

Resolution of Christian Witness in Support of New Hampshire Conference
United Church of Christ Congregations
Awakening to Racial Justice

Proposed by the Racial Justice Mission Group of the Justice and Witness Ministry of New Hampshire Conference United Church of Christ.

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Summary: This resolution is a call to the churches of the New Hampshire Conference to take action in undoing racism, including both individual acts of racial bigotry and systemic racism.

Background: There is an illusion that New Hampshire does not have a race problem since the percentage of residents of European descent (White) 93.8% vastly outnumbers people of color, particularly, people of African descent (Black) 1.5%. In fact, according to the USA census, in New Hampshire, the total percentage of people of color (minorities) in NH is 8.6% which includes biracial and multiracial children and adults. Yet, there are ongoing incidences of racism in New Hampshire both documented and ignored, such as:

- ✓ the death threats against a teen of African descent at Merrimack Valley Regional High School because he kneeled during the National Anthem;
- ✓ the attempted hanging of a biracial child in Claremont;
- ✓ the bullying and physical abuse against a biracial child on the bus in Oyster River School District;
- ✓ letters to the editor questioning the existence of White Privilege;
- ✓ people of color being followed in stores and considered suspicious and often being asked to leave (some stories have made the newspapers, but many more instances are not publicized);
- ✓ disproportionate incarceration of people of color in New Hampshire (the rate of incarceration per 100,000 people by race is 336 White; 954 Hispanic; 1143 American Indian and Native Alaskan; 2241 Black);
- ✓ a UCC pastor of African American descent being denied officiating at a funeral in the church she serves;
- ✓ and the visible absence of people of color in our congregations and in the leadership of our congregations in the New Hampshire Conference.

In New Hampshire, racism is pervasive in ways White people do not always see because it has been so much a part of our predominant White culture. This resolution invites us to go deeper into the implicit biases and cultural White supremacy that feed the illusion that New Hampshire does not have a race problem since there are not many

people of color in our congregations and state. How can we more fully become the inclusive Beloved Community of Jesus' Kin-dom?

Definitions:

- ✓ Prejudice is belief about other races based on incomplete and inaccurate information learned from a culture of White supremacy.
- ✓ Bigotry is a form of prejudice paired with individual actions that carry the negative side of prejudgment contrary to our Baptismal vows.
- ✓ Racism is prejudice coupled with power to oppress or discriminate against a people. Racism exists to maintain power and control of one group over another; to determine who is normal and who is abnormal; and to decide who gets resources and who does not.

Rationale

Whereas in Genesis 1:26, 27 God said, "Let us bring forth humanity in our image, according to our likeness...so God created humankind in [God's] image, in the image of God [God] created them; male and female [God] created them," and there is nothing in our foundational understanding of humanity created by God that excludes any human being from being made in the image of God, and there is no reference to skin color;

Whereas in Galatians 3:27-28 Paul writes: "As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Gentile; there is no longer slave or free; there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus;"

Whereas the second commandment in the Gospels (Matthew 22:39, Mark 12:31, Luke 10:27) is "Love your neighbor as yourself," and throughout the Hebrew Scriptures and New Testament, there are numerous verses about loving others, and none of these verses consider anyone made in the image of God as "The Other," and othering is never promoted by the Scriptures;

Whereas the Sacrament of Baptism is the universal acceptance into the Church of Jesus Christ that makes all of us in the New Hampshire Conference part of a wider ecumenical family, and Christians are bound to receive as a brother or sister in Christ with full equality and participation in the leadership of the church all people, regardless of how much melanin in their skin which determines color;

Whereas our baptismal vows include the promises "to be Christ's disciple, to follow in the way of our Savior, to resist oppression and evil, and to show love and justice;"

Whereas race is a societal construct dividing people into distinct groups based on the amount of melanin in our skin, regardless of human ability or need, and is meant to maintain the power of White people;

Whereas we have not understood the role of New Hampshire in the slave trade and as enslavers, nor appreciated the contributions of African Americans to the economy and culture of NH over hundreds of years;

Whereas if one suffers from racism, we all suffer because our humanity is bound together;

Therefore, be it resolved that the churches of the New Hampshire Conference United Church of Christ be encouraged to make intentional efforts to become informed about and engage in ongoing study of White privilege, systemic racism, and the hidden history of the presence of African Americans in New Hampshire and their contributions to our communities.

Be it further resolved the New Hampshire Conference calls upon all United Church of Christ Churches in New Hampshire and congregants to become Interrupters in the continued cycle of prejudice, bigotry, and racism. To be an Interrupter is to take action including, but not limited to:

- Learning with white friends and family about White privilege, White fragility, and White supremacy,
- Learning with your own children through children's stories about racism in age appropriate ways,
- Lifting up stories of African Americans and the Black Heritage of New Hampshire,
- Forming partnerships with congregations of People of Color,
- Learning about the history of the NAACP in New Hampshire and supporting it,
- Speaking up whenever you hear a comment or joke that marginalizes People of Color,
- Writing op-eds or letters to the editor about issues of bigotry or racism in your communities,
- Putting a Black Lives Matter sign at your church or on your lawn,
- Doing an inventory of your church to include images of multi-racial people,
- Using your money to support businesses and ministries of People of Color,
- Inviting a member of the Racial Justice Mission Group to present a program in your congregation. The program could include many options from a selected movie with reflection to a programmed discussion or guest sermon.

Be it further resolved the churches of the New Hampshire Conference United Church of Christ be encouraged to become allies with People of Color in challenging race-based injustices in New Hampshire in criminal justice, environmental degradation, economic deprivation, and exclusion from full participation in our communities of faith.

Be it further resolved that the New Hampshire Conference United Church of Christ declare itself to be a Racial Justice Conference and charge the Racial Justice Mission Group to create a process, approved by the Board of Directors, by which local

congregations can be designated as Racial Justice Churches of the United Church of Christ.

Implementation:

The Racial Justice Mission Group of the New Hampshire Conference United Church of Christ will take the lead in supporting and monitoring implementation of this Resolution as part of its annual programmatic action plan and budget and also calls upon the Board of Directors, Conference Ministers and Association leaders to play an active role in building awareness of this Resolution and encouraging and guiding its implementation throughout the Conference.