



MEDIA RELEASE

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CONTACT: Rev. Liddy Barlow
Office: 412-688-9070
Cell: 412-523-6736

Christian Associates of Southwest Pennsylvania Renews Its Commitment to Racial Reconciliation

On the 50th anniversary of the conclusion of the march from Selma to Montgomery, Christian Associates of Southwest Pennsylvania laments that racism still pervades every arena of American society – perhaps most grievously of all, our churches. Although the Bible teaches that Christians “are all one in Christ Jesus,” Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s observation is still correct: “the most segregated hour of Christian America is eleven o’clock on Sunday morning.” As Christians, we believe that all human beings are made in the image of God and that Christ came for the salvation of all people. Racism denies Christ’s redemptive purpose of reconciling and uniting humankind. To proclaim Christ as Lord is to declare the fundamental unity of humanity.

In this season of Lent, we are called to repent of our sin and return to the good news of the Gospel. Jesus taught that before calling out the speck in our neighbor’s eye, we must remove the log from our own eye. If we hope to address the injustices we observe in the wider world, we must first examine how prejudice is manifest in our own structures.

In that spirit, Christian Associates of Southwest Pennsylvania renews its commitment to racial reconciliation and partnership through an intentional process of listening and relationship-building. We must diversify the voices in our fellowship and listen more carefully to the experiences and insights of people of color. We must learn from their voices how Christian Associates might best contribute to the struggle against racism on the local, regional, and national levels.

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Therefore, in 2015, we will:

1. Reinvigorate our connection with the historically African American churches in our membership (the Allegheny/Scranton and Pittsburgh districts of the AME, the Pittsburgh District of the AME-Zion, and the Allegheny Union Baptist Association) through one-on-one and group meetings with executives and clergy. We will share meals together, visit houses of worship, engage in prayer and fellowship, and speak frankly of the challenge of racism.
2. Listen carefully to the voices of people of color within majority-white churches in our membership, organizing conversations to hear their experiences and insights.
3. Reach out to churches of color not currently represented among our membership, seeking to make our fellowship more representative of all the Christians of Southwest Pennsylvania.
4. Identify necessary next steps and craft a call to ongoing action for ourselves, our congregations, and their members, informed and inspired by what we have learned from these new and revitalized relationships.

At our recent worship service, we heard the Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson, Minister for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations of the United Church of Christ, declare that “racism is a church-dividing issue.” We believe that with God’s help, the effort to eradicate racism, arm in arm and heart to heart, can become a church-uniting issue, as Christians of all races and ethnicities strive together to defeat this evil and live into beloved community. May God bless our intentions and empower our action.

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