



THE RACIAL ETHNIC

# TORCH

Volume 27, Issue 2, Fall 2017



GROW | TRANSFORM | EMPOWER | LEAD | DEVELOP



**A message from the director,  
Rhashell D. Hunter**

Racial Ethnic & Women’s Ministries, envisions a world in which all communities have equal voice, fully participate in church and society, through intercultural ministries, leadership development, racial justice and reconciliation, women’s empowerment, church growth, and revitalization and transformation. Our goals are: ending racism, empowering women and building intercultural communities.

One of our strategies is to provide cultural humility training to groups in the church. Cultural humility is the ability to understand, appreciate, communicate and interact with persons from other cultures, races, genders, gender identities, and belief systems different from one’s own, in order to effectively engage in ministry with God’s diverse people. Cultural humility is essential in building coalitions of intercultural people who join together in a faith community to serve Jesus Christ in the world.

A collective goal in Racial Ethnic & Women’s Ministries is to create an awareness of institutional racism in the church and create an environment where racial ethnic, new immigrant, and women Presbyterians in congregations, mid councils and other groups can serve fully in ministry and leadership. Awareness of privilege and practicing cultural humility will help us to reach the vision of God’s intercultural community.

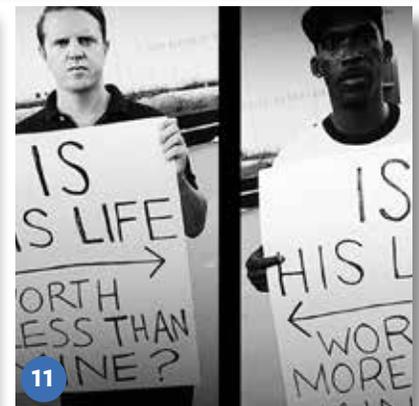
The call to live as an intercultural community is rooted in the Bible. Scripture consistently portrays God as recognizing the value and worth of human beings, affirming our inherent dignity, and calling us to recognize and honor the image of God in one another. God sent Jesus to break down cultural barriers, affirm God’s love for all people, forgive our sin, reconcile us to God and one another, and invite us to new and abundant life.

In the pages that follow, you will read more about antiracism and cultural humility. Join with us and pray with us, as we seek to serve God in the world, remembering the words of Peter, in Acts 10:34-35, “I now realize that it is true that God treats everyone on the same basis. Whoever fears God and does what is right is acceptable to God, no matter what race they belong to.” Thanks be to God!

# THE RACIAL ETHNIC TORCH

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## Save the Date

### **January 31-February 3, 2018, Association of Presbyterian Church Educators (APCE),**

*Louisville, KY*

Connect and learn about leadership and recruitment opportunities in the PC(USA). Participate in a forum on Racial Ethnic, New Immigrant & Women's Leadership Development on January 31 from 1-2:30 pm. Join Racial Ethnic Leadership Development & Recruitment in the Market Place at exhibit booth #302. Contact Jieun Kim Han at [jieun.han@pcusa.org](mailto:jieun.han@pcusa.org).

### **December 30-January 1, 2018, Middle Eastern Immigrants Retreat, Mideast Church of Pasadena, CA**

For more information please contact Magdy Girgis at [Magdy.girgis@pcusa.org](mailto:Magdy.girgis@pcusa.org).

### **January 26- 28, 2018, Youth Snow Retreat, Mideast Church of New Jersey, NJ**

For more information please contact Magdy Girgis at [Magdy.girgis@pcusa.org](mailto:Magdy.girgis@pcusa.org).

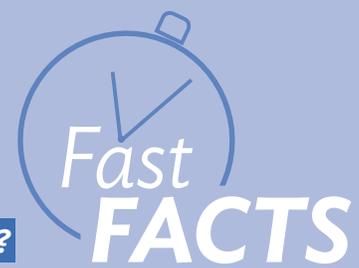
### **February 19-22, 2018, Korean Ministry Pastors'**

*Conference, Atlanta, GA*

Korean pastors from across the country will gather to discuss issues impacting Korean churches in college towns throughout the U.S.

### **March 12-14, 2018, Coordinating Committee for Korean American Presbyteries, Louisville, KY**

Participants will include executive presbyters, stated clerks, and the moderators of the three non-geographic Korean mid councils as well as staff from the Office of Korean Emerging Ministries and the Office of the General Assembly. Contact Moongil Cho, at [moongil.cho@pcusa.org](mailto:moongil.cho@pcusa.org)



### **Did You Know?**

- ❖ Racial Ethnic & New Immigrant Intercultural Ministries (formerly The Racial Ethnic Unit) was established in 1987 in the reunited Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). It was designed to develop and implement ministries and programs related to the issues of race in church and society.
- ❖ Staff in Racial Ethnic & Women's Ministries speak 9 languages, including English, Spanish, Korean, Chinese, Taiwanese, Mandarin, Arabic, Hausa and Igbo.
- ❖ Our constituents in new immigrant ministries represent 22 nationalities speaking 18 languages and dialects.
- ❖ The mandate of Racial Ethnic & New Immigrant Intercultural Ministries (formerly The Racial Ethnic Unit) is "to do justice,... love kindness and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8). The mandate had two interrelated focal points: doing justice and strengthening congregations (see G.A. Minutes, 1993, A. Assigned Responsibilities 35.001, **bolding added**).

**On the front cover of each *Racial Ethnic Torch*, you will see our mantra: *Grow, Transform, Empower, Lead, and Develop*.** The core ministry and the purpose of our work in the Racial Ethnic & New Immigrant Intercultural Ministries office is:

- **Church Growth**, with a focus on new worshipping communities
- **Transformation** of existing congregations
- **Social Justice and Empowerment**
- **Intercultural Ministries**
- **Leadership Development**, with a focus on developing racial ethnic, women, and young adult leaders.

Thus, our mantra is: *Grow, Transform, Empower, Lead, and Develop*. The Racial Ethnic & New Immigrant Intercultural Ministries offices *equip, connect, and inspire* racial ethnic and new immigrant worshipping communities and develop and empower racial ethnic and new immigrant leaders. The ministry area does this through training, coaching, resource development, leadership development institutes, networking, and providing grants to congregations, and communities, racial ethnic schools and colleges, and racial ethnic and immigrant members and leaders. In Racial Ethnic & Women's Ministries, we engage the church in its mission to become more diverse and inclusive of racial, ethnic, cultural, and language groups, and we equip women for leadership in all ministries of the church.

## STATED CLERK'S STATEMENT:

# 'ARE WE COMPLICIT IN THE RACISM OF THE ALT-RIGHT?'

Nelson: 'Proclaimers and hearers of the gospel must engage this uncomfortable issue that damages the soul of our country'

"All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you." (John 14:25-26)

**WE BELIEVE** that any teaching which attempts to legitimate such forced separation by appeal to the gospel, and is not prepared to venture on the road of obedience and reconciliation, but rather, out of prejudice, fear, selfishness and unbelief, denies in advance the reconciling power of the gospel, must be considered ideology and false doctrine. (Excerpt from *The Confession of Belhar*)

White supremacy raised its head and occupied a weekend of the news. We are reeling as a nation from President Trump's cursory statement that failed to aggressively condemn the existence of the alt-right and their promotion of vitriolic racial rhetoric and white supremacy. No longer can we make statements of denial that racial hatred and bigotry are isolated occurrences in our society. We witnessed the blatant actions of white supremacists giving declaration to their views of dominance, control and superiority in

the streets of Charlottesville, a prestigious university town in Virginia. If the espousal of white supremacy was not enough, we now know that James Alex Fields Jr. of Maumee, Ohio is the driver of the car that killed one person and injured dozens more in the name of white supremacy. These occurrences are the result of a protest organized by the alt-right to maintain a statue of another white supremacist, Robert E. Lee.

The handprint of racism is all over the United States in the 21st century. My question is: Where are we in the Church with the racist attitudes that have now been given an extreme voice from the highest offices in the land – both governmental and corporate? Where are the modern-day prophets – not simply in the streets and on television, but in local communities, organizing for a new day in the United States?

These rhetorical questions are a way of simply asking: What did you preach to your congregation this past weekend? Did you preach a prophetic word of liberation addressing the context, content and consequences of our urgency to act in these times, or did you preach on Sunday's lectionary text about Jesus walking on water?

The lectionary text failed to presage that white supremacy in

the United States would raise its ugly head on national television the day before we had to preach. However, for some pastors who encounter white supremacy every day, the preaching transition was not a shock. Changing sermon titles, tweaking Scripture readings and even discarding a sermon and starting over at midnight or hours before worship are a part of the contextual reality we face. Having lived as a child through the civil rights activity of my father, uncles and other clergy, I know that this strain of white supremacy in the United States is nothing new. New African-American pastors and others of color have adjusted their sermon preparation in response to Trayvon Martin's Saturday (midnight) verdict; the Emanuel AME prayer meeting/Bible study shooting (midweek); the Walter Scott shooting by police (Saturday afternoon) and the countless numbers of detention lockups, deportations and police-sanctioned violence against their communities, including new immigrants. Midnight sermon challenges are not new. As a matter of faith, some do not even write sermons until midnight on Saturday. This is not an issue of laziness, but the overwhelming contextual realities of the community make it difficult to



Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, The Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II, reminded the Church that it could no longer make statements of denial concerning racial hatred and bigotry following the Charlottesville, VA incident.

even carve out time to give 20 hours weekly to preaching/study time. In these cases their preaching is shaped by an overwhelming context of communal chaos.

President Trump affirmed this past weekend (August 12, 2017) that white supremacy is not simply grounded in individual acts, but is often sanctioned by the complicity of systems that provide support through their silence and well-crafted statements that fail to name the structural “isms” of our society. Therefore, structural racism is deeply connected, even within the church. We are complicit through what we do and refuse to do. Therefore, to have ignored the issues of white supremacy and racism in our delivery of the Word of God this weekend was to be complicit with the very acts in Charlottesville. I know this may feel like an unfair judgment, given all of the pressures that we face in juggling church and personal responsibilities. However, we are always judged as leaders of the church (clergy, laity and baptized members). Someone sat in the pew yesterday seeking a contextual understanding of Scripture related to the events of this past week while trying to make sense of it all. If

we did not address this issue, then we did not faithfully interpret the gospel message that was relevant in our cultural context as a nation of people. If we turned only to the lectionary to expound upon the miracle of Jesus walking on water without giving a contextual exegesis on the rise of the alt-right in the United States and preservation of the white supremacist call to protect the statue of Robert E. Lee, then we were complicit in their behaviors.

Jesus reminds us in the gospel of John, *“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father and he will give you another Advocate to be with you forever”* (John 14:15–16). This word advocate comes from the Greek word *advocare*, which means to “stand beside or stand with.” Its connotation is akin to a lawyer standing beside a client. Jesus is preparing them to live a life in faith without his physical presence, while reminding them that the spiritual presence that guided him will still be with them; will stand beside them; will be an advocate for them. We use the words justice advocacy to explain the power of walking beside the victimized in our society. Racism represents a historic ill and

victimization of people of color in this nation. It is a cancer in the soul of our country that can be driven out only by love. This love makes both the believer and nonbeliever uncomfortable, because it causes us to recognize that we can do more when we take our eyes off ourselves and place them on the Almighty.

White supremacy will not be eradicated until faith leaders become willing to risk their very lives (professional and otherwise) for the sake of the gospel. The Scriptures remind us that “Whoever tries to keep their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life will preserve it” (Luke 17:33). Our denomination must be willing to lose its life for the sake of eradicating more than 400 years of white supremacy in the United States. Our great celebration of the Belhar Confession at the 222nd General Assembly was a joyous occasion and signaled to the world that we are prepared to begin a new journey of turning the world upside down, by engaging our (PCUSA’s) complicity in racism.

An excerpt from the Belhar Confession states: “We believe that any teaching which attempts to legitimate such forced separation by appeal to the gospel, and is not prepared to venture on the road of obedience and reconciliation, but rather, out of prejudice, fear, selfishness and unbelief, denies in advance the reconciling power of the gospel, must be considered ideology and false doctrine.”

The behaviors and ideologies of racial superiority are learned. Dylann Roof was 21 years old when he wore an apartheid patch on his vest the night he killed parishioners in Bible study/prayer meeting at Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina. Roof was born in 1994. He was too young to understand what the patch represented without the assistance of others. Therefore,

*continued on page 14*

# BIG TENT RACE, RECONCILIATION AND REFORMATION PHOTOS

This year's Big Tent conference theme was Race, Reconciliation, and the Reformation. Through plenary events, Bible study, workshops, and worship, attendees were challenged and renewed by the power of the gospel to overcome current realities of anxiety, division, and inequality.

Held on the campus of Washington University, Big Tent offered workshops on issues facing

the church and society today. Racial Ethnic & Women's Ministries (RE&WM) offered pre and post-conference events and workshops.

Attendees were led in Bible study led by Dr. Eric Barreto of Princeton Theological Seminary and heard from local church leaders about the struggles the St. Louis community faces around issues of inequality.

Here are photos of RE&WM workshops and other Big Tent events.

1. The workshop Disrupting Racism: Building the Intercultural Community was attended by 50 percent more people than had registered. Workshop participants engaged in one-on-one discussions.

2. Young adults ages 19-35 with ethnic backgrounds from five continents participated in the Presbyterian Intercultural Young Adult Network's post-Big Tent Conference.

3. Uplifting music was a part of the Big Tent worship service.

4. The Rev. Dr. Christine Hong of Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary preaching at closing worship.

5. Participants joined together in prayer at the Presbyterian Intercultural Network pre-conference which tackled the difficult subject of race relations in the U.S.

6. Nibs Stoupe, Presbyterian Intercultural Network (PIN) board member, identified seven ways white people and congregations can engage racism at the PIN pre-conference.

7. PC(USA) Stated Clerk the Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson reminded attendees that "God through Jesus Christ is providing us an opportunity at Big Tent to go deep in our theology and faith while renewing our spirits." Nelson greeted attendees following worship service.



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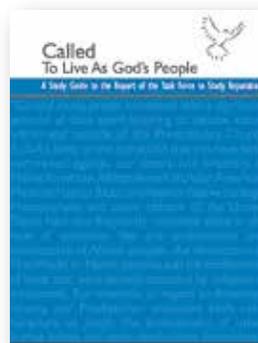
# ANTIRACISM/RACIAL JUSTICE/BELHAR CONFSSION

## PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.) RESOURCES

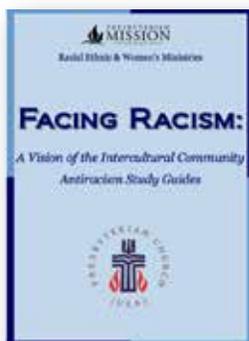
As part of an ongoing campaign to address racial injustice, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is sharing a wealth of antiracism resources — including studies, books and training — to equip the greater church to work against racism. We hope you'll return to this site frequently as links to new resources are added between now and the 223rd General Assembly in June 2018. For additional resources go to [facing-racism.pcusa.org](http://facing-racism.pcusa.org).



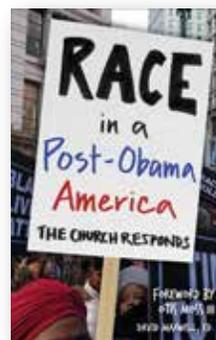
**Facing Racism: A Vision of the Intercultural Community.** The most recent antiracism policy of the PC(USA) was approved by the 222nd General Assembly (2016). [presbyterianmission.org/resource/facing-racism-vision-intercultural-community-churchwide-antiracism-policy/](http://presbyterianmission.org/resource/facing-racism-vision-intercultural-community-churchwide-antiracism-policy/)



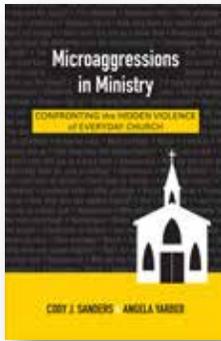
**Called to Live as God's People – A Study Guide to the Report of the Task Force to Study Reparations.** This study guide is intended to acquaint Presbyterians with the contents of the Report of the Task Force to Study Reparations and to help facilitate more extended discussion of the issues raised by the report. [presbyterianmission.org/resource/called-live-gods-people-study-guide-report-task-fo/](http://presbyterianmission.org/resource/called-live-gods-people-study-guide-report-task-fo/)



**Facing Racism: A Vision of the Intercultural Community Study Guides.** This six-session study explores the themes of the PC(USA) antiracism policy approved by the 222nd General Assembly (2016). [presbyterianmission.org/resource/facing-racism-vision-intercultural-community-antiracism-study-guides/](http://presbyterianmission.org/resource/facing-racism-vision-intercultural-community-antiracism-study-guides/)



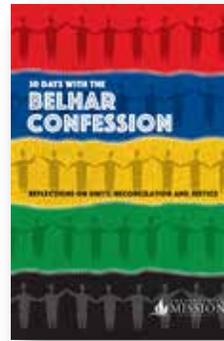
**Race in a Post-Obama America.** This book, edited by David Maxwell offers concerned Christians the chance to clarify terms and issues around racism and discern how to respond. Westminster John Knox Press. Available at [pcusastore.com](http://pcusastore.com).



**Microaggressions in Ministry: Confronting the Hidden Violence of Everyday Church.**

Written by Cody J. Sanders and Angela Yarber for Westminster John Knox Press, this book explores microaggressions: subtle slights, insults, and indignities expressed to persons of varied minority statuses within the context of ministry and the life of the church.

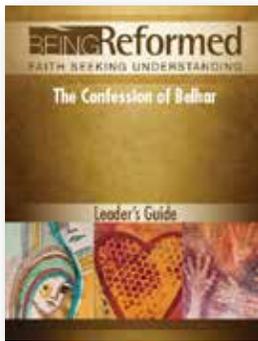
*Available at [pcusastore.com](http://pcusastore.com).*



**30 Days with the Belhar Confession.**

This series of daily devotions reflecting on the Belhar Confession weaves together Scripture passages and the Confession's timely themes of unity, reconciliation and justice. Presbyterian Peacemaking Program. PDS#: 2435816004

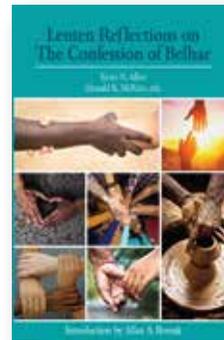
*Available at [pcusastore.com](http://pcusastore.com).*



**The Confession of Belhar.**

Written by Cynthia Holder Rich, this study explores what it means to be a confessional Church and to meet and confess our faith in the face of racism in its various forms. There is a participant's book and leader's guide.

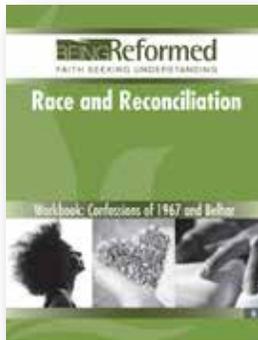
*Available at [pcusastore.com](http://pcusastore.com).*



**Lenten Reflections on The Confession of Belhar.**

Editors Kerri N. Allen and Donald K. McKim have gathered a range of authors to create a devotional on the Belhar Confession that can be used during Lent or at any time. Westminster John Knox Press.

*Available at [pcusastore.com](http://pcusastore.com)*



**Race and Reconciliation: Workbook – Confessions of 1967 and Belhar.**

This study, written by Clifton Kirkpatrick, helps participants claim the ministry of reconciliation in a world and a church deeply divided by race, nation, gender, economic status, and religion.

*Available at [pcusastore.com](http://pcusastore.com).*



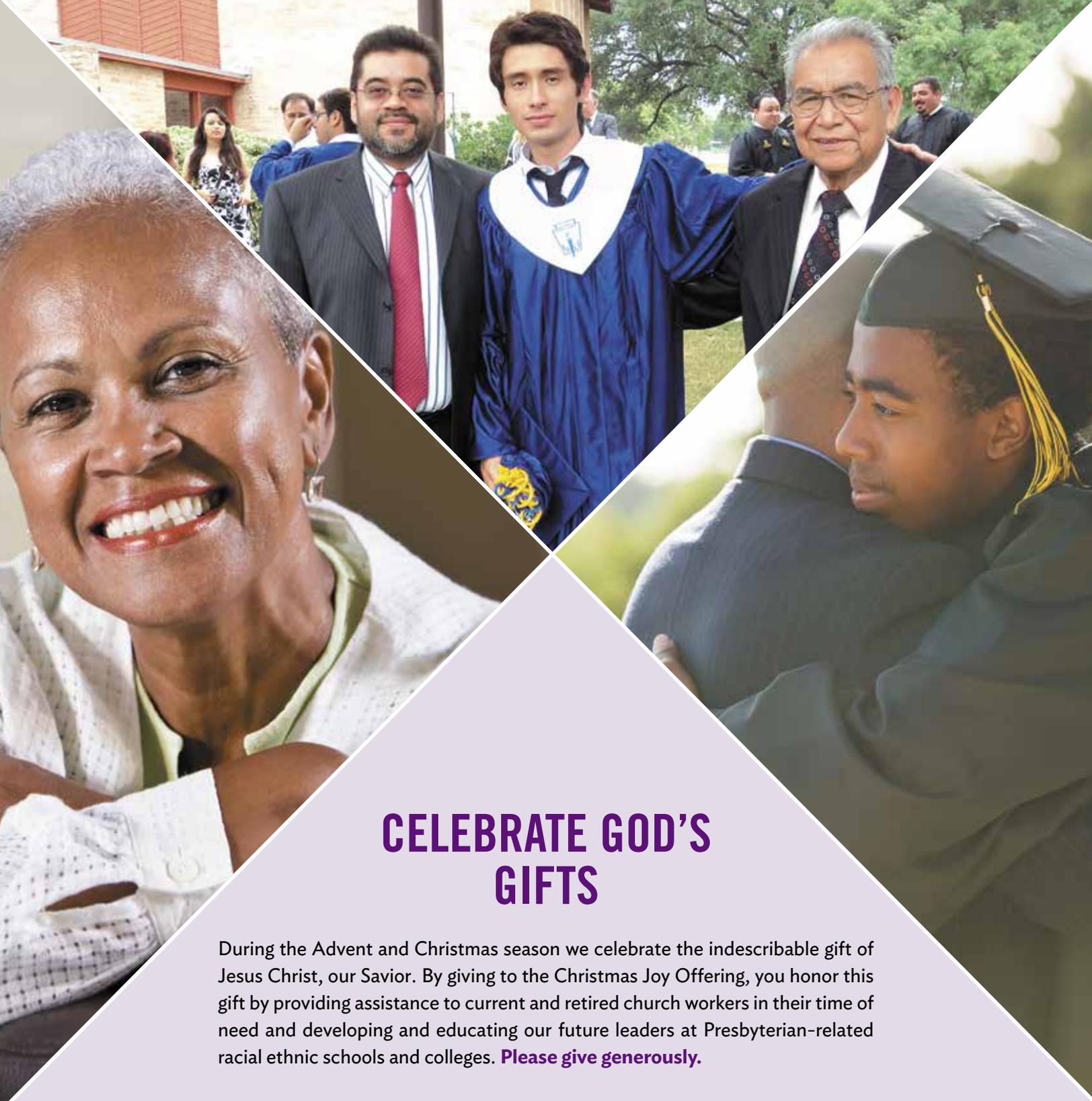
**PC(USA) Web Pages Facing Racism**

<https://facing-racism.pcusa.org/>. Find studies, books, and training, to equip the church for antiracism work.



**Engaging Belhar**

<http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/constitutional-services/belhar/>. Find translations of the Belhar Confession in English, Korean, and Spanish as well as resources for understanding and using the confession.



## CELEBRATE GOD'S GIFTS

During the Advent and Christmas season we celebrate the indescribable gift of Jesus Christ, our Savior. By giving to the Christmas Joy Offering, you honor this gift by providing assistance to current and retired church workers in their time of need and developing and educating our future leaders at Presbyterian-related racial ethnic schools and colleges. **Please give generously.**

***Thanks be to God for this indescribable gift.*** —2 Corinthians 9:15



CHRISTMAS JOY  
SPECIAL OFFERINGS

CHURCH LEADERS—PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE



# PRESBYTERIAN ATTITUDES ON RACE

More emphasis on racial justice  
and worship diversity

Presbyterians perceive more racial discrimination today than 4 years ago

They say people of color have less of a chance than white people —

	2013	2017
• Of getting a good education	54%	62%
• Of getting a good job	34%	57%
• Of getting affordable housing	30%	56%

They also say that people of color are treated worse than white people —

	2013	2017
• In stores and shops	20%	40%
• In dealings with the police	48%	64%
• In courts of law	27%	45%
• On public transportation	7%	20%
• On the job and at work	6%	26%



But congregations and members are now getting more involved in efforts to dismantle racism

Members who say their congregation has made it a priority to become more racially and ethnically diverse

	2013	2017
	25%	34%

Some of the things that **congregations** are doing

- Preaching on racial justice
- Inviting guest preachers of a different race from the majority of members
- Participating in a racial justice class
- Worshiping jointly with a congregation of predominantly a different race

Some of things that **Presbyterian members** are doing

- Belonging, volunteering or giving money to racial justice organizations
- Participating in civil rights protests
- Attending a cultural diversity or anti-racism workshop

Source: Research Services, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). *Race and Ethnicity: The Report of the August 2013 Panel Survey and Race and Ethnicity: The Report of the February 2017 Panel Survey*

The neo-Nazi rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, and the police shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, have helped renew attention on issues of race and ethnicity. Have Presbyterians' attitudes and involvement in these issues changed with the times?

A comparison of results from August 2013 and February 2017 Presbyterian Panel surveys suggests that Presbyterians have changed.

Today, Presbyterians are more involved in racial justice work and more likely to believe there is discrimination against people of color than in 2013.

More Presbyterians today are open to worshiping in a congregation in which people of a racial or ethnic background different from theirs predominate. And more are already part of a congregation trying to diversify its membership.

Because different Presbyterian leaders responded to the two surveys, it is difficult to know definitively whether Presbyterians have become more supportive of racial justice, or whether the composition of Presbyterians has changed. The findings likely reflect a bit of both.

There was no change in the percentages of panelists who are white and people of color. About 9 in 10 Presbyterians are white.

For more information, see the PC(USA) "Facing Racism" website: [facing-racism.pcusa.org](http://facing-racism.pcusa.org).

Perry Chang is a research associate with Research Services for the Presbyterian Mission Agency.

Infographic by Jeffrey Lawrence, publisher of Presbyterians Today.

# LIVING INTO THE CONFESSION OF BELHAR

## Understanding our history, affirming our hope

By Gail Strange and W. Mark Koenig

Racism in the United States of America is nothing new. But to more fully understand it requires knowing our history. Racism has existed in many forms and cultures throughout history. During the U.S. colonial era legally and publicly authorized racial privileges and rights were extended to and enjoyed by white Americans. Those same rights were denied to Native Americans, African-Americans, Asian-Americans and Latino-/Latina-Americans.

The American story of race is not dissimilar to that of South Africa, birthplace of the Confession of Belhar and a place where racism was part of the legal code, institutions and common culture. As a statement of Christian unity in the face of racial discrimination, the Confession of Belhar called racism a sin, not just in South Africa but around the world.

While many laws have changed in an effort to eliminate racism in the United States, racist institutional and cultural practices still exist, making the Confession of Belhar as important in the U.S. today as it was when it was adopted in South Africa in 1986.

### Knowing our history

White Americans, the majority of whom were Protestant, were given exclusive legal privileges related to citizenship, land ownership, education

and voting rights beginning in the 17th century. And throughout the history of this nation, white Americans have institutionalized racial and ethnic discrimination. The United States systemically enacted such practices as slavery, segregation and racial and ethnic discrimination that adversely affected people of color, particularly African-Americans.

Africans were kidnapped from many countries and cultures and imported to the Americas. They were enslaved and subjected to horrific acts of violence and inhumanity, and discrimination against them continued despite the passage of laws that proclaimed their equality.

But they are not the only group to have experienced ongoing discrimination. Native Americans had their land taken and were relegated to reservations in a violent process justified by the Doctrine of Discovery. Many Native American children were forcibly taken from their families, sent to boarding schools, indoctrinated with European values and compelled to dissociate with their native culture and language.

A large group of Hispanics and Latino-as became Americans in 1848 when, at the end of the Mexican-American War, a large part of Mexico became what is now the southwestern United States. The prevailing economic model became

one of debt and peonage that was based on low wages, racial inequality and oppression. The Bracero Program, a guest worker program, also brought millions of Mexicans into the United States to fill labor shortages in agriculture. In recent years people from Mexico and Central America have faced persecution and prosecution in the U.S., where they have sought refuge after fleeing violence in their home countries.

Asian-Americans also have come to the U.S. from many countries and cultures. It is the experience of American racism that binds this diverse community together. In some instances, racism has been experienced specifically by people from a given country. For example, the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882) created a moratorium on Chinese labor immigration. People of Japanese ancestry, many of them United States citizens, were interned during World War II. Recently, the casting of Asians as the “model minority” has sometimes put people of Asian descent in a wedge position between whites and blacks. Racism still affects Asian-Americans.

### Looking at racism today

Legal racial discrimination was largely banned in the mid-20th century and came to be perceived as socially unacceptable and/or morally

repugnant. However, the institutions and structures of previous eras of racism remain staunchly in place. Racism continues to be revealed in socioeconomic inequality as well as employment, education, lending, housing and government. In a report to the United Nations, the U.S. Human Rights Network notes: “Discrimination permeates all aspects of life in the United States and extends to all communities of color.”

A 2016 Pew Research Center survey about views of race and inequality in America found that racial equality still seems far off for many African-Americans. About 4 in 10 blacks are doubtful that the U.S. will ever achieve racial equality. The survey findings reported “profound differences between black and white adults in their views on racial discrimination, barriers to black progress and the prospects for change.”

Racism has been called “America’s original sin,” and the church has been complicit in that sin. The church played a significant part in perpetuating racist practices and divisiveness (see “What Presbyterians Believe,” p. 4). On many occasions Scriptures were used to promote the “rightness” of slavery and oppression.

While the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has taken steps to address racism over the years, most recently the Church has elected to address racism by adding the Confession of Belhar to the Book of Confessions, part of the church’s Constitution. This gives the call for antiracism work both scriptural and confessional authority.

### Living into hope

The Special Committee on the Confession of Belhar recommended that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) add Belhar to its Constitution because the committee believed the clarity of Belhar’s witness to unity, reconciliation and justice might help the PC(USA) speak and act with similar clarity at a time when it



BLACKS LIVE MATTER, GRAPHIC STOCK

White people in the United States have had different legal and cultural privileges from Americans of different skin colors and ethnic backgrounds.

faces division, racism and injustice. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) approved the Confession of Belhar as part of the Book of Confessions at the 222nd General Assembly (2016).

But how does the church live out the Confession of Belhar? One way is to address racism at a national level.

At this year’s Big Tent, racial issues were at the forefront. Before the full conference Racial Ethnic & Women’s Ministries of the Presbyterian Mission Agency sponsored a discussion on diversity in the PC(USA).

Nibs Stroupe, Presbyterian Intercultural Network (PIN) board member and retired pastor of Oakhurst Presbyterian Church in Decatur, Georgia, identified seven ways white people and white congregations can engage racism: recognition, repentance, resistance, resilience, reparations, reconciliation and recovery.

When asked how a white man born in Tennessee who was pastor of three Southern churches developed such a progressive ideology about racism, Stroupe replied, “The church taught me racism. I grew up in a segregated church where the cooks and cleaning staff were the only black people in our church. I also grew up in a home where my mother didn’t allow certain behaviors.

“I could never call black adults by their first names and I could not use the ‘N’ word in our house. And

because my father was not in our home, I came to know a bit of what it felt like to be looked down on or to be marginalized. Other white people in the church taught me to affirm racism and homophobia, but they also helped to understand that we are all God’s children. ... I chose Jesus over racism.”

Sharon Mook, moderator of PIN, said it’s hard to be white in America and not be racist.

“There is a lack of awareness among whites because we are born into racism,” she said. “By this I mean when you’re white, you’re born into a power structure that already exists in this country. The real test comes when you determine how you will participate. ... One can be an active racist, a passive racist or a recovering racist/active antiracist working to change the power structure and their personal behavior.”

The Rev. Dr. Mark A. Lomax, founding pastor of First African Presbyterian Church of Lithonia, Georgia, and author of the report of the 2004 General Assembly task force to study reparations, says we must engage locally and at a personal level.

“One must first understand the race, class and gender division of the church,” he said. “If we study Belhar and practice the themes of Belhar, it would make a tremendous difference in the way we live our lives, the way we do ministry in our churches and the way we can transform communities. People want to see how

you live out the Word.”

Lomax said the transformative principles of Belhar — unity, reconciliation and justice — can have a profound impact on an individual’s life as well as on the community. The church often portrays Jesus as a man of privilege. He’s pictured as a white male. Sermons on his ministry may uphold white, middle-class values and many teachers and preachers ignore the radical economic and health ministries he performed for those in need.

“Our church [First African Presbyterian Church] studied Belhar together this year for Lent,” Lomax said. “We engaged issues of race. We reconnected and were reminded of the issues of racism that exist in this country. We found ourselves asking the question ‘Where is the voice of the white church as we see more and more people of color killed and oppressed?’”

*Gail Strange is director of church and mid council communications for the Presbyterian Mission Agency.*

*W. Mark Koenig is coordinator for racial and intercultural justice in the Mission Agency’s Compassion, Peace & Justice ministry.*

## HIGHLIGHTS OF 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; 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;
- that this unity must become visible so that the world may believe that separation, enmity and hatred between people and groups is sin which Christ has already conquered, and accordingly that anything which threatens this unity may have no place in the church and must be resisted.

### **Therefore, we reject any doctrine**

- which absolutizes either natural diversity or the sinful separation of people in such a way that this absolutization hinders or breaks the visible and active unity of the church, or even leads to the establishment of a separate church formation;
- which professes that this spiritual unity is truly being maintained in the bond of peace while believers of the same confession are in effect alienated from one another for the sake of diversity and in despair of reconciliation;
- which denies that a refusal earnestly to pursue this visible unity as a priceless gift is sin.

For the complete Confession of Belhar: [pcusa.org/belhar-text](http://pcusa.org/belhar-text)

*continued from page 3*

the hatred that took the lives of those persons praying and studying God’s Word was taught to him. His white supremacist thinking was an indoctrination to hate-mongering and a superficial belief that superiority is grounded in race alone. We learned this weekend that there are others who are willing to blatantly carry on the banner of racism even if it means the killing of others. What will you preach and teach in this era about the love of Jesus and the call to love one another? How will you as a leader in the Christian church courageously proclaim the Lord’s name in Spirit and truth for the sake of the kingdom

of God?

I want to thank our co-moderators, Reverends Jan Edmiston and Denise Anderson, for continuing their commitment to challenging the PC(USA) to live into our call of embracing Belhar. They have broadened the awareness of many through their book studies while living into their role of challenging our denomination to be transformers of this present age.

I must also give thanks for the deep work of the racial-ethnic ministries unit of the Presbyterian Mission Agency and the ecumenical witness of the Office of the General

Assembly for continued heavy lifting to implement Belhar within the PC(USA) and beyond. We must witness to a new age regarding race in the United States. Our risk is not in engaging the issue of white supremacy. Our greatest risk is in failing to make every effort possible through the gospel to eradicate racism with the help of the Lord.

Proclaimers and hearers of the gospel must engage this uncomfortable issue that damages the soul of our country. God is calling us to be a viable witness in these times. This requires courage and a deep faith to speak truth in love.

# PRESBYTERIAN CAUCUSES AND COUNCILS LEADERSHIP



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Moderator National Hispanic/  
Latino-a Presbyterian Caucus



**Thomas H. Priest, Jr.,**  
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**Sun Mook Jhee,**  
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**Takako Suzuki Terino,**  
Moderator National Asian  
Presbyterian Council

## Who We are

### Racial Ethnic & Women's Ministries (RE&WM)

#### Racial Ethnic & New Immigrant Intercultural Ministries

African American Intercultural Congregational Support  
Asian Intercultural Congregational Support  
Hispanic/Latino-a Intercultural Congregational Support  
Intercultural Ministries  
Korean Intercultural Congregational Support  
Middle Eastern Intercultural Congregational Support  
Native American Intercultural Congregational Support

#### Racial Ethnic Leadership Development

Mission Program Grants  
Racial Ethnic Leadership Development & Recruitment  
Racial Ethnic Schools and Colleges

#### Women's Leadership Development and Justice Ministries

Racial and Intercultural Justice (a shared office  
with Compassion, Peace and Justice)  
Women's Leadership Development & Young  
Women's Ministries  
In covenant relationship with Presbyterian  
Women, Inc. in the PC(USA)

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### **The Racial Ethnic Torch**

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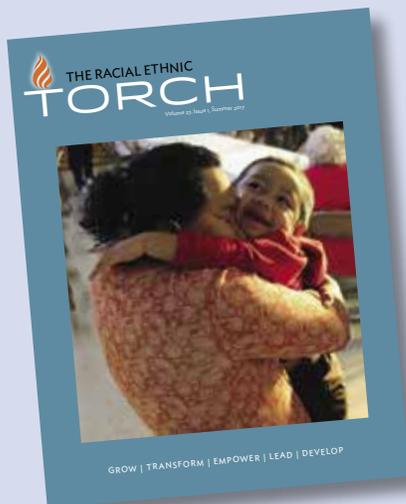
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