

**Declare an Imperative for the
Reformation of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
in being a Transformative Church in This Intercultural Era**



As approved by the 223rd General Assembly (2018)

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RECOMMENDATIONS

Item 11-11

[The 223rd General Assembly (2018) approved Item 11-11 as amendment.]

Declare an Imperative for the Reformation of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in being a Transformative Church in This Intercultural Era.— From the Presbyterian Mission Agency.

The Presbyterian Mission Agency Board, upon recommendation from the Presbyterian Intercultural Network (PIN), recommends that the 223rd General Assembly (2018)

- 1. “Declare an Imperative for the Reformation of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in being a Transformative Church in This Intercultural Era.”**
- 2. Declare the period from 2020 to 2030 as the “Decade of Intercultural Transformation” by focusing on transformative priorities and initiatives across the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).**
- 3. Immediately denounce the persistent and demonic presence of racism and the misuse of power and privilege in our individual and institutional lives. Invest in training and identifying trained antiracism facilitators, who will provide a geographically accessible and affordable network for congregations and mid councils, and develop a process for connecting facilitators and congregations and mid councils who seek assistance.**
- 4. Immediately after the 223rd General Assembly (2018), direct the Moderator to appoint a cross-sectional task force to develop and publish priorities and guidelines for congregations, mid councils, and General Assembly entities for the “Decade of Intercultural Transformation” and recommend appropriate resources to deepen understanding and skills for resisting discrimination based on race, class, gender, sex, or sexuality. Promote awareness of resources currently available that deepen understanding of intersectionality and skills for resistance including those less frequently discussed, such as interfaith competencies so essential in these times.**
- 5. Direct the Office of the General Assembly (OGA), the Presbyterian Mission Agency (PMA), the Presbyterian Foundation (FDN), the Board of Pensions (BOP), the Presbyterian Publishing Corporation (PPC), and the Presbyterian Investment and Loan Program, Inc. (PILP) to develop relevant intercultural programs, resources, events, and antiracism training to assist persons in recognizing intersectionality or how differences treated oppressively are experienced simultaneously in ways that amplify and complicate the consequences of each aspect of oppression.**
- 6. Strongly encourage mid councils and congregations to hold white privilege recognition, cultural humility, and antiracism trainings throughout the church and commit themselves to disrupting racism and intersectional inequality, including intercultural and intracultural realities.**

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- 7. Strongly encourage the Office of the General Assembly, the Presbyterian Mission Agency, and the mid councils to promote integration of the Confession of Belhar into their study life and worship to celebrate its implementation.**
- 8. Direct the Presbyterian Mission Agency and the Office of the General Assembly to equip congregations and mid councils to form intercultural coalitions, networks, new worshipping communities, and congregations across the church that worship, work, share meals, study, share communion, and advocate for racial and intercultural justice, with a respectful awareness and appreciation of each other's ethnicities, cultures, socioeconomic status, able-bodied-ness, gender and sexual identity and expression, and languages.**
- 9. Urge the session of each congregation, as well as each mid council, seminary, Presbyterian Women's groups, and other entities, to take action to be intercultural in their life, work, and worship.**
- 10. Direct the Office of the General Assembly to encourage, assist, and support presbyteries' committees on ministry and committees on preparation for ministry to**
 - a. Urge candidates for ministry to engage in internship and/or field education experiences in intercultural settings; especially for "white" students to work in a racial and cultural context different from their own.**
 - b. Provide opportunities for candidates for ministry to gain experience preaching and teaching about racial justice.**
 - c. Include members of diverse intercultural backgrounds on committees on preparation for ministry, guiding candidates for ministry.**
 - d. Encourage synods and presbyteries to institute dismantling racism programs and encourage all staff and clergy to take the training every three years in like manner of PC(USA) mandated sexual abuse policy.**
 - e. Provide regular white privilege recognition, cultural humility, and antiracism trainings at presbytery gatherings.**
 - f. Support seminarians in their study and learning from diverse readings and topics in seminary curriculum about the lived realities of people of color in the U.S. and the life experiences of immigrants to the United States.**
- 11. a. Direct General Assembly to focus on planting new congregations, and raising indigenous leadership for all levels of the church from within communities of color, with special emphasis on the Latin, African American, Native American, and immigrant communities.**
 - b. Remove barriers and create pathways to full inclusion in the PC(USA) for congregations and pastors coming from historically non-white traditions.**

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If these directives require changes to the *Book of Order*, these changes should be presented to the 224th General Assembly (2020).

- 12. Encourage all members, particularly “white” members, in the PC(USA) to work to end racism in our individual and institutional lives by working on the following eight steps:**
- **Recognition**
 - **Repentance**
 - **Resistance**
 - **Resilience**
 - **Reparations**
 - **Reconciliation**
 - **Recovery**
 - **Resonance**

[See Appendix A for a brief explanation of the steps.]

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RATIONALE

The Presbyterian Intercultural Network (PIN) affirms that we are living in an increasingly intercultural society that brings numerous challenges and opportunities for effective and relevant ministries.

Becoming a “Church of Intercultural Transformation” is embracing the fullness of God’s image in every person and community, and intentionally and decisively making room for all of God’s people by disrupting the status quo, working to end racism, and working to eliminate oppressive systems of power and privilege (see Appendix B for a Glossary of Terms).

A “Church of Intercultural Transformation” fairly represents the whole people of God, where confession, repentance, forgiveness, restitution, reconciliation, and redemption are made possible by following Christ’s path of self-emptying and sacrificial love for people of all races, cultures, and ethnic backgrounds, all of whom are created in God’s image. (cf. Phil 2:6–8 and Gen. 1:27).

A “Church of Intercultural Transformation” gathers in prayer, worship, and mission, and commits itself to practices of mutual recognition and understanding of difference through intentional self-examination, relationship building, and equitable access to power.

Becoming a “Church of Intercultural Transformation” is gathering with people of different racial, ethnic, and cultural identities, interacting with one another, learning and growing together, building relationships and becoming transformed and shaped from each other’s experiences.

In the “Church of Intercultural Transformation,” no one is left unchanged. Some examine their own cultures more deeply, some are changed through their interaction with others, many learn more about what it means to be in intercultural community together.

A “Church of Intercultural Transformation” addresses racial and cultural power imbalances, and people are able to learn from each other through the power of the Holy Spirit, leading toward the transformation of all people.

The commitment to become a “Church of Intercultural Transformation” is expressed when the church begins to live its faith by:

- Celebrating and using God’s gifts of theological and liturgical richness that arise from all of God’s people’s racial, cultural and linguistic diversity.
- Intentionally seeking ways to engage the genuine racial, cultural, and linguistic diversity of all members of the church in all church structures, councils, agencies, and organizations.
- Supporting the development and distribution of multilingual resources in the languages of members of the church.
- Engaging in effective prophetic advocacy and public policy development on the issues of race, class, gender, and sexual identity and expression, economic and environmental justice.
- Expanding curriculum to educate about different racial and cultural heritages, histories, and traditions in the church and society, as well as educating about racism, sexism, classism, power and privilege, cultural humility, and different ways of learning and practicing the Reformed faith.
- Assuring that writers of church publications are of different racial, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds and that images used in denominational publications and promotions show Presbyterians of color as ministers, elders, and leaders in the denomination, rather than relying on portrayals of people of color as objects or recipients of mission.

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- Encouraging ministers and leaders in the church to engage in white privilege recognition, cultural humility, and antiracism training, and to participate in immersion experiences in other cultures and languages.
- Including people of different races and cultures on boards of trustees, finance and property committees, and in the planning and implementation of financial management and stewardship in the church; promoting faithful, equitable, and just stewardship; and sharing of financial and property resources by those in God's intercultural community.
- Incorporating an ethic of mutual accountability in relationships with one another at all levels of church governance by reporting to one another regularly on progress and areas of difficulty and obstacles to equity.

(Source: See "One Body, Many Members: Living faith and life cross culturally," Uniting Church in Australia, <https://assembly.uca.org.au/obmm>).

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APPENDIX A

Eight Steps to End Racism (See Recommendation 12)

1. **RECOGNITION**—As it happened in John 20:11–18, like Mary Magdalene, we hear our names called and recognize that we are captive to the power of race. We cease denying that race has power in our individual and communal lives.
2. **REPENTANCE**—We acknowledge to ourselves and to others that race has power in our lives and contributes to our white privilege.
3. **RESISTANCE**—We commit ourselves to combating the power of racism in ourselves, in others, in churches, and in institutional life. Because of its long reach in American history, at times we will feel like those who are battling principalities and powers in Ephesians 6:10–20.
4. **RESILIENCE**—We are called to affirm the traditional ways of combating racism while seeking new ways to engage a powerful force that continues to be present in American life and that continues to evolve.
5. **REPARATIONS**—We commit ourselves to doing our part to repair the breaches that have been made through racism, including psychological, spiritual, and economic damage.
6. **RECONCILIATION**—We recognize that we have long benefitted from racism and that in order for reconciliation to take place, we will need to work the first five steps listed above.
7. **RECOVERY**—We receive and commit ourselves to live by a new vision of a humanity created by God to live in love, equity, and justice rather than in the hierarchy and domination of the system of race.
8. **RESONANCE**—We understand and resonate with our own cultural background.

(Source: Steps 1–7 are from “Seven Steps for Those Classified as White to Use in Engaging Our Racism” by Nibs Stroupe, <https://www.revnibsstroupe.com/>).

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APPENDIX B

Glossary of Terms

Antiracism: An active and consistent process of change to eliminate individual, institutional, and systemic racism, as well as the oppression and injustice racism causes. (Source: Canadian Race Relations Foundation's Glossary of Terms)

Class: A category usually used to divide members of society into groups in terms of their economic status. The American Heritage Dictionary defines it as "a social stratum whose members share certain economic, social, or cultural characteristics."

Classism: The cultural, institutional, and individual set of practices and beliefs that assign value to people according to their socioeconomic status, thereby resulting in differential treatment. (Source: Canadian Race Relations Foundation's Glossary of Terms)

Culture: The mix of ideas, beliefs, values, behavioral and social norms, knowledge and traditions of a group of individuals who have historical, geographic, religious, racial, linguistic, ethnic, or social context, and who transmit, reinforce, and modify those ideas, values, and beliefs, passing them on from one generation to another. It results in a set of expectations for appropriate behavior in seemingly similar contexts. (Source: Canadian Race Relations Foundation's Glossary of Terms)

Cultural Group: A group of people that share certain characteristics such as mannerisms, beliefs (religious and other), language, values, and usually a common history, real or fictitious. See Ethnic Group.

Cultural Humility: The ability to understand, appreciate, communicate, and interact with persons from other cultures, races, genders, and belief systems different from one's own in order to effectively engage with people in God's intercultural community.

Culturally Humble Organization: The policies and practices of an organization, its values and mores, which enable that organization and individuals in the organization to interact effectively in an intercultural environment: assessing culture, valuing and managing the dynamics of difference, adapting to difference, and institutionalizing cultural knowledge. Cultural humility is a "way of being" that is reflected in the way an organization treats its members, its employees, its clients, and its community.

Cultural Identity: Seeing oneself in relation to one's own ethnic or cultural group. There are many different affiliations that we hold that come together to create a unique cultural identity for each of us. Our cultural identity is very complex with each group membership intersecting with the others. Because of this complexity, we cannot be judged, labeled, or categorized based on one aspect of our identity. (Source: D. Merrill-Sands, Holvino, and Cumming. Working with Diversity: Working Paper NO. 11, Center for Gender in Organizations, Simmons Graduate School of Management, MA, USA, 2000.)

Discrimination: Treating members of a targeted group less favorably than those of the dominant group. This often occurs when the dominant group determines the accessibility of goods or services for, and/or the rights and privileges of, the targeted group. (Source: Association for Women's Rights in Development.)

Ethnic Group: A group socially defined on the basis of cultural characteristics of diverse types such as language, religion, kinship organization, dress, and mannerism, or any other set of criteria deemed relevant to the actors concerned. (Source: Merrill-Sands, D., Holvino, and Cumming. Working with Diversity, Working Paper, No. 11, Center for Gender in Organizations, Simmons Graduate School of Management, MA, USA: 2000)

Ethnicity: A social construct that divides people into smaller social groups based on characteristics such as shared sense of group membership, values, behavioral patterns, language, political and economic interests, history and ancestral geographical base. (Source: Maurianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell, and Pat Griffin, editors. Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A sourcebook. New York: Routledge, 2000)

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Gender Equality: Women and men have equal conditions for realizing their full human rights and potential to contribute to national, political, economic, social, and cultural development and to benefit equally from the results, not by becoming the same, but by correcting the systemic nature of inequality. (Source: Association of Women's Rights in Development)

Institutional Racism: When the values, norms, beliefs, standards, and expectations of a dominant group become the basis for organizational policies, practices, arrangements, and appropriate behaviors, and result in unequal distribution of benefits and opportunities. The power to control resources, determine access, reward and punish behaviors, distribute benefits, and privilege is lodged in norms of the dominant group and access is denied to people of different identity groups. (Source: Merrill-Sands, D., Holvino and Cumming. Working with Diversity)

Intercultural: Respecting and embracing different cultures or cultural identities within a society or nation, holding each as equally valuable to and influential upon the members of society. An intercultural church treasures the different cultural contexts that God gives to different individuals and communities and values diverse expressions of practicing the faith. It offers a positive vision of the whole community, together in its difference. It encourages a healthy critique of each other's points of view, and it values the give and take of respectful relationships. It also takes steps to become a multilingual community.

Intercultural Church Movement: Igniting the intercultural vision in the church is a radical transformation calling all of us to change. The movement inspires Presbyterians to: *I- Interact* and build deep relationships with people of different races and cultures, *E- Educate* in the areas of cultural humility and intercultural ministry, and *I- Involve* ourselves in intercultural coalitions to ignite the vision for intercultural ministries in the church in this new era.

Intercultural Coalitions: Individuals of different races and cultures who join together in groups as allies, advocates, and partners, learning from one another, strategizing and taking action to disrupt racism, actively resisting white privilege, challenging social and historical inequalities that permeate institutions, and joining together in the vision of becoming God's intercultural community.

Internalized Oppression: External oppression becomes internalized oppression when the oppressed come to believe and act as if the oppressor's belief system, values, and way of life are reality.

Intersectionality: The experience of the interconnected nature of race, gender, class, ethnicity, etc. (cultural and social), and the way they are imbedded within existing systems, such that they define how one is valued. The reality for people who suffer not only from one form of bias, but also experience a range of other forms of oppression. For instance, most women of color experience discrimination not only because of their race but also because of their gender; in other words, women of color live the intersection of gender and race discrimination.

Prejudice: A pre-judgment drawn in the absence of evidence and held in the face of evidence that contradicts it. (Source: Working Definitions prepared for antiracism training in the PC(USA))

Privilege: In organizational systems, large or small, privilege refers to the unearned benefits that come from having access to the tangible resources and social rewards of that system. Privilege also extends to the power to name and influence the functions of the system itself. Privilege in any organizational system includes the ability to have one's voice heard and/or exercise power, to shape the norms and values of the system (group, organization, society).

Race: A socially constructed category—rather than an objective, scientifically, or biologically consistent characteristic of a person or group of persons—developed during the period of European colonial expansion that uses characteristics such as skin color, facial features, and body structure as a basis for classifying people.

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Racism: (Power + Racial Prejudice = Racism) Racism in the United States is a social system in which some are advantaged and others are disadvantaged because of skin color. Racism is not primarily about individual prejudice or an individual's beliefs and attitudes. It results from a merger of social power and racial prejudice to create systems that treat people differently whether intentionally or unintentionally. It shapes institutions and structures, so that they provide privileges for some while oppressing others. It involves inequality and unfair access to the distribution of such resources as money, education, information, and decision-making power between dominant and dominated groups.

Sexism: Refers to gender stereotyping of women and men as hierarchically ordered (men over women) and also as confined to limited cultural identities and roles as "masculine" and "feminine." It is expressed in the exclusion of women from certain types of employment or leadership roles that are assumed to be the prerogatives of males. Sexism is expressed in personal, interpersonal, cultural, economic, legal, and political terms, and is part of a total social and cultural system. (Source: Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Dictionary of Feminist Theologies*, Westminster/John Knox. Letty M. Russell and J. Shannon Clarkson, 1996.)

Stereotype: A fixed notion or conception of a person, group, idea, etc., allowing for no individuality and no critical judgment of individual cases. Stereotypes are usually based on false generalizations about a particular category of people, and are often used to justify the actions taken against members of that group. (Source: Maurianne Adams, et. al.)

White Privilege: "White privilege" names the unearned advantages that come to whites in the system of racial preference. Whites tend to assume that they are "normal" and that others are "other." This puts them in the powerful position of defining the world. The concrete benefits of access to resources and social rewards and the power to shape the norms and values of society that whites receive, either consciously or unconsciously, by virtue of their skin color in a racist society where those who are considered to be white are the dominant group. Generally white people who enjoy such privilege do so without being conscious of it. The sense of whites as non-raced and others as being racialized perpetuates the assumed authority of whites to define, and with this assumed authority whites define everyone (themselves and others) in terms of themselves. Whites assume the right to make meaning, to describe, analyze, and define reality. This definition nearly always places whites and their/our definitions and understandings at the center; all others are hyphenated or labeled as other. (Source: "Working Definitions" prepared for antiracism training in the PC(USA))