

NPC's Statement on Social Justice

Newton Presbyterian Church is deeply committed to the cause of ending systemic racism and social injustice in America and around the world. This position is aligned with that of our denomination, the PC(USA).

“God sends the Church to work for justice in the world: exercising its power for the common good; dealing honestly in personal and public spheres; seeking dignity and freedom for all people...” - PC(USA) *Book of Order*, W-5.0304

The PC(USA) has adopted the Belhar Confession and the Confession of 1967 to reflect these beliefs. Links to each are provided below.

Belhar Confession:

<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/Confession-of-Belhar-text-2016.pdf>

Confession of 1967:

<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/confess671.pdf>

“To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.” - Proverbs 21:3



ADDRESSING YOUR QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS REGARDING OUR STANCE

Why are we saying that “Presbyterians Affirm Black Lives Matter”?

Simply put: because Black lives do indeed matter. They/we matter to God, which means they/we should matter to God's people.

Facing Racism: A Vision of the Intercultural Community, the PC(USA) Churchwide Antiracism Policy, first adopted in 1999 and revised in 2016, proclaims the following:

“While recognizing that racism victimizes many different racial ethnic groups, we acknowledge its unique impact on the African American community. Given the particular forms that anti-Black racism has taken in the United States of America both historically (including slavery and Jim Crow) and today (including mass incarceration, disproportionate policing, economic inequality, and continuing acts of racially oriented violence and hate), we state clearly: GOD LOVES BLACKNESS. Too many have denied this basic truth for too long. Our choice to align ourselves with love and not hate requires both a rejection of racism and a positive proclamation that God delights in Black lives.”

But don't *all* lives matter?

Saying unequivocally that “Black Lives Matter” in no way means that all lives do not matter. It is rather an acknowledgment that many lives – specifically Black lives – are systemically devalued. As a community that tries to follow Jesus, we proclaim that such a devaluation of our siblings is an affront to the Living God. The *Confession of Belhar* reminds us “that God, in a world full of injustice and enmity, is in a special way the God of the destitute, the poor and the wronged.” Specificity toward Black lives is necessary, particularly in this moment, so that we may acknowledge and address the inequities that prevent the whole community from living as if all lives matter.

Does that mean we are claiming affiliation with the Black Lives Matter organization?

As an organization, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has no affiliation or official status with the Black Lives Matter Movement. Presbyterians across the country are members of Black Lives Matter Global Network chapters, and many congregations actively support BLM efforts in their local communities.

I'm sorry, but I just cannot agree with supporting the Black Lives Matter organization.

We understand there are those in our communion who do not agree with positions of the Black Lives Matter Movement as they understand them. Presbyterians have always been invited to use discernment in matters of faith and practice, understanding that [“God alone is Lord of the conscience.”](#) We have never been required to be in lockstep with matters such as these.

.
. .

However, in our discernment we must be careful that we do not expect that we, a majority-white institution, may determine the path of liberation and equity for Black people, nor should we expect that we may “correct” the goals and methodologies developed by any community we seek to support. In all justice efforts, we must be led by the ones who are impacted. Black Lives Matter provides a way forward formulated for and by Black people. And we need not wait for complete agreement with every position before we act in ways that are loving, bold and (again) directed by the communities with whom we want to align.

I fear that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is getting too political and hopping onto the latest bandwagon.

Presbyterians have long been “political.” Civic engagement has always been part of the life of the church.

.
. .

But before all these things, Christians were calling Jesus “Lord,” which is a civic designation. Christianity is inherently political. The word “political” has its root in the Greek word for “people.” Jesus commanded us to love God and neighbor. Our faith can never be extricated from our concerns for people.

Affirming that Black Lives Matter is very much in line with who we are as Presbyterians, and while the gospel of Jesus Christ is political, it is not partisan. It is not in service to any one political party or leaning, but challenges all of us to have righteous relationships with one another. We believe that justice for the oppressed is not and should not be a partisan value. Justice is a gospel value, one that all who claim Jesus as Lord should hold. We may have different ideas of how to live into the value, but as Christians we are beholden to it.