

 THE RACIAL EQUITY
TORCH

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GROW | TRANSFORM | EMPOWER | LEAD | DEVELOP



THE RACIAL EQUITY TORCH

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A message from the director, **Rhashell D. Hunter**

When urban design consultant Joshua Poe showed me a redlining map of Louisville, I saw how the intersections of racism and poverty are interwoven.

Poe helped me to see how redlining, the systematic denial of mortgages and fair housing for African Americans and people of color in Louisville, resulted in continued racial and economic disparity.

This map illustrates the ways redlining and the Home Owners’ Loan Corporation have affected housing development, disinvestment and lending patterns in Louisville since the 1930s. Poe said, “When the redlining maps were made and then handed over to mortgage companies, what was created were two economies. African Americans and people of color in Louisville existed in that second economy.” Poe suggests, “This is not a historical perspective; it is the current reality of Louisville.”

Big Tent, this year in Baltimore, where one of the first redlining maps was drawn. The effects of governmental housing laws and policies still impact the city today.

What is disturbing is that many feel comfortable simply offering charity in response to systemic injustice. Though charity may assist some individuals, it does not change power dynamics or provide long-term benefits to communities.

Partnering with oppressed families to increase income, gain employment, obtain educational opportunities and purchase property is a more just way to move toward eliminating poverty and disrupting structural racism. African Americans and people of color in Louisville were led toward rental markets. You don’t gain equity in rental housing. And, even those who were able to purchase houses were led to neighborhoods where they will never accumulate the kind of equity those in other parts of town not only achieve but expect. How will we as leaders in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) improve our society, instead of passively accepting that many of our members live in poverty and face structural racism? When will leaders acknowledge the unearned privilege they possess, which comes from having access to tangible resources and social rewards that are denied to others?



Save the Date

June 26–29

National Black Presbyterian Caucus Biennial Convention, Atlanta

The National Black Presbyterian Caucus will hold its 45th Biennial Convention in June. The conference theme is “Seeking Racial Justice and Equity! Where Do We Go from Here?”

Registration is now open. To register, go to ogaevents.pcusa.org/register/nbpc-2019. For additional information, contact Judith Murphy at jmurphy135@gmail.com or (803) 315-0410.

July 12–14

Native American Presbyterian Women’s Conference, Suquamish, Washington

The theme for this year’s conference is “Anchored in Faith.” It will be held at the Clearwater Casino Resort.

The registration fee is \$100. For more information, contact the Rev. Danelle McKinney at dmckinneypw@gmail.com. The registration deadline is June 15.

July 16–20

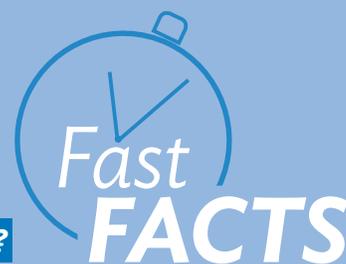
Presbyterian Youth Triennium, Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana

The Presbyterian Youth Triennium is a gathering for high-school-age youth from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the Cumberland Presbyterian Church that occurs every three years. All participants must be registered through a local presbytery or church delegation. For more information, contact national registrar Molly Atkinson at molly.atkinson@pcusa.org.

July 31–Aug. 3

Big Tent, Baltimore

This year’s Big Tent theme, “Called to a Movement Beyond Institution,” will emphasize our hope of the gospel and its power to challenge institutional conventions. In our current cultural context of racial division, gender inequality and economic disparity, come to be renewed, refreshed and reformed, so that we may be sent out to effect change in our own communities. Through worship, Bible study, learning opportunities, and active engagement with one another and the community, come and encounter the Church participating in God’s mission for the transformation of our world. To register, visit ogaevents.pcusa.org/register/2019-big-tent. The registration deadline is July 1.



Did You Know?

- ❖ The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has 1,352,678 members and 9,161 congregations
- ❖ The Presbyterian Church has 170 presbyteries and 16 synods
- ❖ 40% of the active ministers of Word and Sacrament are women
- ❖ 53% of ruling elders are women
- ❖ 1996 General Assembly diversity goals were:
 - At least 10% of members would be people of color by 2005.
 - At least 20% of members would be people of color by 2010.

On the front cover of each *Racial Equity Torch*, you will see our mantra: *Grow, Transform, Empower, Lead, and Develop*.

The core ministry and the purpose of our work in the Intercultural Ministries and Support for Congregations of Color office is:

- **Racial Justice and Empowerment**
- **Leadership Development**, with a focus on developing leaders of color, women and young adults
- **Church Growth**, with a focus on new worshiping communities
- **Transformation** of existing congregations

Thus, our mantra is: *Grow, Transform, Empower, Lead and Develop*. Intercultural Ministries and Support for Congregations of Color offices *equip, connect, and inspire* Communities of color and new immigrant worshiping communities and develop and empower leaders of color and new immigrant leaders. The ministry area does this through training, coaching, resource development, leadership development institutes, networking, and providing grants to congregations, schools and colleges equipping communities of color, and leaders of color and new immigrant leaders. In *Racial Equity & Women’s Intercultural Ministries*, we engage the church in its mission to become more diverse and inclusive of racial, ethnic, cultural, and language groups, and we equip women for leadership in all ministries of the church.

Building the intercultural community: First Anti-Racism/Cultural Humility Facilitators Consultation is held

The following is reprinted from Presbyterian Women in the Synod of Southern California and Hawaii



Participants of the Anti-Racism/Cultural Humility Facilitators Consultation gather for photos following the three-day event in Louisville.

Friends,

I was honored and humbled to be a part of the first Anti-Racism/Cultural Humility Facilitators Consultation. Here's a brief update and a warm invitation to you to consider how you can begin a dialogue or deepen your work to truly build the intercultural community that is Jesus' peaceable kingdom, or "kin-dom," in your church, presbytery and synod.

The first Anti-Racism/Cultural Humility Facilitators Consultation was held at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary from Oct. 22–24. Anti-racism trainers and facilitators from throughout the PC(USA) gathered for shared learning and strategic planning for the future. Organized by the Office of Racial Equity & Women's Intercultural Ministries and led by the Revs. T. Denise Anderson and Beth Olker, we also benefited from the Rev. Dr. Rhashell Hunter and the Rev. Lemuel Garcia. We met and

hung out with the newly appointed Rev. Shanea Leonard, associate for racial and gender justice. We got to hear some visionary thinking from the Rev. Dr. Herbert Nelson, II, the Stated Clerk, and the story of the research behind the new Anti-Racism/Intercultural Church policy from its writer, systematic theology professor Shannon Craigo-Snell. Some of the most exciting sessions were those when I, along with others, also got a chance to lead/role-play facilitation using the new manual, "Building the Intercultural Community." There was also a very powerful afternoon when we delved into the Doctrine of Discovery.

The consultation was informed by Item 11–11 from GA 223, "Declare an Imperative for the Reformation of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in being a Transformative Church in This Intercultural Era." This important directive instructs the PC(USA) to "invest in training and identifying trained anti-racism

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." Soon, the Office will be offering a directory of anti-racism/cultural humility trainers for churches and mid councils who are looking for educational opportunities and to deepen their work.

I hope you're as excited as I am by this vision of the intercultural community. I think we can all benefit from increasing our proficiency, cultural humility and learning tools such as power analysis. Anti-racism is a spiritual formation practice and a vital part of Christian discipleship for growing healthy thriving congregations. If you'd like to learn more, please contact me. Thanks!
Anita Coleman

What about the white folks?

By Rev. T. Denise Anderson

The United Methodist Commission on Race; Black Ministries and Latino/Hispanic Ministries of the Episcopal Church; Council for Racial and Ethnic Ministries of the United Church of Christ; Ethnic Specific and Multicultural Ministries of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; Racial Equity & Women's Intercultural Ministries of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) —

These are a few examples of entities in American mainline denominations that are dedicated to minority witness and interests. They communicate one thing clearly: In American mainline denominations, whiteness is centered.

The United States is predominantly white. American mainline Protestant denominations reflect and even amplify those demographics in their ranks. For generations, hermeneutics that favored whites went unchallenged in our churches, and the effects persist in the 21st century, with mainline membership at around 90% white across the board.

Dominant groups normalize and center their own experience. It is usually only through the advocacy of those outside of it that the dominant group comes to realize that it needs to make some space.

To make this space, the denomination establishes “racial” or “ethnic” ministries. It is explicit as to whose voice and witness it wants to amplify: the non-white voice. Ironically, it aims to be explicit about this non-white witness by using coded language. All people are part of ethnic groups and races. We use the language of race and ethnicity to refer specifically to non-whites, which suggests that white people do not think of themselves in terms of race or ethnicity because they don't

have to.

I recently participated in a conversation on race in which we were divided into groups and asked: “When was your first encounter with race?” The whites recalled their first encounters happening some time in their late teens or early 20s, while the people of color had never not been aware of race. We had always encountered the world with the understanding that we were “different,” that there was a separate set of rules by which we needed to abide.

I'm not surprised that whites tend to arrive at these realizations about race relatively late in life. Racial awareness isn't necessary for survival for whites in the way that it is for people of color.

I'm thankful for white ministers who speak to their white congregations about white supremacy and white privilege. I would like to see more of that. What if denominations developed resources and systems of support to help

its ministers do this? If whiteness is centered in our denomination, then it would stand to reason that diversity and anti-racism efforts should actively engage white people, rather than hoping or expecting these systems to be redeemed by the presence of people of color.

Acknowledging the witness of people of color and ensuring that they are at the tables where important decisions are made is only part of any effective solution. In any space — religious or secular — white folks need to talk to, organize and challenge white folks. When that happens, the bastions of white supremacy and privilege begin to dissolve.

If we truly want a more just and inclusive church in a system in which whiteness is centered, the key is to engage white folks. I wonder what a “Whites for Dismantling White Supremacy” ministry would look like — and which of our denominations might be ready to start one?



Structural racism from the gender perspective

By Rev. Shanea Leonard



I was elated when I accepted the position of Associate for Gender and Racial Justice for the PC (USA). Not only was this an extension of the justice work I was already involved in, but it gave me a chance to bridge the gap and widen the conversation around race and gender in our denomination. I have become increasingly proud of the PC(USA) in that we have taken not only a declarative stance against racism and white supremacy but also have made efforts to not leave those sentiments on the General Assembly floor.

Our denomination understands that we have a racism problem. Although there is more work to do, we are aware that inequities exist within our world and even within our Church that have created an environment where white privilege has fermented and people of color have suffered.

Racism is sin. It is power-based prejudice toward another based on that person's skin color, ancestral lineage, familial heritage or racial identity. Structural racism creates disparities in access to the

distribution of resources such as money, education, clean water, information and food.

Structural racism is present when we look at the fact that black women are three times more likely to die in childbirth¹ and that black girls are three times more likely to be placed in the juvenile justice system². And although many communities of color experience the direct and residual effects of racism, it is not a singular issue of injustice.

In 1989, Columbia Law School professor Kimberly Crenshaw defined "intersectionality" as "the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage." In her work, Crenshaw argues that the experience of being a black woman cannot be understood in independent terms of either being black or a woman. Rather, it must include interactions between the two identities, which, she adds, should

frequently reinforce one another.

Gender justice seeks to help us understand that the voices of all genders are often absent from positions of power and decision-making. Gender justice points to intersectionality in that it also values the total of all parts of humanity and champions the voice of the marginalized, regardless of their gender. Misogyny, homophobia, transphobia and other bigotry often are the voices of opposition to gender justice.

Thus, when we look at structural racism we must understand that it is not a simple problem. Rather, it is systemic oppression that has asserted dominance and power over various aspects of one's existence. And thus, the eradication of such is not tied up solely in the alleviation of inequity among races of people. Justice for all people requires an understanding that we are multifaceted people whose liberty is tied together in the liberation of one another. We must look at the holistic picture of humanity as we seek the liberation of all people.

1. Villarosa, Linda. The New York Times, Why America's Black Mothers and Babies are in a Life-or-Death Crisis. [nytimes.com/2018/04/11/magazine/black-mothers-babies-death-maternal-mortality.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/11/magazine/black-mothers-babies-death-maternal-mortality.html)

2. Epstein, Rebecca, Jamilia J. Blake, Thalia González. *Girlhood Interrupted: The Erasure of Black Girls' Childhood*. law.georgetown.edu/poverty-inequality-center/wp-content/uploads/sites/14/2017/08/girlhood-interrupted.pdf

Workshop leader at White Privilege Conference has tips for creating anti-racism spaces

by Mike Ferguson | Presbyterian News Service, Ali Michael

Ali Michael, an author and the co-founder and director of the Race Institute for K-12 Educators, says her main task as a white person working primarily with other white folks toward racial justice is “to find my lane and go as fast as I can — in my lane.”

Michael led a lively workshop called “White on White: Working with Other White Folks Toward Racial Justice” during the 20th White Privilege Conference.

Michael said she began her work about 18 years ago after attending a workshop on creating anti-racism spaces. She established an anti-racism space, a community of allies that meets regularly, with another like-minded woman.

“It’s where I’ve done most of my learning about racism. We agreed we would ask our stupid questions of one another,” Michael said. “I grew up in a house where talking about race was impolite.”

She advised white people who are interested in developing their own anti-racism space to “include people of color in the organization to whom you are accountable, because any action I take will have impact on people of color.” The group should also have a facilitator, she said.

“Our inclination as white people is to compete with one another. When we are trying to be anti-racist, we try to be the best white person in the room,” she said. “But the goal is to end racism, and so it really doesn’t matter if I’m better than you or worse than you. White people need role models, and they need people to help them learn.”

White people also “need to cry



Ali Michael led a lively workshop during the 20th White Privilege Conference in Cedar Rapids, Iowa called “White on White: Working with Other White Folks Toward Racial Justice”.

about racism,” she said. “These spaces can give us a place where we can feel.”

In her work, “I welcome mistake-making,” she said. “Our motto should be ‘Do the wrong thing,’ because doing nothing is also wrong.” The best feedback she receives comes from “showing up and putting my foot in my mouth,” she said.

Using the work of research psychologist Dr. Janet Helms, Michael explored with workshop attendees six stages — they’re circular and not linear, Michael said — of white racial identity development.

Those are, in broad strokes:

- Contact — The first contact with the notion of racism
- Disintegration — Confrontation with the disintegration of one’s image of a just world
- Reintegration — The truth about racism is too hard, so the person tries to reintegrate their

image of a just world

- Pseudo-Independent Stage — The person starts to understand the realities of racism, but still has many misconceptions
- Immersion — Immersing oneself in learning what it means to be white
- Autonomy — Life and work in the “beloved community,” including the ability to work in multi-racial coalitions and to seek and accept feedback from colleagues of color.

“Your racial identity is your toolbox,” she said. “If you feel guilt and shame, that is what you will project to other people. That’s why doing your own work is so important, because people take shame and guilt and transform it into hostility and anger.”

The ultimate goal is “not to feel bad,” she said. “The goal is to understand the whole picture — and to keep moving forward.”

Presbytery of Baltimore focuses on eliminating poverty and racism

Intersection of Change, Inc. (IOC), a non-profit in west Baltimore City, was founded by a clergy couple 23 years ago. IOC has provided significant neighborhood revitalization through the full renovation of six previously vacant and dilapidated buildings, transformation of 18 vacant lots into community green spaces and meditative gardens, creation of two dozen neighborhood murals, and the conversion of 1.5 acres of vacant lots into an urban farm. IOC operates three programs: Martha's Place long term housing for women recovering from homelessness and substance abuse; Jubilee Arts, an arts program where participants have the chance to initiate change in their community through designing and participating in art classes, murals, festivals, art exhibits, and public art/beautification projects; and the Strength to Love II (S2L2) farm.

Strength to Love II (S2L2) operates an urban farm and employs ex-offenders returning to the community from incarceration. The program's farm includes 16 greenhouses totaling 1.5 acres and uses environmentally sustainable methods to grow our high quality produce for local consumption, addresses community food apartheid issues, and offers employment to ex-offenders and underserved populations. S2L2 sells its produce at local restaurants, colleges, and farmers markets. Since 2013 the farm has employed over 40 individuals who were formally incarcerated.

The Strength to Love II's mission is to address: (1) A high recidivism rate of citizens returning from

incarceration in the community without employment opportunities, and (2) Food apartheid (the accessibility of healthy food) issues in west Baltimore City.

In April 2019, S2L2 added a workforce development program for disconnected youth ages 18-24 years. The model combines paid job training as farm workers on the S2L2 farm with classroom instruction to ensure youth gain and retain employment and move towards self-sufficiency. The youth will also be introduced to the world of landscaping as the program was just awarded a grant to maintain 50 vacant lots through the city of Baltimore. The University of Baltimore Cooperative Extension Service will provide training in farming skills to the workers. The youth will also learn landscaping as they maintain 50 vacant city lots in

the community.

The S2L2 farm will be one of the options during the Big Tent held in Baltimore in August of 2019. On Friday evening, August 2nd, Big Tent attendees can visit the S2L2 farm for a "Farm to Table Dinner," learn about the Food Apartheid initiative in Baltimore City, be introduced to how agriculture is being used to heal traumatic experiences, and listen to cool jazz. This event will also include a bus tour of the over thirty murals created since the death of Freddie Gray, many by IOC's Jubilee Arts summer program Art@Work. The S2L2 farm workers are also recipients of the national Self-Development of People grant.

Submitted by Rev. Dr. Karen V. Brown, Resource Developer Intersection of Change, Inc.





In September 2018, the Presbytery of Baltimore adopted a policy to require foundational training on Dismantling Racism for all active teaching elders, presbytery staff and anyone serving on the Committee on Ministry or the Committee on Preparation for Ministry. Other congregational and presbytery leadership are also encouraged to attend. Modeled after the “Healthy Boundaries” training, current members of the presbytery have three years to complete the training, which will be provided at least annually beginning in 2020.

The Dismantling Racism Team came together in early 2018 to develop the training concept after several different programs and dialogues over the past three years

uncovered a deep hunger across racial lines to break down our racial heritage and work toward racial equity and justice within our own churches and the presbytery.

The Rev. Michael Moore, pastor of Knox Presbyterian Church, wrote this in favor of the policy:

Like a complex “American quilt,” racism has been sown together by greed and conquest of lands with genocidal realities of people of color — our Native American brothers and sisters and the horrors of millions of deaths through the Atlantic slave trade. It was sown with dehumanizing trauma of our African American brothers and sisters with the chattel enslavement that built and enriched this nation.

It was knitted together by the sanctioning of the church and justified by racist exegesis and interpretations of the Holy Scriptures.

As of January, 56 people have been trained, and we hope to reach at least 50 more this year. The Dismantling Racism Team is already discussing other opportunities and resources to support individuals as we practice what we have learned to recognize, interrupt and dismantle racism and work to become the beloved community that God has intended.

Susan Krehbiel, Social Justice Consultant, Presbytery of Baltimore



Racial Equity & Women's Intercultural Ministries



Big Tent Events

TUESDAY, JULY 30

African Leaders Pre-Conference
Begins at noon Tuesday; ends before noon Wednesday.

Includes Tuesday lunch and dinner and Wednesday breakfast.

By invitation — contact Lemuel Garcia (lemuel.garcia@pcusa.org) for more information.

African Presbyterian leaders will connect with God and each other, explore mission and ministry, and be equipped for the gifts of ministry. Conference participants will set a vision for African congregational ministry in the PC(USA) in an intercultural era and affirm the gifts and leadership of African Presbyterians in the denomination.

National Middle Eastern Presbyterian Caucus meeting

Begins Tuesday afternoon; concludes by noon Wednesday.

By invitation — contact Raafat Girgis (raafatgirgis85@yahoo.com) for more information.

National Asian Presbyterian Council meeting

Begins Tuesday at 5 p.m.; ends before noon Wednesday.

Fee: \$30; includes Tuesday dinner and Wednesday breakfast.

By invitation — contact email. napc@gmail.com for more information.

National Hispanic/Latino-a Caucus Coordinating Team meeting

Begins with dinner Tuesday; ends by noon Thursday.

By invitation — contact Tony Aja (ajatony@gmail.com) for more information.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 31

African Leaders Pre-Conference continues, concluding before noon.

National Middle Eastern Presbyterian Caucus meeting continues, concluding before noon.

National Asian Presbyterian Council meeting continues, concluding by noon.

National Hispanic/Latino-a Caucus Coordinating Team meeting continues.

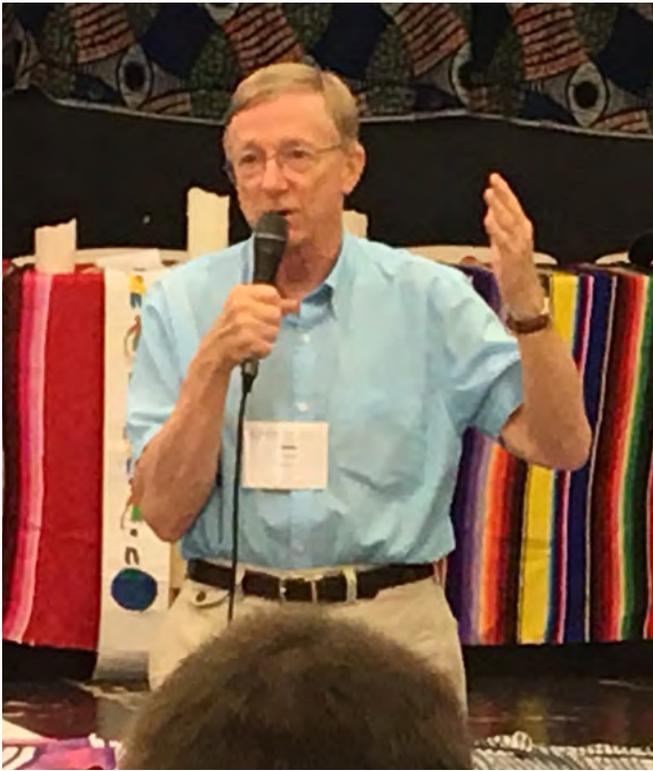
Convocation for Communities of Color

Begins at noon Wednesday; ends at 1 p.m. Thursday.

Fee: \$100; includes Wednesday lunch and dinner and Thursday breakfast and lunch.

Contact Lemuel Garcia (lemuel.garcia@pcusa.org) for more information.

Through the leading of the Spirit we will share stories, deepen relationships and draw on the strength of our collective tenacity as we move towards wholeness and healing.



THURSDAY, AUG. 1

National Hispanic/Latino-a Caucus Coordinating Team meeting continues, concluding by noon.

Convocation for Communities of Color continues, concluding with lunch.

SATURDAY, AUG. 3

Post-Big Tent Opportunities
Presbyterian Intercultural Young Adult Network (PIYAN) Post-Conference

Begins at 3 p.m.; ends with lunch on Sunday.

By invitation — contact Moongil Cho at moongil.cho@pcusa.org for more information.

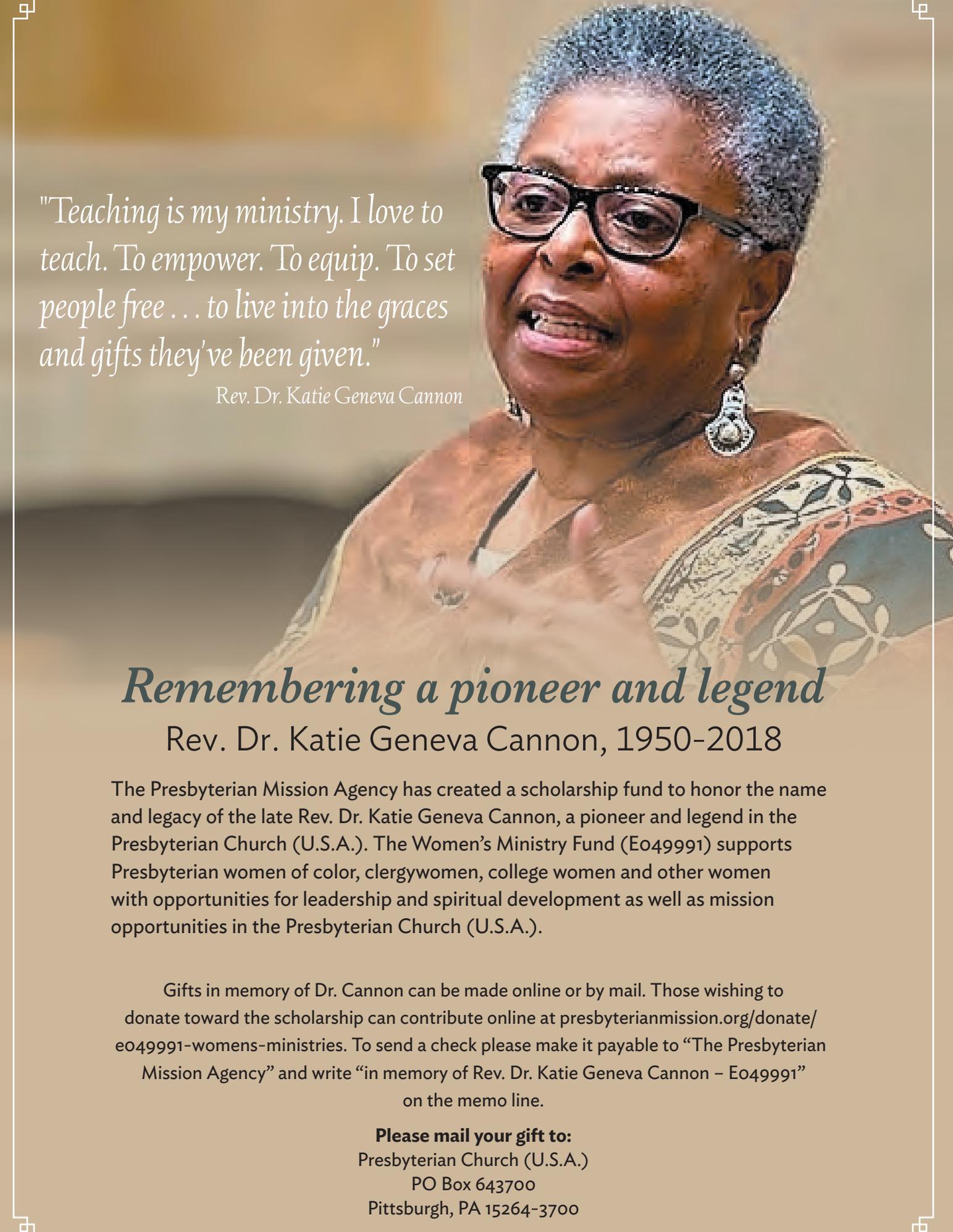
Young adults in the PC(USA) come together to witness God’s good work in their lives, both inside and outside of the church.

They recognize that unity is enlightened by different cultures, backgrounds and traditions. At this post-conference, intercultural young adults, ages 20–35, will gather to affirm their unity in Christ and a vision for mission and ministry in the PC(USA) in this intercultural era.

SUNDAY, AUG. 4

Presbyterian Intercultural Young Adult Network continues, concluding with lunch.



A portrait of Rev. Dr. Katie Geneva Cannon, an African American woman with short, curly grey hair, wearing black-rimmed glasses and large, ornate earrings. She is wearing a patterned shawl over a dark top. Her hands are clasped in front of her, and she has a thoughtful expression.

"Teaching is my ministry. I love to teach. To empower. To equip. To set people free . . . to live into the graces and gifts they've been given."

Rev. Dr. Katie Geneva Cannon

Remembering a pioneer and legend

Rev. Dr. Katie Geneva Cannon, 1950-2018

The Presbyterian Mission Agency has created a scholarship fund to honor the name and legacy of the late Rev. Dr. Katie Geneva Cannon, a pioneer and legend in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The Women's Ministry Fund (Eo49991) supports Presbyterian women of color, clergywomen, college women and other women with opportunities for leadership and spiritual development as well as mission opportunities in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Gifts in memory of Dr. Cannon can be made online or by mail. Those wishing to donate toward the scholarship can contribute online at presbyterianmission.org/donate/eo49991-womens-ministries. To send a check please make it payable to "The Presbyterian Mission Agency" and write "in memory of Rev. Dr. Katie Geneva Cannon - Eo49991" on the memo line.

Please mail your gift to:
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
PO Box 643700
Pittsburgh, PA 15264-3700

Becoming a transformative church in this intercultural era

By Lemuel Garcia

In 2018, the 223rd General Assembly approved the initiative to “Declare an Imperative for the Reformation of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A) in being a Transformative Church in This Intercultural Era” (go to pcusa.org/intercultural to download the initiative). The Assembly also declared 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.).

Some of these priorities and initiatives include the creation of intercultural programs, resources, events and antiracism training by the six agencies of the denomination, and the encouragement of mid councils to offer dismantling racism programs every three years similar to the healthy boundaries training.

The Intercultural Initiative calls for 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.”

The Intercultural Initiative is challenging Presbyterians to become a transformative church that is truly inclusive and genuinely appreciates each other’s



Emmett and Clara Wise of Westminster Presbyterian Church, Austin, Texas, participate in Austin’s annual MLK Day Walk. Photo Credit: Elise Ragland

distinctiveness and differences. Living in an intercultural society brings opportunities for the church to engage in effective and relevant ministries as we commit to model God’s community together, where mutual recognition and understanding of differences through self-examination, relationship-building and equitable access to power are not mere ideals but actual practices. We are also challenged to change by interacting and building deep relationships with people of different races and cultures, by educating in cultural humility and intercultural ministry, and by involving ourselves in intercultural coalitions that join with other people of faith as allies, advocates and partners in making a reality the vision of becoming God’s intercultural community.

One of the recommendations of the Intercultural Initiative is to “urge the sessions of each congregation, as well as each mid council, seminary, Presbyterian Women’s group and other entities, to take action to be intercultural in their life, work and worship.” Yes, it is time for all of us to take decisive action at every level of the denomination to become a transformative church in this intercultural era. Our hope and prayers are that this initiative may be the beginning of a new Reformation Movement in the church where God’s people who have already come from east, west, north and south and who are already living in our midst have their rightful place at the table in God’s “kin-dom.”

Taking off the blinders to racism

Our nation needs to heed the call for change

Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II, Stated Clerk of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

More than 50 years ago, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. told a crowd at Riverside Church in New York that there needed to be a “radical revolution in values” in order to address racism, extreme materialism and militarism. That statement has never meant more than it does in these turbulent times.

Racism is passed from generation to generation, and we’ve made it acceptable to oppress certain groups by preventing people of color from moving into specific neighborhoods, banks refusing to grant loans, or raising bail to keep those facing nonviolent offenses from getting out of jail.

There is confusion in our land as to who we are as a nation. Communities of color are afraid to wear traditional dress. Islamic individuals and groups fear being labeled as terrorists. We see people struggling to make a livable wage, and yet we turn away.

Racism represents a historic ill and victimization of people of color in this nation. It is a cancer in the soul of our country that can be driven out only by love. Its handprint extends from Charlottesville, Virginia, to the nation’s capital. From the streets of Anytown, U.S.A., to the Oval Office, statements of racism and bigotry are broadcast through television, social media, newspapers and cellphones. We can’t escape the reality that as hard as we fight against it, the racial divide continues.

The strain of white supremacy is nothing new. I grew up during the civil rights movement and witnessed my father, uncles and other clergy put their own safety on the line to



Participants of the Presbyterian Women’s Gathering in Louisville, KY march against injustices and inequities against people of color.

advocate for justice. They understood that racism cannot be eradicated until faith leaders are willing to risk their lives (professional and otherwise) for the sake of the gospel.

Anti-racism has been described as a “focused and sustained action with the intent to change a system or an institutional policy, practice, or procedure which has racist effects.” If you look at the history of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), there are countless examples where advocacy, prayer and the commitment of our church leaders have made significant strides to melt the icy hearts of racism and white supremacy in this country. Through action, conversation and in some

cases incarceration, the church has been a voice to seek change and reparation for people whose only “fault” was to be born of another color.

Luke 17:33 reminds us: “Whoever tries to keep their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life will preserve it.” We must enter into a new age regarding race in this country. Our greatest mistake will be the failure to make every effort through the gospel to eradicate racism with the help of the Lord.

As uncomfortable as it is, we as proclaimers and hearers of the gospel must engage this issue, for God is calling us to be a viable witness, to have courage and a deep faith to speak truth in love.

FEATURED RESOURCES



Matthew 25

Matthew 25:31–46 calls all of us to actively engage in the world around us, so our faith comes alive and we wake up to new possibilities. Convicted by this passage, both the 222nd and 223rd General Assemblies (2016 and 2018) exhorted the PC(USA) to act boldly and compassionately to serve people who are hungry, oppressed, imprisoned or poor. By accepting the Matthew 25 invitation, you can help our denomination become a more relevant presence in the world.



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Intercultural Ministries and Support for Congregations of Color

African Intercultural Ministries
African American Intercultural Congregational Support
Asian Intercultural Congregational Support
Hispanic/Latino-a Intercultural Congregational Support
Korean Intercultural Congregational Support
Middle Eastern Intercultural Ministries
Native American Intercultural Congregational Support

Leadership Development & Recruitment for Leaders of Color

Mission Program Grants
Racial Equity Leadership Development & Recruitment
Schools and Colleges Equipping communities of Color

Women's Leadership Development and Justice Ministries

Gender and Racial Justice
Racial and Intercultural Justice (joint office with CPJ)
Women's Leadership Development & Young Women's Ministries

In covenant relationship with Presbyterian Women in the PC(USA), Inc.

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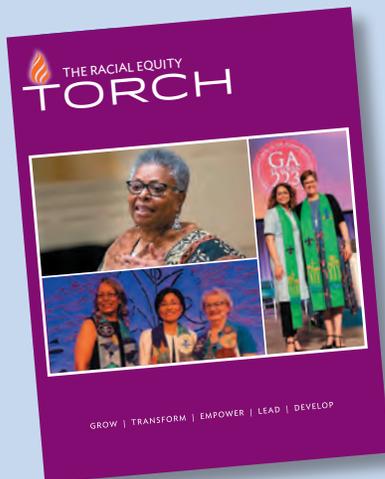


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