

## PTCA Anti-Racism Policy<sup>1</sup>

*The PC(USA) Book of Order mandates that all church councils must adopt and implement an anti-racism policy in the section "Administration of Mission," **G-3.0106**.<sup>2</sup> This requirement was established by the 225th General Assembly (2023) and was updated in the 2023-2025 Book of Order.*

The PTCA is *also* creating this policy (even if the BoO did not demand it) because our antiracism work over the past few years, including the Race and Equity report, has led us to clarity that this is core work for our Christian calling and for our future flourishing.

This policy exists in two parts:

**Part One** is the entirety of the PTCA's [Race & Equity Report](#) unanimously approved in May 2023 for implementation. This report and set of recommendations provides the history, theological foundations, self-study, commitment, and vision for where we are called to move together across many years of future work together.

**Part Two** is the below "PTCA Policy for Redress of Harm" that allows us to commit to a clear procedure and range of options to guide us together in productive and healing interactions. This adds to Part One in ways that are undergirded by antiracist ideals and the work of the report, and is aided by the container of "policy" as we seek to live it out.

### Part Two: Policy for Redress of Harm

#### **Theological Anchoring:**

Our history as a predominantly white presbytery in a predominantly white denomination compels us to work toward redress and rebalancing of our past wrongs. We are aware that our Confessions call us to this work, as in the Confession of Belhar:

*"We Believe that Christ's work of reconciliation is made manifest in the church as the community of believers who have been reconciled with God and with one another; that unity is, therefore, both a gift and an obligation for the church of Jesus Christ;*

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<sup>1</sup> The PC(USA) calls for each Presbytery to have an Antiracism policy, however this is more a procedure to lead back to healthy relationships when harm has been done. With that in mind, the terms policy and procedure will be used interchangeably in this document to refer to the procedures set out below.

<sup>2</sup> "All councils shall adopt and implement the following policies: a sexual misconduct policy, a harassment policy, a child, youth, and adults with vulnerabilities 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." Book of Order G3.0106.

*that through the working of God's Spirit it is a binding force, yet simultaneously a reality which must be earnestly pursued and sought: one which the people of God must continually be built up to attain;”*

This policy helps us live into a way of being Church that lives into the vision of the early Christian baptismal formula that Paul quotes in Galatians 3:28: “There is no longer Jew nor Greek; there is no longer slave nor free; there is no longer male and female; for *all y’all are one* in Christ Jesus.” We believe this ancient formula summons us to celebrate the differences that exist among us—by acknowledging and addressing how these differences shape our access to power.

### **What this policy is:**

This policy lays out a road map or set of options for navigating complex conversations and instances of possible harm that occur in community life amidst deep diversity. This policy is a process that parties can opt into *or* decline to engage, and which we recommend for the building up of our communal Christian community. It seeks to assist us in navigating misuse of power and seeking relationship repair, and is intended to help all people work through interpersonal conflicts and harm, mindful of the particular needs of marginalized people in these situations and the unique power dynamics that they end up navigating.

This policy does *not* seek to duplicate:

- EEOC<sup>3</sup> policies or *other HR conflict resolution policies* that already exist within our system
- Processes for *possible ministerial misconduct by those ordained as Teaching or Ruling Elders or Deacons in the PC(USA)* where a process already exists in the Book of Order
- Processes for *infractions by councils* (session, midcounsel, etc.) of the Book of Order where a process already exists in the PC(USA) Book of Order

Rather, this policy creates a process that might, in a grounded, faithful, and reflective way, address other potential human and systemic harms and address complicated conversations involving racism, sexism, heterosexism, queer- and transphobia, ableism, or other forms of prejudice or discrimination where power dynamics (both formal and cultural) are at work.

Critically, the engagement and process this policy invites is less about “fact-finding,” or proving the reality or unreality of issues that may arise, than about *understanding power dynamics and overall impact*; and committing to new ways to be in relationship and community together. Said another way: this is less an *investigative* process than a *relational* one.

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<sup>3</sup> EEOC stands for Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, a federal office enforcing antidiscrimination laws in employment practices.

As stated, this policy is designed to work in tandem with the major recommendations of the Institutional Race and Equity Assessment<sup>4</sup> (IREA) report. This pairing acknowledges that the IREA report was not designed to redress *specific* instances of harm, but instead offered a systemic assessment and related interventions for overall transformation. The recommendations also did not address interpersonal harms between individuals, but were more tied to the way systems operate. This policy creates a path for individuals to engage, but also for individuals or groups to engage with committees, leaders and more; in a proactive and faithful way.

This policy is also a living document, amendable at any point with the vote of the Presbytery if we find that a pivot is needed to address a greater challenge or an emergent issue.

### **How This Policy Will be Shared:**

- Once passed, this policy will be presented in full at a stated meeting of the PTCA.
  - Furthermore, at least one procedure of the policy will be highlighted at least twice a year by ARTF.
- This policy must be shared with all new Teaching Elders, Presbytery Commissioners, Clerks of Session of member churches, and presbytery committee members. The primary method of sharing this will be in a New Presbyters Welcome Packet of information.
- Posted prominently on the presbytery website both on the list of “shortcuts” and in the “resources and forms” drop down.

### **Naming our Stakes in this Work:**

*It is true that, for those in our presbytery who have historically and culturally privileged identities like whiteness, or being male, non-disabled or having a comfortable income or generational wealth, there are anxieties and costs that come with interrogating and dismantling these parts of our identities. But we can testify that the process offers healing and liberation. Through the moments of challenge, this work has brought our team joy, humor, courage, and hope.*

*There is a promise for all of us in reorienting ourselves to the Gospel, especially in deepening our relationships and living into a fuller understanding of who we are as people of God.*

- 2023 PTCA Race and Equity Report

We need ways of holding ourselves accountable for the changes called for in the 2023 IREA report. We are aware of the ways in which our lack of capacity in these areas of deep dialogue and conflict resolution continue to undermine our wider work both with our diverse membership and with the body of the PTCA as a whole. Our hope is that this policy offers guidelines, opportunities, and reminders that can aid us in this work.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WhkZzv4OFocgy2YUZjpY2gXBASSTlvTc/view>

## Values Guiding Us:

- Healthy community & healthy engagement
- Communal Shepherding - it is all of our responsibilities to tend to the spiritual and emotional health of our spaces - especially when tensions arise around larger systems and cultural norms that create harm
- Transparency - systemic transparency
- Appropriate Confidentiality
- Common definitions ([Please see pages 51-57 of PTCA Institutional Race and Equity Self-Assessment Report](#))

## Vision:

- To create a process that is welcoming to all parties, knowing that dedicated and transformative conversation is healing and spiritually powerful work
- To reduce assumptions of shame or blame, and focus on appropriate response to harm, making amends for impacts, and recreating relationship when possible
- To make these processes habitual for presbytery members so that 15 years from now we do not need this policy but have healthy habits of how to redress harm when it arises - in these areas and beyond.

## Procedure:

**How to request a redress of harm process:** Any of these processes can be initiated by application to the Committee on Representation and Ethics (CORE) or to the Executive Presbyter of the PTCA. The person or group (“Applicant”) asking for a process *does not need to know in advance* which process is their preference before requesting a conversation with CORE or the EP.

The options below can be employed alone, or stacked if one process does not yield a helpful result. Helpful discernment about which process might apply could include:

- based on the applicant’s judgement of the harm and their desire of how to proceed
- if the issue is a first occurrence or first attempt at addressing underlying issues, or a second or third attempt.
- mindfulness of the power dynamics at play in the situation/ among the parties and the capacity of an internal or external mediator to draw out such dynamics

## Option 1 - Collegial Conversation with Witnesses:

A process of collegial restorative conversation between the Applicant and the Other Party for basic truth telling and compassionate witness. Conversation optimally leads to a discussion

about impact and a request for transformed relationship/engagement. The specific hoped-for outcomes of a conversation would be shared at the top of the engagement.

- Relevant Parties:
  - the Applicant
  - the Other Party
  - an invited Witness from the presbytery (there to witness and report back – not to facilitate the conversation nor provide “factual support” for one party or the other)
- Follow up:
  - Witness reports to COM and PLT simply that a conversation occurred. The identification of a Witness will be at the suggestion of CORE, ARTF or the EP, and/or by mutual agreement of the Applicant and the Other Party.
  - Names or other details about the conversation are not included in the reporting
  - ARTF will be notified: the policy was used

### **Option 2 - *Internal Trusted Mediator***

This model is a more structured conversation that includes a mediator within the PTCA system. This could include any mutually-agreed-upon leader with background in this area, or it could be the Chair of COM, CPM, the EP, the Stated Clerk, etc.

#### Relevant Parties

- the Applicant
- the Other Party
- a mutually-agreed on Mediator from the presbytery
- Follow up:
  - Mediator reports to COM and PLT that the conversation occurred
  - Names or other details not required in this reporting, unless mutually agreed on by both parties, or a mediator deems it necessary.
  - COM and PLT will retain this information as confidential internal awareness, not for disseminating beyond the room
  - ARTF will be notified: the policy was used

### **Option 3: *External Trained Mediator***

This is the most formal of the three options, inviting the PTCA to hire an outside party (specializing in cultural or contextual dynamics to the particular case if possible) to be an impartial mediator to a conversation. This is also the process that may need to practice the highest level of transparency with wider systems (either internally to PLT, or to the wider PTCA as a whole) with care for appropriate confidentiality in situations where employment is a factor.

This option may be particularly appropriate or needed when the issues in question ask for conversation with entire committees or key staff of the PTCA (e.g., CPM, the EP, etc.). This is

not, however, a *required* starting point in these more clearly structural or systemic cases, so thoughtfulness around the needed level of support for a conversation is still important. Likewise, this more formal process can be used between individuals when particularly critical or when prior attempts at conversation have failed to transform outcomes.

Relevant parties:

- the Applicant
- the Other Party
- Mediator
- Two (2) “at-large” Witnesses from the PTCA who may have cultural or social insight relevant to the conversation
- **Optional:** an invited representative from the Synod or another *presbytery* in the Synod (EP, etc.) where wider issues for the Presbytery system as a whole are at play
- Follow up:
  - Mediator reports to COM and PLT that the conversation occurred
  - Parties *will* be shared with a high-level summary of outcomes prepared by the mediator
  - COM and PLT will either:
    - A) retain this information as confidential internal awareness, not for disseminating beyond the room
    - B) choose to share an appropriate level of information with the entire presbytery
      - This sharing is *required* in cases where commitments to change have been made by a committee or group within the PTCA
      - ARTF will be notified: the policy was used

**Possible redress actions may include (but are not limited to) any/or several of the following:**

- The representative member(s) or ARTF will then follow with recommendations for follow-up actions of redress and growth
  - Trainings
    - Followed by coffee with a member of ARTF (or ARTF’s designee) to discuss your learnings/takeaways from the training and how it applies to the recent issue
  - Acknowledgement of harm caused
    - What should it include and to whom is it said/presented
- Accountability
  - Completion of these steps will be overseen by a relevant body (committee or otherwise) at the next higher level of the PC(USA).
  - Every time this process is used it should be reported to ARTF (by the presbytery witnesses) so that ARTF can assess policy usefulness, monitor for issues of

similarity (which could reveal patterns in our common life) , and follow up with participants in the process (to hear their experiences of the process to inform policy review).

- ARTF is responsible for maintaining records of the processes undertaken including who was involved in each process.

- Use Cases

- Commission On Ministry (COM), Early Intervention and Mediation (EIM), Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM), and Staff - will re-reference and use this policy as part of their addressing any situation where misuse of power issues are named.

\*\*\*This Policy must be reviewed at least every 5 years by the Antiracism Task Force (ARTF) in consultation with the Presbytery Leadership Team (PLT).