

Whites Confronting Racism Clergy Cohort
Eastern Pennsylvania Conference
The United Methodist Church

June 4, 2020

The Eastern Pennsylvania Conference of the UMC is committed to dismantling racism. The Whites Confronting Racism Cohort launched last year is one manifestation of that ongoing commitment. We came together for a series of workshops in 2019 that birthed a cohort of sixteen white clergy committed to learning, reflection, action, and mutual accountability.

The recent statement from the EPA Conference Commission on Religion and Race in response to the murder of Ahmaud Arbery and to the racial disparity revealed by the pandemic asked us, as individuals and churches, for a “faithful, active, response” to the sins of racism and white supremacist violence. Therefore, we offer our support to the Commission on Religion and Race, stand with our siblings engaged in dismantling racism in our conference and beyond, and express our outrage for “yet one more attack and murder, one more lynching in a disgustingly long history of white supremacist violence against people of color in our society.”¹ Since their statement just weeks ago, we see this “disgustingly long history,” continue with the deaths of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd as well as through the unconscionable lie told against Christian Cooper.

We recognize that the ‘white’ color of our skin has afforded us privilege in established systems that preserve our social and institutional power. Racism, in the U.S. and in much of the world, is expressed in systems that privilege white people at the expense of people of color. These systems are controlled and maintained by white people. Even the best-intending white person benefits economically and socially from this system, even while they may suffer from that same system in less obvious ways.

We also recognize that as members of God’s beloved family we’re given responsibility for speaking up and out when racial injustice plagues our communities. Therefore, white people must be involved in confronting, resisting, and dismantling racism. When white people remain silent, we strengthen the white supremacist ideology that is woven into the fabric of our nation, our communities, and our churches. If we witness racism and say nothing – it is as if we are saying that we do not care, that racism is not a problem for us. Today, we say that we do care, and that racism is a problem for us. We cannot ignore the multitude of harm racism has done to people of

¹ Commission on Religion and Race Eastern Pennsylvania Conference of The United Methodist Church. (May 13, 2020). *Enough is enough! A call to address racism and racial violence* [Advocacy Statement]. Retrieved from <https://www.epaumc.org/news-information/2020/05/an-advocacy-statement-by-the-commission-on-religion-and-race/>

color and the spiritual and psychic harm that racism does to white people and the whole body of God's people.

Knowing that the work of confronting and dismantling racism extends beyond any single moment or event, we share our intent to continue holding one another accountable to the following commitments. With God's leading, we agree:

...To actively listen to and follow the leadership of people of color expressed in already established groups such as the Commission on Religion and Race (CORR), Healing the Wounds of Racism Core Accountability Team, Black Methodists for Church Renewal (BMCR), the Committee on Native American Ministry (CONAM), Korean United Methodist Church Caucus of PA and DE, Black United Methodist Pastors (BUMP), the Latino Commission, and Metodistas Representando la Causa de los Hispano Americanos (MARCHA).

...To address racism in our own lives: We will continue to learn, to recognize, and to repent of our own bias and our culpability in racist systems. We will take active steps to act against racism in the communities where we live, work, and lead as clergy.

...To aid in the Eastern PA Conference's ongoing efforts to acknowledge and confront racism within our own conference. We do so, recognizing that we are not alone, but join many others, in this commitment and work.

We, as one cohort of whites confronting racism, continue to pray that by taking the above steps, by working with others, and by following the leading of God's Spirit, we might begin to see a world where the injustices of a racist society are less prevalent than the peace and love that abounds in a just society.

We join together with anyone who has a heart for the oppressed and a desire to live in a world where all of God's children are equally valued, honored and respected,

Rev. Michelle Beissel
Rev. David Eckert
Rev. Jennifer S. Freymoyer
Rev. Shauna K. Ridge
Rev. Robin Hynicka
Rev. Andrea Brown
Rev. Tamie Scalise
Rev. David Tatgenhorst

Rev. Sean Dougherty
Rev. Mark Terry
Kristi Painter, *Global Mission Fellow*
Rev. Scott Friedgen-Veitch
Rev. John Keretzman
Rev. John Bletsch
Rev. Eddie Cameron
Rev. Robb E. Faller