



NEW CASTLE PRESBYTERY

"Sparked by Grace to Transform the Church for the Good of the World"

June 10, 2020 (*updated signers as of August 18, 2020*)

Dear Pastors and Session Clerks:

It is all too easy for white churches to believe that racism is not our problem.

But New Castle Presbytery is a "Matthew 25" Presbytery.

We proclaim that racism IS our problem.

We are committed to dismantling structural racism and systemic poverty as part of our commitment as a Matthew 25 Presbytery.

We condemn structural racism in the United States today, even as we acknowledge with profound regret our historical participation in a system that enslaved people because of the color of their skin. For all of his church planting endeavors in the 17th century in the southern part of this presbytery, the Rev. Francis Makemie, regarded as the father of our denomination, held property in human beings. Slavery is a shameful part of our legacy.

We condemn the murder of Mr. George Floyd just as we condemn the lynching of Mr. George White in 1903 and the nine other lynchings that occurred within the bounds of what is today New Castle Presbytery. We acknowledge with deep sadness and regret that Mr. White's lynch mob was incited by a Presbyterian pastor. Lynching is a shameful part of our legacy.

But, we are more than this. We are people convicted and called into redemption. Our Book of Confessions reminds us of this part of our legacy.

From The Confession of 1967 (sections 9.43 and 9.44, inclusive language version):

In each time and place, there are particular problems and crises through which God calls the church to act. The church, guided by the Spirit, humbled by its own complicity and instructed by all attainable knowledge, seeks to discern the will of God and learn how to obey in these concrete situations...

...The church is called to bring all people to receive and uphold one another as persons in all relationships of life: in employment, housing, education, leisure, marriage, family, church, and the exercise of political rights. Therefore, the church labors for the abolition of all racial discrimination and ministers to those injured by it. Congregations, individuals, or groups of Christians who exclude, dominate, or patronize others however subtly, resist the Spirit of God and bring contempt on the faith which they profess.

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Missional Presbyter

Elder Lynette C. Kenton
Treasurer

Rev. Sara Holben
Co-Interim Connectional
Presbyter

Donna L. Scully
Administrator



Elder Bob Schminkey
Co-Interim Connectional
Presbyter

And from The Confession of Belhar (section 10.7):

We believe that the church must stand by people in any form of suffering and need..., and that the church must witness against and strive against any form of injustice, so that justice may roll down like water and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

What is God calling us to do?

We believe that God is calling those of us who are white people **to listen** to the cries of people protesting, people suffering and people who have been shouting about racism for years and years, only to have much of their message go unheard. Now is the time to truly heed those voices.

We believe that God is calling those of us who are white **to learn** about our own complicities in a system of structural racism that puts a knee on the neck of people of color until they cry out, "I can't breathe." From micro-aggressions in our everyday life to how we cast our ballot, we must see all our actions through a lens of structural racism.

We believe that God is calling for people of faith who are white **to confess** that we are complicit in the sin of racism. And as much as people who are white try to be an "anti-racist," and a racial justice ally, we are still steeped in a culture that holds whiteness as the standard, white culture as the norm, and white history as the lens through which we see ourselves. Forgive us, O Lord!

We believe that God is calling those of us who are white pastors and people of faith **to proclaim** from our pulpits and in our congregations that racism IS our problem. "Thoughts and prayers" is no longer enough. We must learn to speak the anguish we feel when we learn of yet another vigilante lynching or police murder, and we must channel that anguish into concrete anti-racism action on the local, state and national levels.

As individuals we cannot end racism alone. We need a community, a church, to offer forgiveness, support, and encouragement.

Presbytery staff is committed to helping to build that community, that new church. In February, ten of us from New Castle joined others from our synod on a trip to Montgomery Alabama for a pilgrimage to civil rights sites and the Equal Justice Initiative. From that experience, we have been sharing resources and will develop more thorough and far-reaching ways we can respond to racism in our congregations and presbytery.

We can all work together to become a Matthew 25 Presbytery. We can work together for the righting of wrongs, justice for all, and an end to racism.

"So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation"

(2 Corinthians 5:17-18)

New Castle Presbytery Staff

The Rev. Tracy Keenan, Missional Presbyter *

The Rev. Sara Holben, Co-Interim Connectional Presbyter

Ruling Elder Bob Schminkey, Co-Interim Connectional Presbyter *

Donna L. Scully, Administrator

Ministers of Word and Sacrament

The Rev. Dr. John Ames, Honorably Retired
The Rev. Susan Bennett, Easton Presbyterian Church
The Rev. Victoria Bethel, St. Andrews Presbyterian Church
The Rev. Tim Bostick, Limestone Presbyterian Church *
The Rev. Steve Brundage, First Presbyterian Church on Newark (6/12/20)
The Rev. Scott Burkley, Honorably Retired
The Rev. Steve Clark, Concord Presbyterian Church
The Rev. Dr. Tom Davis, Honorably Retired
The Rev. Dianne Deming, First Presbyterian Church of Milford
The Rev. Duke Dixon, The Presbyterian Church of Dover *
The Rev. Beth Doty, Honorably Retired
The Rev. Terry Dougherty, Ocean View Presbyterian Church
The Rev. Dr. Lyle Dykstra, Honorably Retired
The Rev. Tom Euston, Rock Presbyterian Church
The Rev. Carol Fisher, New Covenant Presbyterian Church (6/16/20)
The Rev. Miriam Foltz, New Castle Presbyterian Church
The Rev. Caitlan Gartland, Presbyterian Church of Chestertown
The Rev. Dr. Doug Gerdts, Member At-Large
The Rev. Maggie Gillespie, Wicomico Presbyterian Church
The Rev. Douglas Griffin, Westminster Presbyterian Church
The Rev. Dr. Fred Hanna, Community Presbyterian Church
The Rev. Nona Holy, Lumos Campus Ministry (6/10/20)
The Rev. Catherine Jackson, Member At-Large
The Rev. Andy Jacob, Hanover Presbyterian Church (6/10/20)
The Rev. David Jones, Honorably Retired
The Rev. Dr. Gregory Jones, Westminster Presbyterian Church, Wilmington
The Rev. Dr. James Kay, Honorably Retired
The Rev. Eric Koenig-Reinke, Red Clay Creek Presbyterian Church
The Rev. Anne Ledbetter, Chaplain, Heron Point *
The Rev. Dr. Hilary Livingston, Head of Christiana Presbyterian Church
The Rev. Dr. Kimberly Long, Member At-Large
The Rev. Richard Loring, Honorably Retired
The Rev. David Lovelace, Lower Brandywine Presbyterian Church
The Rev. Brad Martin, Trinity Presbyterian Church
The Rev. Peter Maurer, Frankford Presbyterian Church
The Rev. Sam Monte, Makemie Memorial Presbyterian Church
The Rev. Kai Moore, Member At-Large
The Rev. Kate Morgan, Church of the Covenant
The Rev. John Potter, Honorably Retired
The Rev. Kathie Pownall, Member At-Large
The Rev. Barbara Price-Martin, New Hope Counseling
The Rev. Neta Pringle, Vice Moderator, New Castle Presbytery
The Rev. Bob Prior, Honorably Retired

The Rev. Clifford Richards, Honorably Retired
The Rev. Emily Schwenker, In Validated Ministry(6/9/20)
The Rev. Tom Speers, Calvary Presbyterian Church (6/11/20)
The Rev. Beth Thomas, At-Large (6/9/20)
The Rev. Joel Tolbert, Presbyterian Church of Chestertown (6/9/20)
The Rev. Lazare Tshibuabua, Executive Presbyter, Congo Partner/Kananga Presbytery (6/25/20)
The Rev. Bob Undercuffler, Honorably Retired
The Rev. Jenny Warren, Member At-Large
The Rev. Mike Williams, Honorably Retired
The Rev. Gary Willingham-McLain, Elkton Presbyterian Church
The Rev. Tim Woodruff, Member At-Large
The Rev. J. Cameron Yorkston, Honorably Retired (6/11/20)

Ruling Elders/Clerks of Session

Elder Judy Adams, Milford Presbyterian Church
Elder Karen Colwill, Ocean View Presbyterian Church
Elder Candy Dunson, New Castle Presbyterian Church
Elder Katie Gillespie, Head of Christiana Presbyterian Church
Elder Julius Jackson, Community Presbyterian Church *
Elder Ted Koser, First Newark (7/1/20)
Elder Brian Lindgren, New Covenant Presbyterian Church
Elder Fred Massie, Community Presbyterian Church
Elder Rourke Moore, Community Presbyterian Church *
Elder Susan Prior, West Nottingham Presbyterian Church
Elder Marlene Quinn, Ocean View Presbyterian Church (6/24/20)
Elder Sandy Sarjeant, Red Clay Creek Presbyterian Church
Elder Bill Standiford, West Nottingham Presbyterian Church
Elder Ruth Vietri-Green, The Presbyterian Church of Chestertown
Elder David Wall, Coolspring Presbyterian Church

Commissioned Ruling Elders (CRE's)

Pastor Tim Arnold, Hanover Presbyterian Church
Pastor Mark Douyard, Dover Presbyterian Church ((6/11/20)
Pastor Mawuna Gardesey, Olivet Presbyterian Church *
Pastor Anne Gunn, Perryville Presbyterian Church
Pastor Ginny Jones, Church of the Covenant
Pastor Rourke Moore, Community Presbyterian Church *
Pastor Pam Ruarke, Faith Chapel Presbyterian Church (6/22/20)

Sessions

Concord Presbyterian Church (8/5/2020)
Westminster (Rehoboth) Presbyterian Church (7/21/20)

*Denotes Member of the Montgomery Pilgrimage Group