

# Antiracism Policy of the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee

## **Background**

In June 2022, the 225<sup>th</sup> General Assembly passed an amendment to the Book of Order that was approved by a majority of the presbyteries in July 2023. **Book of Order Section G-3.0106 Administration of Mission** states:

**“All councils shall adopt and implement the following policies: a sexual misconduct policy, a harassment policy, a child and youth protection policy, and an antiracism policy. Each council’s policy shall include requirements for boundary training which includes the topic of sexual misconduct, and child sexual abuse prevention training for its members at least every thirty-six months.”**

This policy is designed to meet the Book of Order requirements for an Anti-racism Policy for the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee (“PMT”).

## **Purpose**

Personal and institutional racism have historically existed and continues to exist in the church and world. Combatting racism in the PC(USA), its councils, and our communities is a legal and moral imperative.

In the church, PC(USA), and its councils there are disparities between racial demographics and the communities in which the church continues its ministries.

The purpose of this policy is to eliminate all forms of racism from the PMT and its member churches.

## **Definitions**

The following definitions have been adapted from the Government Alliance on Race and Equity at [www.racialequityalliance.org](http://www.racialequityalliance.org)

**Anti-racism:** the practice of identifying, challenging, and changing the values, structures, and behaviors that perpetuate systemic racism.

**Individual racism:** pre-judgment, bias, or discrimination by an individual based on race. Individual racism includes both privately held beliefs, conscious and unconscious, and external behaviors and actions towards others.

**Institutional racism:** occurs within institutions and organizations that adopt and maintain policies, practices, and procedures that often unintentionally produce inequitable outcomes for people of color and advantages for white people.

**Structural (or systemic) racism:** encompasses the history and current reality of institutional racism across all institutions and society. It refers to the history, culture, ideology, and

interactions of institutions and policies that perpetuate a system of inequity that is detrimental to communities of color.

### **Anti-racism Policy Guidelines**

These guidelines are designed to dismantle the individual, institutional, and structural racism that exists in the church.

**Policy Communications:** The Presbytery of PMT shall adopt a public statement against racism, post it in the office, publicize it in presbytery documents, and other communications. The public statement shall read:

“The Presbytery of Middle Tennessee shall follow the Foundations of Presbyterian Polity as expressed in The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and rejects all forms of racism as destructive to the Foundations of Presbyterian Polity as expressed in the Book of Order Chapter One, The Mission of the Church.”

**Leadership and Administration:** As stated in the Book of Order *F-3.02 Principles of Presbyterian Government*, this policy shall apply to *F-3.0201 One Church*, *F-3.0202 Governed by Presbyters*, and *F-3.0203 Gathered in Councils*.

**Discipline:** Failure to comply with this policy shall be subject to Book of Order *Section D-1.0000 Principles of Church Discipline*.

**Training:** All officers, staff, and committee leaders in the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee shall be trained in this policy at least every 36 months. The Presbytery office shall keep training records for those trained and the date trained.

Part I of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Book of Confessions includes the Confession of Belhar approved at the 222<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly in 2016. Section 10.6 of the Belhar Confession summarizes the church’s position on racism.

“Therefore, we reject any doctrine which, in such a situation sanctions in the name of the gospel or of the will of God the forced separation of people on the grounds of race and color and thereby in advance obstructs and weakens the ministry and experience of reconciliation in Christ.”