



June 15, 2020

Dear Kin in Christ,

On Thursday evening, your Regional Board and church members whose experience brought special insight to the discussion met for prayer, conversation, and sharing around the issues of systemic racism and persistent oppression and violence against Black lives. It was an honest discussion where many shared their concerns and confusions, deep pain and hurt not only of witnessing recent events in the US and here in Canada, but their personal experiences of racism as well

Today we write to you not simply to respond to protests and demonstrations, but to reaffirm the Disciples' commitment to be an Anti-Racist, Pro-Reconciling Church. We write to bring into sharp focus that we have within our Canadian Disciples community people from myriad cultures. We are Black, Indigenous, Asian, Spanish, Caribbean, Haitian, South American, Filipino, French, Pacific Asian, Mexican, Central American, Congolese, Middle Eastern, South African, Metis, and European. We recognize that so many Black, and People of Colour (BIPOC) have been and continue to be targets of racist acts and systems of oppression, and that now the majority of white people are witnessing video footage of just how dangerous it is to be Black in our society today. Now, we cannot unsee how Black people are the targets of racial profiling and excessive use of force, even when they are peacefully protesting for justice against these issues. As a denomination, we condemn all acts of violence perpetrated against Black lives and declare that Black Lives Matter! We honour and stand with our Black members, pastors, and leaders and all those in solidarity with them both here in Canada and in the US who are fighting for racial justice. We support their right to peacefully protest racial injustice

Friends, although we declared more than twenty years ago that one of the Four Priorities that would guide us through the new millennium would be to be an Anti-Racist, Pro-Reconciling Church, we have not done enough to end the sin of racism in our church and in our communities. We lament that we have been slow to acknowledge and actively dismantle white privilege and white supremacy, and we have not invested enough of our time and resources to truly live into our Gospel-directed mandate. We confess that we have too often paid only lip-service in the fight to end racism. It is long overdue that we live into this commitment and act.

The Canadian Region is actively working on a plan to provide resources, education, and opportunities for greater communication and understanding among Canadian Disciples in the days and months ahead. We will be providing opportunities to participate in "caucus conversations" so that people of different ethnic groups may speak with one another around issues connected with white supremacy, white privilege, and anti-black racism, in spaces that allow them to freely express themselves and ask questions. In addition, we are collecting and will be sharing resources (books, articles, podcasts, workshops, etc) for use by individuals and congregations that focus on white privilege and racism in

Canada. We are also working on resources to help unpack some of the specific language used in the Anti-racism movement to help clear up confusion and uncertainty. We also commit to looking at our founding documents, policies, and practices to ensure that they do not erase the contributions and leadership of Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour in the history and life of our church, that they are not discriminatory nor anti-racist.

As we work on these commitments for the church, we ask that all congregations, members, and participants read and take time to discuss the numerous letters that have been sent to you from the College of Regional Ministers, the General Minister and President, and other General Ministries. Read and discuss them with a heart that is open to where God is leading in this critical time. Read and discuss them prayerfully and courageously, making space for Spirit to move, convict, and heal. And finally, consider adding your name to this growing list, affirming your commitment to Pro-Reconciliation and Anti-Racism as a mission priority of our church found here <https://disciples.org/congregations/we-need-to-be-the-church-we-say-we-are/>.

Friends, we are called to be “a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world.” We cannot live into Jesus’ call that we be one when so many Black kin are suffering and dying because of racism, silence, and inaction. The church is called to declare freedom to the captive. The church is called to declare the year of the Lord’s favour to those who suffer. We are Christ’s church...this is our call. We are Christ’s church...we are called to act. We are Christ’s church...we are called to love one another in ways that our Black, Indigenous and People of Colour actually feel loved. Let it be so.

On behalf of your Regional Board,

Peace, Jen

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jen Garbin', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rev Dr Jennifer Garbin  
Regional Minister, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
In the US & Canada, Canadian Region