, welfare, and education for

their children. Similarly, there is a socio-political struggle bent on the curtailment of bilingual education. As we increasingly become a multiracial society, we must rid ourselves of decision-making influenced by race, which denies equal opportunity to all people.

4. Racism negates or ridicules the efforts of people who have different historical or cultural roots to name and esteem themselves. Many white people misunderstand Afrocentrism, viewing it as a threat to Western perspectives and values. Afrocentrism reflects Black people's desire to affirm an historic and cultural identity, and provides an antidote to the cultural imperialism of an Eurocentric bias. Native Americans, Asian Americans, and Hispanic Americans have the same right to identify and preserve certain values in their own cultures.

ACTIONS:

The Presbytery Task Force on Racism calls upon the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta to adopt this document and take the following actions:

- a. To acknowledge our responsibility and confess our complicity for racism in the Presbyterian Church, and its continued power in society.
- b. To celebrate those efforts of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and individuals and congregations within it that have borne, and continue to bear witness to the love of Jesus Christ, which breaks down the dividing walls of hostility separating race from race.
- c. To trust in the power of God to change people, while pledging to root out racism in personal, as well as structural, dimensions of society.
- d. To make racial justice a priority concern in its total ministry of the proclamation of the Gospel.
- e. To address the low level of trust between the majority and the minorities by working toward the goal of reconciliation between majority and minority elements of the church and society.
- f. To encourage congregations to receive delegations from the Racism Task Force to present seminars on racism.

This Mission Statement was developed by the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta's Task Force on Racism, was approved by the Presbytery's Division of the Urban Church at its monthly meeting, April 9, 1997, and by Council of the Presbytery at its Stated Meeting, April 15, 1997. It was presented and discussed at the 1997 Summer Stated Meeting of the Presbytery (June 28), and was approved by the Presbytery at its 1997 Fall Stated Meeting on Tuesday, October 28 meeting at McDonough Presbyterian Church, McDonough, GA.