



Chapel in the Pines Presbyterian Church



August 20, 2020

Pastoral Letter on Anti-Racism Efforts at Chapel in the Pines

This is the motion passed by our session on Monday, August 17, 2020.

Chapel in the Pines will make a public witness in our immediate neighborhood that we are a community that stands for anti-racism.

Session requests that each of the standing Committees develop one, or more, specific strategies in support of the overall goal to make a public witness for anti-racism. Each strategy will be linked to one, or more, of the three "W's" of our Church's mission statement (Welcome, Worship, and Witness).

In addition to highlighting it for your attention, I wanted to spell out the practical implications of this action.

Roughly two dozen church members recently completed a 21 Day workshop on anti-racism. As a result of this training, these individuals looked for direction in terms of channeling newfound knowledge into concrete actions.

I believe that anti-racism initiatives shall be most effective if enacted through the existing leadership structures of the church. Rather than thinking of these efforts as separate from the mission of the church, the goal is to incorporate stances against racism into the life of our congregation.

Possible general strategies could include, but would not need to be limited to:

- Engaging in interracial justice ministry by working with community partners to identify and address at least one local issue affecting the quality of life in communities of color, such as equity in education, housing, economic opportunity, access to a clean and healthy environment.
- Engaging Chapel in the Pines' members in anti-racism activities through "regular" events, such as book studies, committee meetings, and fellowship events.
- Promoting programs that allow Chapel in the Pines' members to creatively share, via artistic expressions, their personal experiences with race.
- Providing expressions of racial diversity in our children's and youth curriculum.
- Amplifying and supporting Black voices by identifying and becoming a part of local anti-racism organizations with Black leaders.
- Building upon our relationship with Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church by creating new ministerial partnerships.

Following the death of George Floyd, I wrote a pastoral letter in which I cited author Ibram X. Kendi's claim that the heartbeat of anti-racism is confession. I also quoted *If we say we have no sin, then the truth is not in us.* (1 John 1:8).

I see this call to action from session as the next step. After we have named what is wrong, we seek to do what is right. God has told us what is required: to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly (Micah 6:8). The challenge is in the details. What does anti-racism in action look like for our church?

Every week since my first letter about anti-racism, I've had conversation and prayer with Rev. Neal of Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church. Notice I use his official title. Titles are important in his tradition and I want to be respectful. But it is also true that I'm used to being called Andrew. Even at my graduate schools, the professors simply went by their first names. So, in addition to some awkwardness around using such titles, I've also forgotten, accidentally calling Rev. Neal by his first name. He has been very gracious.

But this week, something else happened. He called me "brother" and I responded with "brother" and it felt right. He ended his conversation with this: "Brother, I think we're on to something."

In that hope,
Andrew
andrew@citppc.org