

ADDRESSING SYSTEMIC RACISM  
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF KALAMAZOO  
JULY 20, 2020

In times of crisis, suffering, and hardship, the Church is called to speak both prophetically and compassionately, to comfort and heal, and to call for justice and accountability. In this time of crisis, our community and our country are struggling with a confluence of crises: pandemic, economic distress, and civil unrest. In all these things, the disparity between white society and people of color is evident.

God did not choose one people over another. Indeed, in times such as this, “there are particular problems and crises through which God calls the church to act. The church, guided by the Spirit, humbled by its own complicity and instructed by all attainable knowledge, seeks to discern the will of God and learn how to obey in these concrete situations.” (1) Now is such a time and place.

“We have been slow to face the reality of systemic racism. We have been slow to acknowledge the pain of our fellow Presbyterians, of our fellow Christians, of our fellow citizens, and of those whose value has been judged by the color of their skin. We pledge to join hands and hearts with our BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) siblings to actively confront and dismantle systemic racism in the church and in society at large, and to work for a more just, merciful, and peaceful country that allows all of God’s children to flourish.” (2) (3)

We who call FPC home are committed to non-violent ways to bring about justice. We stand with those who call for an end to unjust and discriminatory policies and practices, both explicit and implicit, which disproportionately affect our siblings of color.

We appeal to the leaders of our houses of worship, our cities and counties, our states and our nation to act with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love in healing our communities and in combating racism in all its forms. (4)

In Peace and Grace,  
The Session of First Presbyterian Church Kalamazoo (PCUSA)

Footnotes

1. Confession of 1967 9.43
2. Statement from 224<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the PC(USA)
3. These are examples of what FPC could do, noting that this is not an exhaustive list and is apt to change as the work evolves.
  - review FPC Vision and Mission Statements as to how they align with our public statements against systemic racism
  - review current FPC policies and procedures
  - make an honest assessment of where FPC is on a continuum of anti-racism work
  - scaffold the work that should follow the assessment
  - commit resources to this work
4. Sections of this were adapted from a letter sent by Pasadena Presbyterian Church