

## 21 Day Racial Equity Challenge for Unity Presbyterian Church

Adult Discipleship Ministry Team

June 2020

The Matthew 25 initiative of the PCUSA invites congregations to live out their faith in the world by actively addressing one or all of these focus areas: Building Congregational Vitality, Dismantling Structural Racism, and Eradicating Systemic Poverty. While Unity has not made a formal commitment to become a Matthew 25 congregation, based on recent events in our world and local communities, the Adult Discipleship Ministry Team recently discussed how our congregation could be offered an opportunity to educate ourselves more on issues related to racial justice and to grow in our understanding of our Christian responsibility to be a part of creating a more just and equitable world for all people.

The Dismantling Structural Racism page on the website of the Presbyterian Mission Agency says this about the Theology of Racism: “Racism is anti-Christian. In 2016, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) approved a comprehensive churchwide anti-racism policy called ‘Facing Racism: A Vision of the Intercultural Community.’ The policy states:

Racism is a lie about our fellow human beings, for it says that some are less than others. It is also a lie about God, for it falsely claims that God favors parts of creation over the entirety of creation. Because of our biblical understanding of who God is and what God intends for humanity, the PC(USA) must stand against, speak against and work against racism. Anti-racist effort is not optional for Christians. It is an essential aspect of Christian discipleship, without which we fail to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Structural racism is not only the ‘opposite of what God intends for humanity,’ but is also an example of how sin is systemic rather than simply personal. As the PC(USA)’s anti-racism policy states, ‘Reformed theology offers a nuanced understanding of sin. Calvin did not understand sin to be simply an individual belief, action, or moral failing (Calvin, 1960). Rather, he viewed sin as the corporate state of all humanity. It is an infection that taints each of us and all of us. No part of us — not our perception, intelligence, nor conscience — is unclouded by sin.’” (<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/matthew-25/racism/>)

In using Matthew 25:31-46 as the central scripture around the PCUSA’s challenge to congregations, the Matthew 25 initiative reminds us that Jesus calls us as individuals and as the corporate church to “actively engage in the world around us, so our faith comes alive and we wake up to new possibilities.” (<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/matthew-25/>) and to dismantle structural racism. 1 Corinthians 12:26 says, “If one member of the body suffers, all suffer together with it.” We are called as Christians to listen to the suffering of others and to respond to eradicate that suffering.

While our church campus is closed and all of our Christian Education programming must be online, the ADMT is offering our congregation members the opportunity to participate in July in a “21 Day Racial Equity Challenge” as a way to educate ourselves about racial justice issues and

listen to other voices as a way to face, both individually and corporately, our part in systemic racism and discern ways we can act to make a change in our world. This challenge is completely voluntary. Since it is all online and done at home, it is open to any adults and youth in our congregation interested in taking the challenge.

After reviewing 21 Day Challenges offered at churches in our denomination, the one ADMT has chosen is one that originated with the Holderness School, an Episcopal boarding school in New Hampshire. Oakhurst Presbyterian Church in Decatur, GA, also used this particular version of the challenge and created a personal reflection journal to accompany each day's challenge. We have adapted this journal for our church's use.

21 Day Challenge: <https://jsparkman7.wixsite.com/21daychallenge>

Reflection Journal: See attached document