

An Inconsistent Testimony

A Brief History of Highland Presbyterian's Racial Activism

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Introduction

Highland Presbyterian Church was officially constituted in 1882.

Between 1877 and 1950, 4,400 Black people were lynched. Some of them were hanged. Some were burned alive. Others were shot, drowned, or beaten to death.

At least 186 of those victims were in Kentucky, which boasts some of the most gruesome lynchings on record, including the violent murder of the Walker family. Seven family members — including a mother holding an infant in her arms and four other children — were riddled with bullets as they attempted to escape their home, which had been set on fire.

Most likely, all of these numbers fall short. Lynchings were not tracked, and there are probably many that have gone unrecorded.

There is no record of any response from Highland Presbyterian to this anti-Christian violence.

On March 13, 2020, Louisville police shot and killed Breonna Taylor as she stood bewildered in her hallway, after having been woken by strangers entering her home. The police believed she was receiving suspicious packages at her home for her ex-boyfriend — a suspected drug trafficker — even after a U.S. postal inspector concluded in January that she was receiving no such packages. No drugs were found in her home. She had no criminal record. She was shot at least eight times.

It took almost more than 11 weeks, and multiple letters from members of the congregation, before a written statement acknowledging Breonna Taylor's murder was sent to the Highland congregation.

Highland Presbyterian debated whether we should place a Black Lives Matter sign in front of our building. While our Black and Brown siblings grieved the loss of another from their ranks, we sought to protect the comfort of our White members from an inanimate sign rather than demonstrate our solidarity with the grieving. It took 8 months for a Black Lives Matter sign to be approved.

A group of Highland members drafted a statement in response to the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, David McAtee, and Ahmaud Arbery. An original draft of [that document can be found here](#), and at the end of this report in [Appendix 1](#). Although this original statement could hardly be considered radical, it did directly address the systemic racism inherent in these brutal murders. In an effort to maintain White comfort and the White move to innocence, however, this statement was modified numerous times to the point of being ineffectual.

The outrage stemming from the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and others has sparked a reexamination of race issues and discrimination that many consider long overdue. Highland Presbyterian Church is no different. Like any family, we don't always agree, and that is okay. Some in our church would defend the status quo, staying silent about racial issues for fear that bold action and a focus on anti-racism will cause people to leave. Others want to actively speak out in order to attract people who are aligned with justice.

However, our concerns as Christians should not be which position culture considers to be on the “right side of history,” but on which position is aligned with the truth of God’s word.

Agents of supremacy are anathema to righteousness. White supremacy, which is sin, infiltrates the psyche and can and will use anyone for its purposes. The path of history runs so that, even today, no matter how fair-minded and well intentioned a person may be, a bias toward the supremacy of Whiteness will still be a likely conscious or subconscious inclination. Any type of supremacy can only lead down a dark road, even if it starts with the best intentions.

Guilt is not the goal here — healing is. This is not about applying bandages, it’s about healing wounds. Growth and comfort do not coexist. Martin Luther King, Jr. said “A time comes when silence is betrayal... “ Some of us who have already begun to break the silence of the night have found that the challenge to speak is often a vocation of agony, but we must speak. We must speak with all the humility that is appropriate to our limited vision, but we must speak.

Silence without action can take many forms:

- It looks like someone making a racist remark and not saying anything
- It looks like making excuses for older friends and family, calling them a product of their time.
- It looks like not having conversations with children about racism
- It looks like “not seeing color”
- It looks like insisting White privilege doesn’t apply to you because you worked hard or have had struggles in your life.
- It looks like a 15-year discrepancy in life expectancy depending on which side of the 9th Street Divide you reside.

- It looks like drawing attention to looting and rioting — instead of peaceful protesters — while ignoring historical and ongoing police brutality.
- It looks like saying Breonna Taylor’s name without ever doing anything to create actual change.

Our silence without action has real consequences to the people we worship with:

- It looks like our members who are anxious about going for a run in their own neighborhood.
- It looks like our members asking their spouse to not walk the dog after dark
- It looks like our preschool members asking their parent if the police will kill them because their skin is darker
- It looks like our children hearing a young VBS volunteer wonder aloud how their brown-skinned grandmother can be *their* grandmother
- It looks like our members having conversations with their children about racism to protect them
- It looks like our members doing all they can do to live their life without fear

The Race Equity Task Force recognizes that historically, Highland’s concern with racial justice has, at best, been a matter of convenience — it’s been something we have done when we had a leader who cared about it, when it was simple or easy, and when it fit with our current agenda. We have been passive and silent when we should have acted as a force for racial healing. We believe it is part of our duty and passion as Christians to be committed to bold action for racial justice in order to enliven our church, heal our own souls, and to draw an energetic multi-cultural group of people into our congregation. Our goal is to be a truly

open and welcoming place in which all people are treated with the dignity they deserve.

What does it mean, after all, to be a Matthew 25 Church? It means to be morally righteous, and to work boldly to serve the oppressed, the imprisoned, the hungry and the poor. In order to fulfill this mission, we must actively engage in the community around us, and that includes when that community is struggling with issues of racism. We can't say that's who we are if that's not what we do.

The purpose of this report, therefore, is to evaluate how effectively Highland has been a force for racial justice in the past, to identify what makes this work toward justice important, and to lay out a clear path forward for next steps. The report is divided into a number of brief sections. In *What's the point?* we define what it means to be a radically anti-racist church, and offer suggestions for what that might look like. In *What's in it for Highland?* we offer the evidence that a heartfelt and bold anti-racist stance is both good for Highland and what the congregation wants. In the section titled *Denominational History*, we look at how our denomination as a whole has been working toward racial equity for decades, and we examine common obstacles to real change that the denomination has identified. In *Highland History* we identify our church's inconsistent response to racial crises throughout history, even while highlighting some bright spots. Finally, in *Next Steps*, we lay out the pathway toward becoming a radically anti-racist church.

What's the point?

When the Anti-Racist Task Force was created, we understood from the congregation that Highland Presbyterian desires to become a *radically anti-racist* church. Those words can sound scary and intimidating. How radical do we need to be, after all, and what does it actually mean to be anti-racist? This is an important place to start if we hope to understand the ultimate point of our work.

In his *Letter From a Birmingham Jail*, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. speaks of the need to create tension in the face of resistance to spur growth. When a community refuses to meaningfully engage with an oppressed population's valid complaints, a time comes when those oriented toward justice *must* take a stand. Often, that stand will create tension. Whiteness, as both a construct of identity and a lens through which White people see the world, often views the perpetrators of such tension as *radical*. Our discomfort, not just with difference, but with any thing or person who might point to our own privilege creates in us an inner discord. We seek to silence those voices by calling them divisive and naming them troublemakers, rather than carefully examine the injustice they are trying to show us. After all, it is *racism* that is the problem; it is *racism* that is divisive. The people who seek justice are not the ones who are dividing us. They are, however, often the ones labeled *radical*, as if justice were an idea that falls outside the norm. Understood this way — as seeking a justice that should be the norm but is not — the anti-racist task force sincerely desires to be *radically* anti-racist.

Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and establish such creative tension that a community that has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue...I confess that I am not afraid of the word tension. I have earnestly worked and preached against violent tension, but there is a type of constructive nonviolent tension that is necessary for growth.

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., *Letter From Birmingham City Jail*

I guess it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say, "Wait." But when you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and brothers at whim; when you have seen hate-filled policemen curse, kick, brutalize and even kill your black brothers and sisters with impunity; when you see the vast majority of your twenty million Negro brothers smothering in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society...then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait.

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
Letter From Birmingham City Jail

And what does it mean, actually, to be *anti-racist*? The term — and its embodiment — require action. It moves beyond the passivity of being merely “not racist” to becoming an active participant in the dismantling of racist systems. This often means willingly stepping into discomfort as we begin to individually and collectively interrogate our own Whiteness. So first and foremost, an anti-racist church is a church that is doing internal work. Its congregants are engaging with their individual

Whiteness and practicing agency over it. As an institution, the church is examining its policies and practices and rooting out any **pseudo-supremacy**¹ that lingers there. Once this individual and institutional work is well underway (because to be clear, it will never be complete), the institution of the church can move out into the world as an anti-racist church. That means not only would that church boldly proclaim that Black Lives (actually do) Matter, but it would also begin to participate in very real and practical actions that reveal, examine, and dismantle systemic racism. Its congregants would do this individually, and it would do this institutionally as well.

Dr. King wrote his letter from that Birmingham jail cell in April of 1963, but it was only last year that Ahmaud Arbery was lynched by a small mob of white men. Our Black siblings are still being brutalized and killed by the police. Neo Nazis are marching in city streets. White supremacists are still significantly active — scan recent headlines, and you’ll read about a police

¹ White pseudo-supremacy is a term used in the book *Good White Racist: Confronting Your Role in Racial Injustice*. Language is powerful and can be used as a tool of both oppression and resistance. When we consistently use the term “White supremacy,” even when speaking against it, we reinforce the idea that Whiteness is somehow supreme.

chief who put a KKK sign on a Black officer's jacket². Meanwhile, those of us who are White and claim to care keep telling our Black and Brown siblings to stop being divisive, to be nicer when they protest their oppression, and to smile and obey when they are detained by agents of the state who have a history of violence.

The point is that nothing much has actually changed since Dr. King wrote to the White moderates who asked him to stop being so divisive. It is important to note that even as George Floyd's murderer was sentenced to prison for his crime, justice is still not served. For justice to reign, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Philando Castille and so many others would still be alive.

The Race Equity Task Force seeks to bring into sharper relief the work that is spiritually and practically urgent and temporal. We can no longer ignore the suffering of our Black and Brown siblings and call ourselves good Christian people. We have both a theological and a moral imperative to act, and if that seems radical, perhaps we should question why that is, too.

It is important to note that this report is not the work. Our work is to glorify God through the active resistance of racial inequity and the dismantling of racist systems. Time and time again, Highland has had the opportunity to stand up and take action, and more often than not, we have failed to act. So what does the work look like? It can include the following:

1. To be present with those who suffer the effects of racism (which includes taking a vocal and public stand).
2. To discover where we are practicing racism in our systems, policies and procedures, and to stop.
3. To develop a sense of humility and a desire to learn from the BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) community, and to do so without paternalism or White saviorism.

² <https://www.newsweek.com/video-shows-ohio-police-chief-placing-kkk-sign-black-officers-coat-1605916>

4. To commit to action; identify and develop projects around our organic intentions.
5. To lament, repent and repair.

What's in it for Highland: Why this work is important for our congregation.

Reckoning with our racial past and making an action plan for a racially equitable future is part of Highland Presbyterian Church's pastoral care for ourselves. Reckoning now is also a gift to future generations, as we envision those who come after us will continue on a path of building racial equity in authentic relationships—creating bonds across the beauty and diversity of many U.S. cultures in a vibrant, growing multicultural and multigenerational congregation.

Many benefits could accrue through our reckoning and action now. Racial introspection could increase our understanding of our own cultures and the influence of our racial histories on our cultures. This increased understanding of ourselves could lead to experiences of grace. Beyond guilt and shame, reckoning can shine the light of truth.

We are not responsible for the state of the world into which we were born, and still we have an opportunity to make it better for those who come after us. We are preparing the ground for those who are with us now, and for those who come after us. We wish to create our religious home as a safe, affirming, and enriching place for the BIPOC community and for all who are marginalized by U.S. historical and contemporary systems.

These spiritual outcomes are not measurable in typical ways. Because we have few role models, we cannot predict (but can envision) the spiritual outcomes of our financial, emotional, and intellectual commitment to racial equity. Our imagining of spiritual growth is for both individual members and the congregation as a body.

We wish to unleash hope and grace for all at Highland Presbyterian Church through reckoning with our racial past and present, and by contributing to racial equity in our community.

The congregation wants a bold stance on anti-racism efforts.

Specifically, a bold stance on anti-racism efforts is what this congregation wants, and it is important to realize that if we refuse to be the anti-racist beacon our members desire us to be, we risk losing them. Pastoral leadership and the Session have received feedback via phone calls, emails and written letters, all of which demonstrate a sincere and passionate desire on the part of our congregants to act decisively. Additionally, the youth of the church — the church's future — have expressed outright anger about the church's unwillingness to act. Specifically, they felt dismissed and disheartened by the long delay in placing a Black Lives Matter sign in front of the church. According to the current youth pastor, the youth believe that *if you believe it, you have to say it*. The youth were disappointed by this church that they love and its lack of an organized response. They feel that we talk too much and act too little. This is important, because the youth represent the future of Highland. But, it's not just the youth who care deeply about this issue. The church recently conducted a comprehensive Mission Study that revealed a similar ethos among a majority of the congregation.

The Mission Study

In May of 2021, Highland conducted a general mission study that examined a number of different metrics about the congregation. One thing that clearly emerged from that study is that ***racial justice is a primary concern of Highland members***. Of the ministries on which members

When asked what members think the purpose of Highland should be for the next 2-3 years, multiple respondents mentioned racial justice in their comments:

“An active social justice agenda - two big areas of focus: Racial equity and climate change”

“Becoming more "anti-racist" in support of racial equity! Maintaining the premier Presbyterian youth ministry in our community.”

“Being advocates for social and racial justice in our community and around the world.”

“Broaden our outreach and seek opportunities to diversify, support, and improve race relations and social justice”

“Celebrating God and all of the people and stories within our church, while reaching out and helping organizations with the "second wave of civil rights"”

“Compelling and challenging worship with strong preaching and excellent music; community mission of anti-racism and refugee ministries; Christian education for adults, youth and children; fellowship”

The results are clear: this is a congregation who cares about racial justice. To ignore this call would be to ignore the congregation’s wishes for the kind of church they want to be. This is a dangerous proposition, because we run the risk of losing many current members who feel frustrated by our lack of response.

Not only do our current members care about anti-racism efforts, but bold statements about racial equity — backed with action — are clear pathways to bringing younger generations

into the church. According to Pew Research, Gen Z is more racially diverse than any generation before them; they care about these issues, and are more ready to recognize that Black people are treated unfairly.³ This means that racial justice is not only the right thing to do, but it is also a means to attract new members from future generations, ensuring the sustainability of our church.

³<https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2020/05/14/on-the-cusp-of-adulthood-and-facing-an-uncertain-future-what-we-know-about-gen-z-so-far-2/>

Denominational History

Our work as a community begins with the understanding that our denomination recognizes its complicity in the creation of systemic racism in our society. Our work is intended to deconstruct this systemic racism and to commit ourselves towards the intentional and ongoing work of becoming a radically antiracist community of faith.

In June of 2020, the 224th General Assembly passed item 00-29, "On the Church in this moment in history," which [called Presbyterians to corporate repentance](#):

"Repenting, both personally and corporately, for the role we as individuals and as a predominantly White-dominated church played in history and continue to perpetuate today, even if unknowingly, in systemic racism and White Supremacy, especially in terms of our own local silence, silencing those who attempt to speak or act, and our failure to act regarding police brutality, voter suppression, educational and healthcare inequality, and other acts of systemic racism on federal, state, and local levels."

A comprehensive strategy for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A) titled, *From Racial Justice in the 1980's*, states the following:

Racism is the use of racial identity or supposed racial characteristics to separate, isolate, denigrate, and exploit others because they are different. The sin of racism of the society and church in which we participate is that which places an uncritical priority on being white and speaking English. Because Whites control the overwhelming majority of the financial resources, institutions, and levers of power in our society, white racism is a special curse of our society. Institutional racism can be understood as the way organizational, institutional, societal, political, economic and even religious structures and activities serve to perpetuate racial injustice apart from the question of individual attitudes or intentions. Intended or not, the mechanisms and functions of these entities may serve to perpetuate racism (Minutes, 1981, Part I, p. 197);

That same report revealed that there are within the denomination a set of common barriers to enacting real change. These common barriers are classic tactics that Whiteness uses to deny, deflect, or ignore racism as it happens, and we would do well to examine ourselves carefully to

be sure that these tactics are not in play at Highland, and if they are, to root them out and practice agency over them.

Common Barriers to Action Within the Denomination

The report identified a list of common barriers to real, practical action that are still in operation today. Anti-racism work requires deep stamina, holistic understanding and a willingness to hold paradox, nuance, and an understanding of the nature of systemic oppression. The following list of common barriers can help us better understand our own resistance to the justice work that is in front of us:

1. Loss of will
2. Lack of understanding of the nature and depth of racism
3. Ignorance of racism within the church
4. Perception of racial justice efforts as a threat to church unity
5. Lack of information
6. Lack of understanding of racial ethnic concerns
7. Inability to accept economic risks of racial justice
8. Reduction of racial justice efforts to education
9. Inability to effect policy into actions
10. Disengaged from experienced racial justice

Common barriers in practice: How Whiteness refuses to see racism so it doesn't have to act.

These common barriers present themselves in a number of ways in churches when it comes time to begin the actual work of racial justice. Often, Whiteness will resist the actual work by at once claiming that racism is bad and should be resisted, but also that *these particular things* (whatever might be right in front of us at the given time) are not racist, nor should we make assumptions or jump to conclusions about them. Some key methods that Whiteness uses to do this are to focus on individual bias while claiming systemic racism is not real; demanding proof upon proof while disbelieving the victims of racism when they describe their experience; and the law and order ethos that willingly identifies those who resist racism with direct action as divisive or even criminal.

For example, one of the ways in which racism operates is within our criminal justice system. The system as a whole — which begins with policing and ends with prison — is inherently racist in a multitude of ways that can be demonstrated over and over again. While it would be impossible to examine the entirety of the justice system in this report, a brief look at one aspect of it — the system of policing — offers a lot of evidence around the racist nature of law enforcement. (For an in depth study of the racist criminal justice system as a whole, we highly recommend *The New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander.) The history of policing in the United States has an origin story in slave patrols. Stop and frisk policies combined with racial profiling have led to racially marginalized communities being disproportionately subjected to surveillance and police brutality. Additionally, the system of policing is not designed to protect itself from bad actors; police who underperform, who are proverbial loose cannons, and who put the lives of citizens at risk are regularly permitted to resign quietly and are free to move to

another community. There is no system of checks and balances to ensure that officers who should not be officers don't get hired elsewhere. The criminalization of poverty means that racially marginalized neighborhoods tend to be overpoliced, and movements such as the "war on drugs" result, ultimately, in the systematic and systemic destruction of Black and Brown families and their economic well-being. When drug epidemics impact Black and Brown communities, Whiteness criminalizes people battling addiction and asks the justice system to solve the problem. When drug epidemics impact White communities, it is treated as a public health crisis and we throw medical resources at the problem. (This is the same system of binary response we see in the educational system as well. BIPOC children struggling with learning differences are disciplined — often by school police — while White children tend to receive interventions, whether those be behavioral, medical, or psychological. This is the basis for what is referred to as the school-to-prison pipeline, and it has very real impacts on Black families particularly.)

Whiteness, however, wants to deny the systemic nature of our racist justice system by focusing on *individuals* within the system. We might say, for example, we can not know that the officer who killed George Floyd did so specifically because of race, and therefore, we claim that the system of policing is not racist. We refuse to recognize not only that inherent bias could be at play here, but also that Derek Chauvin is an operator within a system of policing that is riddled with racist policies and practices. Whiteness might say it does not see a pattern of racial bias in policing, but that is because they are choosing not to see it. Studies show that Black people are 3.5 times more likely to be shot by police than white people are, and are more likely to experience other types of force, such as being handcuffed without arrest, pepper sprayed, or pushed to the ground by police.⁴

⁴ <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2016/12/cover-policing>

This is just one example of the systemic nature of institutionalized racism that Whiteness loves to ignore. Because Whiteness operates with a presumed move to innocence — in other words, it assumes the best of itself, which disallows for the nuanced spaces in which racist micro- and macro-aggressions often occur — it can excuse situations such as the brutal lynching of Ahmaud Arbery as “not racist,” even in the face of numerous and well-documented “while Black” [experiences that our siblings of color have every day](#)⁵. When we refuse to even entertain the possibility that Arbery’s murder was based in racist bias, we are practicing emotional violence and gaslighting our Black and Brown siblings when they are desperately trying to get our attention, trying to tell us [what it is like to live in non-white skin](#)⁶. Is that the type of church we wish to be?

What does it mean to be a Matthew 25 Church?

Highland has elected to be a Matthew 25 Church, and as such, we are called to “actively engage in the world around us, so our faith comes alive and we wake up to new possibilities...to act boldly and compassionately to serve people who are hungry, oppressed, imprisoned, or poor.”⁷ We do this in partnership with our denomination at large in order to “become a more relevant presence in the world. We recognize Christ’s urgent call to action, where God’s love, justice, and mercy shine forth and are contagious.”⁸ As a Matthew 25 Church, we are called to dismantle structural racism. According to our denomination,

Racism is not primarily about individual prejudice or an individual’s beliefs and attitudes. Rather, racism in the U.S. is a socially constructed system. Some people are advantaged, and others are disadvantaged, merely because of their skin color, ethnic identity or their ancestral background. Social power and prejudice have combined to treat people differently, whether intentionally or unintentionally. Some people are privileged while

⁵ <https://www.cnn.com/2018/12/20/us/living-while-black-police-calls-trnd/index.html>

⁶ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/18/sports/running-while-black-ahmaud-arbery.html>

⁷ <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/matthew-25/>

⁸ Ibid

others are oppressed. As a consequence, there is unequal and inequitable access to resources such as money, education, information and decision-making power.⁹

If our denomination recognizes that structural racism exists, and we have agreed to being a Matthew 25 Church, then we have a responsibility and both a moral and a theological imperative to do our part to resist and dismantle structural racism. This requires bold action on the part of our church. Placing a Black Lives Matter sign on our building is only the beginning of such bold action. We must continue the labor of self-interrogation, both as individuals and as a corporate body, to root out White pseudo-supremacy where it is at play. We must move from a place of practiced not-knowing to deep lament, repentance, and repair. We must be radical about our desire to root out racism within us so that we can truly be the relevant church body who cares for the marginalized that we claim we want to be.

⁹ <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/matthew-25/racism/>

Highland History

Louisville has a long and problematic racial history. During the antebellum period, Louisville served as hub for human trafficking. Its position on the Ohio River served it well, creating a convenient port that allowed for the highly profitable sale of enslaved men, women and children. The Jefferson County sheriff played a large role in this slave economy and that agency was responsible for putting thousands of human beings into the slave market. Human traffickers placed ads in newspapers in search of people to sell, specifically to the hungry southern states. The area of 2nd Street and Main is a specifically historical place — the geographical marker of humans for sale.¹⁰

The effects of slavery in Louisville were ubiquitous, involving even the middle-class. The effects are still felt today in strained relationships between Black and White people. In academia, we may label this tension "White pseudo-supremacy" or "oppression", but they manifest in very real ways — unless we don't want to see them: the differences in living standards on either side of the "Ninth Street divide,"; the differences in housing, health care, the environment, transportation, and employment between East and West Louisville.

Highland's history with racial justice has been at best inconsistent and at worst, absent. Though silent through most of the Reconstruction period, the Civil Rights movement brought with it a new awareness to the congregation, though we've never fully engaged with the movement as an institution. While we have often had individuals in our ranks who cared deeply about this work, as an institution, our work has been hit or miss, depending on who was at the helm. Even in periods of concerted effort, we are often slowed by recurrent White fears (the

¹⁰ <https://explorekyhistory.ky.gov/items/show/276>

current alarm among White moderates of alleged Marxism in the Black Lives Matter movement harkens back to the panic of communism during the Civil Rights era).

Over the years, Highland has had bright spots when it connected with Black and Brown Christians and built meaningful relationships. Our partnership with West Chestnut Baptist Church is remembered fondly by some members of the congregation, while others bemoan the fact that Highland seemed to be more invested than its partner church. After being influenced by a trip to Central America, Highland member Donna Craig decided to take action and founded Kentucky Refugee Ministries in 1990. In 1995, KRM was selected as a site for resettlement of Haitian and Cuban people and expanded to a second site in Lexington a few years later. Since opening in 1990, KRM has welcomed over 16,000 refugees to Kentucky and is the largest resettlement agency in Kentucky. Kentucky Refugee Ministries is housed in Highland Presbyterian Church's Pleune-Mobley building and remains closely tied to our congregation through its board of director members and our work helping resettle families.

In 2015, after participating in a book study examining the work of Stokely Carmichael, Rev. Dr. Cynthia Campbell helped form a weekly discussion group with Rev. Dr. Kevin Cosby, president of Simmons College of Kentucky, and other pastors across Louisville that became Empower West. This group of black and white pastors and community organizers meets weekly to discuss issues of race, faith, and action across Louisville, but specifically focused on the west end. After Rev. Campbell's retirement, Rev. Megan McCarty took over Highland's presence in this group. Simmons College of Kentucky is one of only two HBCU's in Kentucky. To date, Highland has given over \$35,000 to Simmons College.

Throughout our history, we've had individuals in the congregation as well as pastoral leaders who were deeply invested in this work. Sometimes, they led the church into the work as well, but the labor of anti-racism never got buried deep in the bones of us as an organization. It was — and continues to be — a fickle preoccupation depending on the sails of our leader. Still, we seem to have an organic orientation toward the work of racial equity, whether it is in our Empower West initiative, our response to the Katrina disaster, or our work with Kentucky Refugee Ministries. We have had pastors who preached sermons of resistance, and we have always been engaged in our community. Still, our inconsistency speaks to a lack of organized leadership around racial justice and a dearth of deep commitment. This renders our work at times performative, and though not insubstantial, often unsuccessful at affecting real change.

Our response to the murder of Breonna Taylor was problematic not only for its delay but also for its tepid nature. Our first acknowledgement of the event came only after 11 weeks and multiple requests for an official statement by members of the congregation. Only then was a request made to Session to review a statement from Church In the World — but that statement took 7 revisions and another two weeks before it was approved. Hyperfocused on verbiage and precise language, we took so much time to respond to Breonna Taylor's murder that our final statement was lukewarm at best. It's important to note, too, that this was only a statement — this was not any sort of direct action that would initiate change in any place of import. Rather, it merely demonstrates where we align as an organization.

The events surrounding Breonna Taylor's death did spur us into some action, including the creation of this task force. Nevertheless, overall Highland's response to the her murder and the subsequent protests throughout the city of Louisville, America, and around the world has been disappointing. It has not been an easy time for those who fight discrimination; in the last 17

months we have made incremental progress through the formation of the Race Equity Task Force, including its ongoing initiatives, no fewer than three book studies examining race and racism, and the display of the Know Justice, Know Peace and Black Lives Matter signs outside the church. However, there is a big debate going on right now around whether systemic racism exists. That's not a Black debate.

Highland Presbyterian Church had an opportunity to show strong leadership and produce a clear strategy to tackle racial inequality. Highland Presbyterian Church once again took the path of least resistance and failed to uphold antiracist values and take the steps needed for change. Despite the progress made that has led us here today, we failed our youth, full members of this church, our brothers and sisters at Grace Hope Presbyterian Church, and the community of Louisville by not living into our calling as a Matthew 25 church.

The only way forward is to prioritize Black lives and wellbeing, right now. It's important to also remember that when we do stand up for what we believe in, and causes like this, it leads to good things. It needs lots of people participating in it and that's what we are morally called to do. Systemic change will take real commitment, faith, and participation with the community. The journey must continue.

Next Steps

The Race Equity Task Force is dedicated to the work of healing the racial divide in our community. We know and understand, however, that this is an endeavor that is life-long. There will be no set arrival date at which we can officially call ourselves “not racist.” As a primarily White community, the work of rooting out supremacy culture is important if we hope to embody justice and be the hands and feet of Jesus to the Louisville area. The current project originally had three phases, the first of which is completed with this report with phases two and three outlined below.

Phase 2 - Where are we now?

Per the original proposal approved by the Church in the World Committee, Phase 2 would include a detailed assessment of current church operations, including liturgy and music, marketing + communications, to preaching and pastoral care. The purpose of this assessment is to identify places in which we might be inadvertently aligning ourselves with empire, as well as to identify opportunities we might have to embody a more holistic anti-racist stance, and to invite the congregation into that work with us.

Another part of this phase would be to identify the areas in which Highland demonstrates organic intentionality around racial issues, so that we can, in Phase 3, deepen our commitment to those endeavors. Essentially, organic intentionality simply means that we will look for the anti-racist projects in which Highland is already involved organically — where has our congregation gravitated when it comes to this work? Then, we will use this information to even more intentionally identify areas in which we can expand and deepen our anti-racist activities.

Phase 3 - Where are we going?

Phase 3 is about implementation. During this phase, we will begin the actual work — developing teams (if needed), planning and scheduling activities, and communicating our anti-racist ethos to the church at large. Most importantly, we will create pathways for the congregation to get involved — which is something they have specifically requested. Armed with the understanding of where we have been and where we are now, we will be able to intentionally and consistently engage in real and practical work to dismantle racist systems in our community. While we recognize that we can not solve the problem of racial inequity in its entirety, we can ensure that the work we are doing is not performative, but rather truly impactful. This work must take place on two levels: the personal, in that we are providing pathways for racial awakening and deconstruction for our White members, and the institutional, in that we are operating as an anti-racist corporate body to dismantle racist systems in the world.

Specific Asks:

To these ends, the Race Equity Task Force requests the following:

1. The approval of the remaining phases of work, as per the proposal originally submitted and approved by Church In The World
2. The removal of obstacles to this work by reviewing and approving the suggestions and recommendations of this team as quickly as possible.
3. Prayerful and intentional self-reflection on the part of all members of the congregation as we embark upon a journey of self-discovery, racial awareness and identity.

Conclusion

Throughout the years, Highland Presbyterian Church has been led by a number of people — both pastoral and lay leaders — who have passionately pursued racial justice, but we have been inconsistent at best, and — to the detriment of our BIPOC siblings as well as our own — we have often been silent on this very important matter. We can do better — and we *should* do better. In addition to the moral and theological imperatives that make this work important, it's also what the congregation at Highland wants. That matters, because as newer generations become less and less engaged with church, Highland can, if it chooses to, position itself as a church that is doing relevant work in the community. Younger generations care about racial justice, and they look to organizations like Highland to provide a pathway for them to get involved. If we choose to maintain the status quo, we will be doing the future of our church a great disservice.

But even more importantly than that, we will be missing the call of God to create a more just world for our siblings of color. We can not with integrity claim that we are a Matthew 25 Church and continue to ignore the cries for justice that well up in the streets around us. To do so is to align with empire, not the marginalized with whom Jesus associated. Our denomination has already identified common obstacles that Whiteness places in the way of justice. We can continue to embody those tactics of denial and betrayal, or we can practice agency over them, listen deeply to the grief, pain and suffering of those in our community, and respond with humility, compassion, and a commitment to act. This is a moment of truth for Highland — a pivotal moment that can change our trajectory in a transformational way. Let us not be the group of leaders who, seventy-five years from now, are reviewed by a racial task force and summarized as having been inconsistent and ineffective. Let us instead be the group of visionary leaders who

danced on an imaginative edge and learned a new way to be White in the world, to share power, and to dismantle racist systems. This is a call upon our souls. Let us answer prayerfully, and well.

Appendix

Appendix 1 - Draft of Original Statement

The Session of Highland Presbyterian Church, a congregation of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), makes this public statement regarding occurrences in our community and in our nation that stand at odds with Christ's commands to love, honor, and care for all people.

We believe

- that the church as the possession of God must stand where the Lord stands, namely against injustice and with the wronged; that in following Christ the church must witness against all the powerful and privileged who selfishly seek their own interests and thus control and harm others. (from The Confession of Belhar)

We lament

- that the deaths of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, David McAtee, and Ahmaud Arbery are part of a pattern of violence rooted in our nation's history of slavery, lynching, and racism;
- that leadership of our communities and our nation have failed to quickly address the underlying racism inherent in these deaths.

We affirm

- that Jesus called out religious leaders who put their own interests ahead of those of the people and turned over tables in the temple when he saw injustice;
- that anger, frustration, fear, and pain have rightfully resided within our black and brown siblings, and that these emotions are currently erupting in outbursts of great intensity;
- that property destruction is unfortunate, but as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "A riot is the language of the unheard;"
- that white citizens and elected officials must identify and break down systems of injustice that allow actions of racial oppression and mistrust to continue;
- that we yearn for peace and work for justice, knowing that peace without justice is neither.

We commit

- that we will use our voices, our influence, our privilege, and our bodies to stand in solidarity with our siblings of color against economic, political, and legal systems that perpetuate racism, violence, fear, and hate;
- that we will pray without ceasing that "justice will roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 5:24);
- that we will listen to, support, and follow leaders of color in this quest.

Therefore

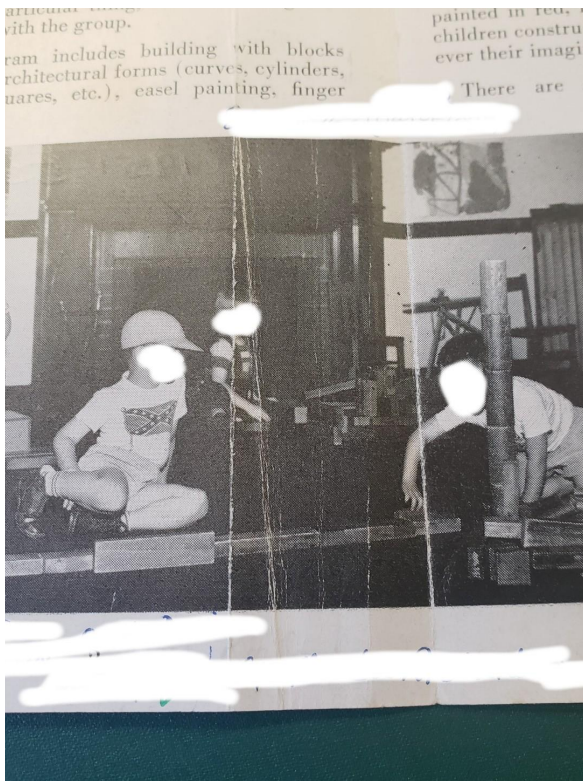
- we will support, advocate, and work toward policies and actions leading to racial justice and equity for all.

Jesus is Lord.

To the one and only God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be the honor and the glory for ever and ever.

Introduction

After completing Phase 1 of our work, which was a deep dive into the history of Highland through a racialized context, the Race Equity Task Force proceeded to perform an assessment of the policies, procedures, and daily operations of Highland Presbyterian Church. The purpose of this Phase 2 report is to outline those findings, and there is much good news to report. Additionally, there are many areas for potential improvement should Highland wish to truly become an anti-racist organization. Our recommended action steps will be delivered in our Phase 3 report, which we expect to complete by the end of March, 2022.



After our Phase 1 work was complete, we came across this photo, which was included in a preschool brochure from the 1960's and shows a child wearing a tee shirt with the Confederate flag proudly displayed. We share this photo as a historical record of our history, and acknowledgment of the conditions from which we have emerged. We no longer include these symbols in our brochures, nor do we condone them in our church community. We share this history in the spirit of hope for how far we have come, and for our racially just and inclusive future.

It is important to note that during our Phase 2 work, Highland Church experienced a significant crisis in the departure of an associate pastor and the children's and youth minister, Doodle Harris. This event impacted not just the church in notable ways, it also inhibited our work substantially. However, we believe this report is an accurate assessment of where our daily operations stand currently within a racialized context, and we are excited to share this news with

the congregation and — even more importantly — suggest real steps for moving forward in our Phase 3 report.

In order to carry out this work, the team split up into smaller groups with each group tackling different areas of operations. The areas reviewed are:

- Preaching
- Liturgy + Music
- Children + Youth
- Buildings + Grounds
- Marketing + Communications
- Small Groups
- Pastoral Care
- Leadership
- Missions + Service

In some cases, where appropriate, the team conducted interviews with relevant leaders and staff, reviewed print and digital collateral, and administered surveys and other types of data collection as part of our methodology. Our findings below are detailed according to category, with each category followed by a “Bottom Line” assessment.

Preaching

Highland Church has historically included racial equity in its messaging from the pulpit — but the consensus from the group is that this could be done more frequently and intentionally. This point was brought up at a recent Session meeting, and one member did point out that when the associate pastors preach, they do indeed reference it regularly. Still, there seems to be a deficit in the ways in which racial equity and anti-oppression are included in sermons.

A common objection to this point might be something like, “Not every sermon can be about race,” and while this statement may be true, it is the belief of this team that while every sermon may not be about a specific racial incident, every sermon *can* be anti-racist and anti-oppressive in nature. Sermons can be intentionally oriented toward a liberative bent, and we will include in our Phase 3 report some specific suggestions for how this can be done. We don’t need to — nor should we — wait for another racial crisis in our country before we begin to speak about race from the pulpit, because every day, Whiteness is working to protect itself (for some examples, see [this report](#) and [this report](#)).

BOTTOM LINE: Highland can do more to include an anti-racist and anti-oppression ethos in its regular preaching.

Liturgy + Music

As noted in the introduction of this report, the severing of the relationship between Highland Presbyterian Church and Rev. Doodle Harris this fall had a disruptive effect on gathering information for this project. That difficulty was complicated further by the fact that Highland Presbyterian was already in an interim period with the church’s lead pastor. Interviews with current and former HPC pastors and with a long-time member of the worship committee inform the body of this report with cross-reference of [*The Book of Common Worship*](#).

Liturgy

The liturgies for worship at HPC are very often traditional in form and structure, aligned dependably with the liturgical practices outlined in the *Book of Common Worship*. The *Book of Common Worship* is a venerable resource offering templates for worship services. The most recent publication of *The Book of Common Worship* was in 2018. The current edition is the last of, at least, six revisions to take place over the 100 years prior – each revision emerging out of an expressed desire within the general assembly to have the language and practice of worship salient to contemporary theological needs. Recent editions even go a step further to state very plainly that it is a “service book”, not a “Directory for Worship” — the latter being church law; the former a helpful but ultimately voluntary resource. The preface goes on to say that the language and form of the liturgy given in the *Book of Common Worship* can be changed, reordered, paraphrased, and built upon to serve different and emerging congregational needs (“Preface,” *Book of Common Worship*).

The pastors and the worship committee acknowledge that they have the power — pretty immediate power, in fact — to change or bring new ideas to liturgy planning, but following, quite closely, the language and cadence of *The Book of Order* has been the default—at Highland and many other PCUSA Churches. That being said, the church has seen noteworthy success in a few of its more non-traditional liturgies for services marking high holidays like the Youth Service late Christmas Eve Night and the Easter Vigil Service out on the patio. Further, HPC has periodically welcomed guest pastors from differing backgrounds to lead worship and share their faith, but efforts to foreground other perspectives and voices in the context of worship and more articulation of antiracist convictions can be more consistent and deliberate.

The good news is that opportunities to seek new voices in the planning of liturgy or to make more deliberate in our worship services our church community's devotion to representation and antiracism can be pursued readily without many external barriers, if the lead pastor initiates those efforts. The challenge is that without a lead pastor's buy-in or at least a commitment on the part of the lead pastor to accept input from different constituencies on liturgical planning, there are not many other external prompts or expectations from church law or historical precedent to spur deeper commitment to equity and inclusion within the worship itself.

THE BOTTOM LINE: HPC can be more intentional about regularly creating diverse worship experiences in order to better represent and include more voices, but the intentional buy-in and commitment of the lead pastor to this call is paramount.

Music

Music enjoys a preeminent role in the worship and fellowship at Highland Presbyterian Church and therefore holds important potential in demonstrating the church's devotion to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Whether the Arts on the Corner Program, caroling before Sunday worship during Advent, the stewardship of the Rapier Fund, or the choir offering a rousing anthem during the offering, there is a deep sense of pride and joy in the music created and shared at Highland. Accordingly, the music program holds a unique and potent position to advance and celebrate the different voices, stories and histories that comprise both HPC and the larger body of Christ.

In the late 1990s into the early 2000s, Highland Presbyterian's participation in active choirs peaked, at least with respect to recent history, with scores of adults and children taking part in weekly rehearsals, Wednesday through Saturday, and routinely spending full weekends

together in choir retreats. This broad popularity and participation in the music program coincided with two seminal events: Rev. Jim Chatham's deepening the relationship between The Louisville Orchestra and HPC and Frank Heller's early tenure as Music Director at Highland.

With increasing numbers and excitement around the church's music, there was notable emphasis on concert performance and anthems. The majority of these more concert-like pieces were in the spirit of musical figures like John Rutter, and they were anchored in solfege as the primary aural pedagogy for musical training. This is not to suggest that Highland was rigid or strident in this devotion. The church enjoyed good collaborations with a wide range of local musicians as well as with other ensembles like Voces Novae. The default was to sing music that was either known well by the congregation or to offer music that built upon recognizable structures and genres, but the church was not closed to ventures or explorations outside of its more familiar musical repertoire. This approach to music, taking place in a period of great health and popularity in the church and its music program, created a lasting paradigm of what "Music" was at Highland, and that paradigm still has considerable influence in the parish today.

The merit and venerability of that paradigm notwithstanding, significant external elements have shifted in the past decade. The entire staff at Highland has turned over in that time, including the lead pastor and the director of music. The congregation at Highland has, on average, grown notably older, and the overall number of members has declined. Following similar patterns, Highland has seen considerable decrease in participation in music programming over the past five years. The COVID-19 pandemic over the past two years has made sustaining any program continuity exceedingly challenging—church or otherwise. However, singing's being one of the most precarious activities with respect to virus spread has made the pandemic

particularly challenging for the music program. These new circumstances provide an opportunity and a demand for a renaissance within Highland's music program.

Highland Presbyterian Church's dedication to equity and justice offers valuable direction to inspire, in part, the renaissance of its music program. Vini Frizzo, the current Music Director at Highland, has a considerable background in ecumenical worship and music, and he has shown genuine openness to bringing new voices and ideas to the parish's music. A devotee to principles of Resonant Worship, Mr. Frizzo has shared his desire to make the musical repertoire, in concerts or in worship, reflect a dialogical process between the theology of the church and the different ways that theology is experienced and expressed by different groups of people.

A great example of this kind of creative process was the Arts on the Corner concert scheduled just before the pandemic, "Art Makes Home." It was designed to couple music by Stephen Foster, Aaron Copland, and Samuel Barber with a showing of artwork by local refugee artists connected through KRM. Unfortunately, this concert and collaboration, scheduled for March 15, 2020, had to be canceled, but opportunities like this abound within our community.

The *Glory to God* hymnal in the PCUSA tradition reveals a broader effort across the reformed tradition to not only speak to the gospel message of justice in the music of their worship but also better reflect that message by offering a fuller spectrum of music in the collection. Further, one of the great writers and composers for *Glory to God*, David Gambrell, is an affiliate member of Highland Presbyterian Church. There are ample resources and energy to enjoy a magnificent new proud era of music at HPC. Making a concerted effort to promote and practice equity in our music program is, in our committee's estimation, a vital means to declare and celebrate the mission of the church and to inspire the future success of the music program.

BOTTOM LINE: Though the music program at HPC faces considerable challenges, such as declining membership numbers and COVID precautions, it remains an ample and wonderful opportunity to demonstrate and participate in racial equity to promote and practice an orientation toward liberative justice.

Children & Youth

As a result of the departure of Doodle Harris, the work we were able to complete in this section was as comprehensive as it could be. Interviews were conducted with leaders at the Weekday School and with parents of the youth and with staff involved with the children and youth ministry.

HPC Weekday School

The Weekday School has a program of professional development for the staff and teachers that emphasizes an anti-bias approach to the programming at the Weekday School. The goals of the approach are:

- *(Identity)* Each child will demonstrate self-awareness, confidence, family pride, and positive social/group identities.
- *(Diversity)* Each child will express comfort and joy with human diversity, accurate language for human differences, and deep, caring human connections.
- *(Justice)* Each child will increasingly recognize unfairness (injustice), have language to describe unfairness, and understand that unfairness hurts.

- (*Activism*) Each child will demonstrate a sense of empowerment and the skills to act, with others or alone, against prejudice and/or discriminatory actions (Derman-Sparks & Edwards 2010)

The Weekday School shared a presentation they delivered to the parents of the children at the Weekday School that details how they are implementing programming to emphasize anti-bias.

HPC Youth

The youth care a lot about Race Equity but don't think the leadership of HPC is engaged in the work. They don't feel their voice is heard and Doodle helped them find a way to be active. The difficulty of placing a Black Lives Matter sign at the church is indicative of the reluctance to engage in the work. The youth are wondering how things will move forward since the plans to continue youth programming are still being worked out. Additionally, the youth had plans for a Civil Rights tour across the South in the Spring of 2022. It is not certain at this time if that trip will take place.

Parents of the youth and children talked with felt that the programming at HPC helped their children feel included and that they had a voice in how their activities were planned. The atmosphere around the programming was fun and made their children look forward to interacting with their friends. There were several comments about how Doodle would go the extra mile to make sure all youth felt included. It is important to note that including the voices of children and youth — a traditionally marginalized group with very little self-agency — is an important aspect of antiracism and anti-oppression work, so it is the recommendation of this team that the children and youth's concerns be taken seriously.

Sunday School Programming

Children are using the “Follow Me” program from the PCUSA. The messaging emphasizes biblical traditions and teachings. The program teaches the following practices:

Chart of Practices

YEAR 1 PRACTICES (2021–2022)	YEAR 2 PRACTICES (2022–2023)	YEAR 3 PRACTICES (2023–2024)
<i>Available July 2021</i> Follow Jesus Welcome All Confess	<i>Available July 2022</i> Honor Sabbath Pray Forgive	<i>Available July 2023</i> Take Up Your Cross Worship God Feed Others
<i>Available October 2021</i> Hope Baptize Live in Community	<i>Available October 2022</i> Go Tell Lament Do Justice	<i>Available October 2023</i> Do Not Fear Renounce Evil Comfort Those Who Mourn
<i>Available January 2022</i> Practice Spiritual Disciplines <i>(six sessions, ideal for Lent)</i> Practice Joy Honor God’s Diversity	<i>Available January 2023</i> Love God, Neighbor, Enemy <i>(six sessions, ideal for Lent)</i> Celebrate Communion Break Boundaries	<i>Available January 2024</i> Use Spiritual Gifts <i>(six sessions, ideal for Lent)</i> Share the Good News Serve Others
<i>Available April 2022</i> Sing a New Song Make Peace Practice Generosity	<i>Available April 2023</i> Make Disciples Care for Creation Walk Humbly	<i>Available April 2024</i> Heal the Sick Practice Gratitude Speak the Truth

A sample of the material [can be viewed at this link](#). Upon review, the sample seems to demonstrate a commitment to racial diversity in its language, programming, and illustrations. The PCUSA also has a set of infographics that break down a number of different topics which are equally committed to diversity.

The youth are using their own curriculum developed by Rev. Doodle Harris, Kevin Burns, Beth Troy, and David Gambrell. The middle school class is an intensive Biblical survey class led by Kevin Burns. This curriculum is extremely informative. Focusing on Biblical literacy, this class gives our youth a solid understanding of the Bible. Many youth parents have commented that they want to sit in on the youth Sunday School classes because their children know the Bible better than most adults. This curriculum also takes into consideration how the Bible can be utilized to confront modern day issues such as racism, classism, gender equity, and much more.

In a normal year, the high school class is led by member Beth Troy, who lets the class choose their own topic and then works with them to develop a curriculum throughout the year. Most of the time topics include issues of social justice that they would like to study from a faith perspective. This class is deeply meaningful to our high school students who value the time to dig deep into topics that matter to them. Due to covid, this class has not been meeting this year.

The other youth class offered is confirmation, available for our interested 8th graders. This curriculum was developed and originally taught by Rev. Doodle Harris but was eventually taken over by David Gambrell. It covers a wide range of topics surrounding the Bible, what it means to be Presbyterian, and the foundations of our faith. The class culminates with each of the students writing their own faith statement, which is an incredibly meaningful exercise for the youth who work hard to put their faith into words.

BOTTOM LINE: The Childrens' and Youth ministry gets an excellent score when it comes to promoting racial equity and justice, but the loss of our associate pastor will have lasting impacts. The church would do well to listen closely to the voices of our youth: they are our future.

Buildings & Grounds

A tour of the inside of the church building and Pleune Mobley was conducted with Pastor Megan while considering the challenges and opportunities inherent in the late 19th Century buildings. Our assessment is as follows:

Sanctuary and Fellowship Hall

The sanctuary includes bright open spaces which are warm and welcoming. Most of the time during the year, the sanctuary exhibits inclusive decorations, such as rainbow banners and other liturgical decor that reflect the diversity of the entire kin-dom. The Fellowship Hall includes artwork of all previous lead pastors, who are all White and primarily men. The Fellowship Hall area also includes a bulletin board that highlights HPC's work in Nicaragua, as well as an information center that includes all of our outreach work with local organizations.

Signage

Directional signage is confusing, which makes it difficult for newcomers to understand and find their way around — even for something as necessary as restrooms. There are other instances of confusing signage: for example, the offices at the top of the ramp lead to the house next to the main building, but there is no signage indicating the ramp leads to another building. A more complete review of all signage is probably necessary, and in our phase 3 report, we'll make

some suggestions about how to improve these signs to create a more welcoming space for all, not just insiders and members.

Wall art

The tapestry art in the Pluene Mobley youth space is colorful. Two multicultural prints outside KRM space are large and colorful. Banners in the sanctuary are bright in purple and rainbows. The NUTS program has two panel areas, and the photos are multicultural and affirming. However, the artwork is predominantly European. Memorial Lounge has a large photo of a white man for whom the space is named, but with unclear attribution.

Library

There are many books on several bookshelves with lots of potential, however there are very few books by people of color. Perhaps create a current reading section for Place at the Table books and other HPC groups. Newer book selections could enliven the library.

Use of Space

HPC is blessed with a significant amount of space, however, the space is not used as well as possible for the nearby community. For example, all church spaces are locked after business hours, including KRM. There is significant unused space that could be made available to the community. Previous AA groups used to meet in the church, but moved to the Pleune Mobley building across the street and eventually stopped meeting due to covid.

Bottom Line: Overall, HPC receives an average score for using our space well when it comes to anti-racism / anti-oppression work. While there is much to be celebrated, there are also many opportunities for improvement, especially in how we use our space for the good of the collective community.

Marketing + Communications

The HPC website is currently (Fall 2021) undergoing an upgrade, and part of this redevelopment includes a concerted effort to reflect our bent toward racial equity. This review is based upon the current, older version in the hopes that our comments might be incorporated in the new website under development.

This review was completed from the perspective of race equity, and the team looked for evidence of inclusion and representation. Additionally, we reviewed from the perspective of a newcomer learning about HPC and was thinking about transparency and ease of navigation. We reviewed all the sections, but did not comment on all errors since the website is under construction and not all errors were related to race equity.

Top Band

Nursery and Weekday School

The page is open, welcoming, colorful website. Application and Financial Aid forms are accessible and minimally complicated. Core values include respect for culture and inclusion.

However, among 33 faculty photos, all are white appearing. While this may accurately represent the staff, it also demonstrates and points to our lack of diversity among the teachers, which may be an area we intentionally improve.

Events and Calendar

The calendar appears to be inactive and has no information. Instead, events are announced on the homepage, in newsletters, and through email (to those on lists). This reiterates that only insiders

(members) have access to information, and our church could be far more welcoming if we made this information more accessible to newcomers.

Contact Us

The Contact Us section has many outdated contacts listed.

About Us

The About Us portion has several sections with a lot of information; however, it is lacking transparency and inclusion. For example, no photos of administrative or music staff are included; custodians are also missing from the page, and there are no photos of session members, who comprise our key lay leadership. Additionally, other influential committees are missing, such as the Personnel Committee. This creates a lack of transparency and keeps many members and visitors from understanding where power and influence lay within the church, keeping it centralized rather than collective.

News and Events

The week at a glance is current, but the calendar and upcoming events are empty and many signups for volunteer opportunities have incomplete information and broken links (Open Hands Kitchen sign up is broken and NUTS is out of date). This makes it difficult for members and newcomers to get meaningfully involved and contributes to an “insider / outsider” experience for some of our congregants.

Worship, Ministries, and Music & Arts

This section seems to have complete information. It could be improved however, because the links are text based and lack color, making it difficult for those with poor eyesight to see. The

Ministries section does not include the Race Equity or Race Audit groups (these groups are entirely absent from the HPC web pages), which is a missed opportunity to demonstrate and announce our commitment to this work, as well as to include more diverse perspectives in this work.

Anti-Racist Resources

Anti-racism is a tab on our main menu, which is wonderful. However, it's also important to note that some of the work is outdated. The new reports from this team should be incorporated into the that tab in order to foster full transparency and keep the church up to date on our work. Hopefully, we can also include our Phase 3 report with measurable action items and an annual review of how the church is doing relative to anti-oppression work.

The fact that our anti-oppression work is located on the middle band lends credibility. Short videos present good, accessible information. However, the Race at HPC/2021 document uses some paternalistic terms such as 'real affection' and "much loved" (p. 5). We would suggest either changing this language or removing the report and replacing it with the more recent work of this team. Additionally, it's important to note that anti-racist efforts appear to have dwindled.

Printed Collateral

The team performed an assessment of printed collateral used in new member training and other marketing and communications efforts and identified the following opportunities for improvement:

- 1. Nicaragua Under the Sun Pamphlet:** The pamphlet regularly refers to “missions”. Partnership is a more equitable term due to the deep historical relationship of missions with colonizing forces. Additionally, there may be an association with the missions industrial complex in it’s relationship with CEPAD.
- 2. New Member Information Form:** Include an option for preferred pronouns to be more inclusive of trans / non-binary folx.
- 3. Welcome letter from Cynthia:** Remove reference to Lordship and missions.
- 4. STITCH:** Positioning the women who attend STITCH as students creates a hierarchy — even if it is a well intentioned one! The learning goes both ways, and the volunteers who teach sewing learn other valuable lessons from the women who attend the classes. Perhaps another word might serve better to deconstruct racial hierarchy here.
- 5. Stephen Ministry:** The Stephen Ministry pamphlet uses masculine pronouns for God which can easily be switched to gender neutral pronouns. Additionally, it might be important to ensure that training for Stephen Ministers includes LGBTQ+ and racial awareness training.
- 6. Connect, Serve + Grow Sheet:** It is important to identify whether gender-specific groups are welcoming to trans / non-binary folx. Is there an LGBTQ+ specific affinity group?

BOTTOM LINE: HPC Marketing and Communications efforts are overall doing fairly well, and with small tweaks can better demonstrate our dedication to antiracism.

Pastoral Care

The most resonant phrase of Highland Presbyterian Church’s Mission Statement is the phrase, “sharing hope from the heart of the Highlands.” It is featured prominently on our

church's website and repeated often in church communication. It should be. Highland Presbyterian Church has, over many decades, cultivated a deeply humane and caring culture where people connected to the church feel seen, nurtured, and loved. This aspect of the church's culture is among its greatest strengths--both with respect to building a healthy community and to glorifying God. This conviction runs deep throughout the church and naturally extends robustly into the church's pastoral care efforts. There is a broad litany of ways Highland works to lift up its congregants in times of need way too long to list--prayer, prayer blankets, home communion, meal trains, hospital visitation, teddy bears for newborns, and the list goes on. Highland's devotion to pastoral care and the energy in which that care is carried out are roundly commendable.

The deacons demonstrate important servant leadership for the church in its pastoral care efforts. In the PC(USA) *Book of Order*, the ministry of the deacon is described as "one of compassion, witness and service, sharing in the redeeming love of Jesus Christ for the poor, the hungry, the sick, the lost, the friendless, the oppressed, those burdened by unjust policies or structures, or anyone in distress." Deacons are ordained before the congregation with this charge, and they [receive training with the teaching elders of the church](#).

That being said, that training only tangentially examines matters related to racial, cultural, and socio-economic sensitivity or sexual / gender identity. In loving and supporting people who comprise the groups adumbrated above, awareness of the challenges of navigating a diverse congregation are integral.

Other notable challenges are the times for deacon meetings and the overall time commitment for this lay work. Deacon meetings take place on weeknights, and pastoral care efforts likewise often are needed in the mornings and afternoons. These scheduling matters can

preclude the participation of adults who cannot control their work schedules, leading to most of the deacons being retired and/or of a level of affluence that permits them not to have to work most weekdays. To be clear, deacons who, for whatever reason, have ample discretionary time to commit to pastoral care efforts are an immense value to the congregation—truly essential; at the same time, examining ways for the diaconate to include individuals who may only be able to contribute to pastoral care efforts in smaller chunks outside of typical workday hours.

BOTTOM LINE: HPC is an incredibly caring community, and with deeper and more holistic anti-racism and anti-oppression training, can become an even greater force for compassionate, equitable justice in our community and the world.

Leadership

Our commitment to advancing racial justice requires intentionality, action, and accountability. Inequity doesn't happen on its own. It requires multiple institutional policies and practices, whether intended or not. It is for this reason we identified key areas of leadership within the church to examine the power structure of the church, who makes the decisions, what the processes are, and how congregants are heard.

A brief survey of questions was offered to some past and present leaders, and the results of that survey were mixed when it comes to racial awareness. While some leaders demonstrate a deep understanding of the ways in which Whiteness operates both in the public sphere as well as their internal landscapes, other leaders demonstrate a decided lack of awareness. For example, there seems to be a misunderstanding regarding their own theologies of Whiteness — they believe they don't have one, and yet in the next sentence state that Whiteness represents morality

and darkness, immorality. In this way, some leaders demonstrate that they are unaware of their own subtextual and unconscious theologies of Whiteness, darkness, or are unaware of their impact on and connection to racial dynamics. There is also a sense that proximity equates to an orientation toward justice (“I learned from this teacher,” “I attended a class,” “I am friends with this person,”), when in fact such contiguity does not, in fact, liberate the internal landscape toward justice. On the other hand, many of the leaders who took the survey have a broad and diverse array of theological conversation partners and appear to have done some deep self-reflection regarding racial awareness.

Personnel Committee

Description

The Personnel Committee responsibilities include, but are not limited to the following:

- Recommend position descriptions for all staff
- Review and recommend to Session compensation packages for all staff
- Recommend personnel policies to the Session
- Encourage professional growth and development for all staff
- Recommend to the Session ways to manage risk exposures
- Implement a plan of equal employment opportunities, developed in consultation with the Presbytery and approved by the Session
- Provide a review process to assist in work planning
- Act as a support group for the pastor and other members of the staff
- Confer with the pastor on any important issues of concern

According to our church bylaws, members of all committees do not have term limits since they are run by volunteers. The Personnel Committee additionally includes the Head Pastor, at least one member from Session and a representative from the Music Ministry. The lack of term limits and the lack of representation from other groups in the church centralizes power and influence and may contribute to an “insider / outsider” experience for some members.

What is working well

The Personnel Committee has a number of professionals with vast expertise (i.e., Business Management, HR, Law), consistency and longevity of its members. The Committee has recently engaged with Simmons College to widen its net of potential job candidates.

Possible opportunities

The emphasis on professionals and professionalism can lead to a disconnect between the caring church identity and personnel processes. There is a need for improved transparency and communication between the Personnel Committee and the congregation while also respecting the committee’s need to balance confidentiality of staff, when appropriate. The Committee adheres to a policy handbook of the church and PCUSA standards that many congregants aren’t familiar with and should be if they so desire. Given the amount of turnover in recent years, providing lessons in PCUSA polity, and challenging it, when necessary, could be useful.

Finance Committee

Description

The Finance Committee oversees the financial resources of the church and exercises a stewardship responsibility to express the will of the church when financial resources are needed. (Our work is an example of that responsibility.) The Committee consists of 5 members (currently) with no term limits and is supported by three members of the staff. Committee members are recruited by a word-of-mouth process.

What is working well

The staff and congregants are able to propose ideas that need financial resources for the Committee to assess. Most activities are approved in the annual budgeting process. When a need arises that is outside the budget, the Committee reviews the need and proposes an action for the Session to approve. (This is how our work was funded.) The Committee is not a gatekeeper, it works to actively support the work the church wants to see accomplished.

In 2021, Highland's Racial Equity Task Force proposal to make a low interest loan was endorsed by the Finance Committee and approved by the HPC Session. The loan from the HPC endowment was extended to an organization that provides housing loans primarily in Louisville's west end communities, where access to home loans is challenging. (Louisville is not unique among large cities. Many have the same issue.) The approved proposal was funded by the Finance Committee and Investment Review Committee.

Possible opportunities

The Mission Study identified several areas of need. Attracting new members is an area where more work needs to be done. The current budget doesn't provide sufficient financial or staff support to make steady progress. Funds should be raised to create a funding stream to support church growth, much like HPC did when it was time to finish the renovation of the Pluene-Mobley building.

Nominating Committee

Description

The Nominating Committee performs the search and selection of church officers for election by the congregation. This Committee also selects special search committees such as a Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC). By way of Session (three-year term) and non-Session members (two-year term), the Nominating Committee annually nominates a class of Ruling Elders and Deacons. Each year, the Committee aims for a cross-section of the church by trying to balance the classes by age, gender, race, long-term, and short-term congregants.

What is working well

Term limits for committee members make it easier to diversify the committee, avoid stagnation, and avoid the perpetual concentration of power within a small group of people.

Possible opportunities

The Nominating Committee often struggles to get a consistent cross-section of the church on an annual basis. Further engagement of the existing congregation and fostering of new members is needed to widen our pool of active members interested in serving the church.

Session

Description

Presbyterian congregations are governed and led by a group of people, chosen by and representative of the congregation, called ruling elders, which serve 3-year terms. Together they serve and comprise the leadership group, called the Session. The pastor of a Presbyterian church is called a teaching elder or minister of the word and sacrament and serves as the moderator of the Session.

The session governs a particular congregation. It is made up of elders elected by the congregation, plus all the installed pastors on the staff, including pastors, co-pastors, and associate pastors. (G-10.0101)

The session is responsible for all decisions regarding the program and policies of its congregation, except for the two powers reserved for the congregation: the election of officers, including the pastoral staff, and the buying, selling, and/or mortgaging of church property. The constitution spells out 19 specific duties for the session. (G-10.0102, G-7.0304)

The session is composed of elders elected for specific terms of service as well as the installed pastor(s) and associate pastor(s). It is presided over by the moderator, who is the pastor or a minister member of the Presbytery when the pastor is not available. (G-10.0101, G-10.0103, G-14.0201)

The session elects its own clerk, who is called "Clerk of the Session." The clerk of the session must be an elder, but not necessarily one serving currently on the session. The session

elects the clerk for such term as it shall determine. The clerk of the session has many duties regarding the records of the church and serves as secretary of meetings of the congregation.

(G-9.0203, G-10.0300)

The session generally makes decisions by receiving a recommendation that comes from a committee. The group will discuss, ask questions, and either vote or send it back to the committee to answer or address specific points. Most votes are simply voice votes. Some are counted with a show of hands. If two elders request it, the vote can be private, written on cards.

Session meetings are open. Anyone may attend and ask that a question be brought up. If a personnel matter is being discussed, the guest must leave for that portion of the meeting. Congregants may also reach out through pastors, committees, members of session, or by sending an email to the entirety of the session.

What is working well?

Members of session are engaged and considerate, even when in disagreement. While personnel matters can be difficult, most items are approved and often sail through when uncontroversial. Despite some believing voices are missing, session appears to have a genuine interest in hearing all voices. Session has sent out letters, held congregational meetings, and as previously stated, has open meetings. Specifically addressing race equity, session has acknowledged the church's desire to address this through its support of the recommendations of the race equity task force.

Possible opportunities

While there is some reliance on teaching elders on rights and processes, the session is straightforward to most of its members. There is room to convey session processes more effectively to people that attend church but are not involved with the leadership of the church. This was recently highlighted by the recent departure of Rev. Doodle Harris. This was likely exacerbated by the amount of youth involved at HPC that aren't members, or whose parents are not members and the number of congregants with young children who may be involved in children's programs, but don't have the capacity to volunteer on committees or serve in leadership roles. This suggests that there is a need for time and space for youth and their parents to feel that their voices are more fully being heard.

Provide mandatory training focused on diversity and race equity for all staff, key leaders and volunteers. Addressing race equity is a clear desire of the congregants of HPC and should be matched on the agenda of session and the eventual called head of staff once the initial work of this task force is done.

BOTTOM LINE: Overall, HPC's leadership is doing well; however, multiple opportunities to provide more transparency abound, and an intentional effort to diversify and decentralize power and influence would serve HPC well in its anti-racism efforts.

Missions and Service

Church in the World

Description

Church in the World (CITW) oversees the spending of the church's Mission budget (10% of overall budget). The Committee consists of six to 10 members, including one youth member, (traditionally) with no term limits.

CITW primarily supports existing organizations, including the following five permanent ones:

- Mid-Kentucky Presbytery
- Highland Community Ministries
- Kentucky Refugee Ministries
- Cabbage Patch
- Habitat for Humanity

The Committee does continual homework and vetting of groups we work with.

What is working well?

Anyone can come to Church in the World (CITW) with ideas and the Committee does its best work when a pastor or group of people are passionate about a particular project or organization. Congregants largely engage with plug and play opportunities (one-time-only), especially if youth are involved. Our congregation does a great job stepping up with giving in times of disaster or things that are relevant in the news.

As mentioned above, the \$500,000 loan to Housing Partnership Inc. is a great testament to the anti-racist work that HPC is committing.

Possible opportunities

There is a desire to engage with the congregation more on two planes:

- Create increased awareness of what CITW is and what it does
- Cast a wider net of people to participate in projects and potentially for those on the Committee itself

Conversations have taken place about taking on root causes to the organizations we support but haven't advanced beyond talks.

A Reflection On Our Experience

It is important to note also that during our Phase 1 work, this team was faced with some of the more subtle ways that Whiteness attempts to stymie anti-racist efforts. While we attempted to take an honest — if, at times, painful — look at our racial history, our work was accused of being revisionist and our critique of systemic supremacy was taken as a personal affront by some rather than an invitation into deep self-reflection. Our work was delayed due to an insistence on precise language and centralized oversight rather than prioritized for its importance, and some of our team members have had to endure long diatribes or uncomfortable glares by those who disapprove of our work. The concern for some seemed to be more focused on things such as grammatical errors, process, and authorship rather than the actual racial injustice that our congregation has indicated it cares about. In this, we were not doing the work of the church but rather became a tool of White supremacy. Though these voices were few, they were loud and exhausting, and more than a few of our members were tempted to quit this good work. This is, of

course, the goal of these types of classic White maneuvers — to exhaust the resistance to supremacy culture by speaking so loudly they take up all the space in the room. These voices were given far more platform than is representative of what our congregation wants, as indicated by the mission study completed in May of 2021, and though they delayed our work, they did not ultimately succeed in stopping it entirely.

We want to recognize, too, that we point this out not to cast blame, but as a matter of pastoral concern. It is not a surprise that our church, given its location and history, would have participated in White supremacy. Christianity's history, after all, is deeply embedded in it, so how could we expect our church to be any different? Nor should we be surprised by the forceful response of Whiteness when it feels fearful and threatened. This, too, is a matter of pastoral concern. We point these responses out in order to accomplish some important things: first, to recognize the ways in which Whiteness plays out when it is being resisted; second, to invite members into meaningful conversations based on curiosity, intentionality, and a desire for real change; and finally, to invite all of us who feel the deep discomfort of this work to notice, interrogate and practice agency over our defensiveness and the ways it helps to perpetuate supremacy culture in our church and beyond.

Conclusion

There is much to be celebrated about HPC's journey toward racial justice, but there is still a lot of work to be done. This should not be surprising, as the fight for racial justice is not a destination, but rather an ongoing effort. Our Phase 3 report will include specific action items that we can take as an organization to ensure that our church continues this journey and employs

a continued practice of self-reflection, awareness, and action. Continual review of our operations, decentralizing power, and expanding transparency will all be important parts of our efforts. It is also important that we become aware of the ways in which Whiteness works to stall and obstruct the efforts of justice by recognizing its values — perfectionism, precision, and professionalism, for example, can be lofty goals that are seemingly well-intended, but can also be tools of dominance that can frustrate and exhaust efforts toward justice. The Race Equity team is excited about the progress we've made in identifying these issues and have already begun the work of laying out our Phase 3 recommendations.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Phase 3 report is to provide actionable, measurable and practical steps that HPC can take that will help us become a more inclusive, welcoming, and truly anti-racist church. Based on our findings in Phases 1 and 2, we have assembled a list of action items that we believe are not only feasible but will be effective in creating meaningful change in our organization.

In order for this change to be truly meaningful, however, it must leap off the page and into real life. That's why we strongly suggest that these actions be measured and quantified on a regular basis with annual audits of our effectiveness. This is also important to help ensure that as an organization, we never become comfortable and complacent, thinking we have "arrived" at an anti-racist stance when indeed, as a primarily White church, this will be a lifelong endeavor for many of us.

We have broken up these action items into categories for easier implementation. It is also important to recognize that this work will be the labor not just of the anti-racism task force but of the whole of HPC, and the cooperation of leaders from all departments will be an important part of our success.

One of the key changes we hope to implement is a deeper intentionality on the part of HPC in the ways in which we approach racialized contexts and a more effective method of communicating that intention to all members and stakeholders. Further, especially when we are in racialized contexts, we aspire to create experiences that have reciprocal benefits for all.

LEADERSHIP

Leadership is paramount when it comes to the success of our anti-racism efforts. For this reason, we make the following suggestions:

1. All leadership (pastors, staff + lay leaders) participate in annual or biannual anti-racism, anti-bias, and anti-oppression training, including training in the deconstruction of Whiteness (with the purpose of rediscovering self-love), as a matter of policy.

Specifically, the training should include practical methods to:

- a. Look for and remove white supremacist policies and practices as ongoing behavior.
- b. Hold one another accountable in all-white spaces.
- c. In meetings ask:
 - Who most benefits from this decision?
 - Who is most harmed by it?
 - Whose interests are missing?
 - How could this action be changed to be more socially just?¹
2. Make antiracism training available to the congregation (including youth).
3. Add a segment on anti-racism to the new member class.
4. Promote Race Equity Task Force to a full committee with a budget (on an ongoing basis rather than a time-bound task force).

¹ Brookfield, S. D., & Hess, M. E. (2021). *Becoming a White antiracist: A practical guide for educators, leaders, and activists*. Stylus Publishing.

5. Allow Race Equity Task Force to participate in the interview process for the lead pastor in order to have meaningful inquiry / investment regarding their commitment to racial equity.
6. Develop curriculum to help identify internalized Whiteness (see #2).
7. Review + dismantle structural obstacles, many of which are embedded in the procedures of the Presbyterian denomination. This might include:
 - a. Identifying ways in which process / procedure (i.e. committees) prohibit anti-racist work;
 - b. Calling out / identifying / inviting people into the adaptive practices that bring this work off the paper and into reality.
 - c. Maintaining a resistance to the status quo and “the way we’ve always done things” by Highland Presbyterian and its influence on the Presbytery.
8. Review hiring processes (including the way in which the personnel committee operates) to focus on outcomes for diverse and just hiring + employee review practices.
9. Develop partnerships with Louisville BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) churches.
10. Leverage our geographic connection with the Seminary and the Presbytery by collaborating on anti-racism initiatives.
11. Ensure our next youth / children’s pastor is aligned with anti-racism by:
 - a. Establishing a clear racial equity criteria before the hiring process begins (including the creation of the Ministry Information Form)
 - b. Involving the Race Equity Committee in the hiring process

12. Develop specific action items that align with being a Matthew 25 Church to eradicate systemic poverty, racism and build congregational vitality by hosting information sessions, encouraging action, and actively participating in community organizing, events that support the collective and structural change.
13. Establish baseline metrics and then continue annual reviews to measure progress in all of these areas.

MUSIC + LITURGY

The music program at HPC is a popular tool of communication, worship, and congregational interaction and is therefore a highly visible modality for displaying anti-racist efforts. Our suggestions are as follows:

1. Regularly employ more varied, multi-cultural liturgical resources from the global majority, as well as going off book with liturgy.
2. Incorporate more collaboration and ideas into our music, specifically with local artists who might bring varying voices and styles to our worship.
3. Seek opportunities to have a variety of diverse musicians, composers and performing artists that can help us celebrate and worship in multi-faceted ways.
4. Embrace the freedom we have to venture away from the Book of Common Worship in order to intentionally provide space for more diverse voices in worship.

CHILDREN + YOUTH

Children and Youth are a vibrant part of our congregation and represent a bright future. In many ways, they drive the anti-racist ethos in our church, and we can look to them for many suggestions and ideas around anti-oppression work.

1. Create a space for the visibility and uplift of the youth and childrens' voices (including surveys to create a better feedback loop to discern their needs as well as possible participation in committee work).
2. Highlight and learn from work being done in the Weekday School.
3. Develop a communication pathway for youth to feel empowered to authentically influence the direction of the church.
4. Make regular, intentional excursions / experiences around racial and social justice issues available (for example, the Civil Rights Tour), and create space for integration and application of this learning.

BUILDINGS + GROUNDS

Our building is historical and integral to our ministry. As such an important part of the work we do, we have the following suggestions for how our building can become more inclusive:

1. Improve building access to increase community stewardship.
2. Review how we are utilizing the building space in order to devote physical resources to the service of the community.
3. Refurbish the library to update with anti-racist titles.

MARKETING + COMMUNICATIONS

Marketing + Communications are an important part of how we tell the world who we are and what we care about. In order to communicate that we place a high importance on race equity, we make the following suggestions:

1. Create a concrete public statement (and place in public places) about race.
2. Create a Task Force to address signage and visual representation on walls.
3. Schedule a meeting between the Race Equity Committee and the Website Task Force to ensure our website accurately represents our anti-racist efforts.
4. Remove the current statement on race from the main tab and replace it with this team's reports.

PASTORAL CARE

Pastoral care is a key initiative of any church, and so much good can be done with this type of ministry — but so, too, can a lot of harm be done, even unintentionally. Those offering pastoral care must be racially aware and equipped to manage their own racial lens as well as the racialized worldview of those we serve. To that end, we make the following suggestions:

1. Deacons undergo lay leaders' anti-racism / anti-bias training (refer to leadership section).
2. We create a visionary statement called Keys to Inclusivity by which all members, but especially Deacons and those providing pastoral care, abide, as follows:

KEYS TO INCLUSIVITY

Openness:

- We demonstrate a willingness to listen and believe other people — especially marginalized communities — when they tell us about their oppression. For example:
- We offer the use of space in the HPC building and encourage members to attend BIPOC led community events, especially those geared toward racial justice.
- We are willing to honor the leadership of BIPOC in matters of systemic racism.
- We offer volunteer hours to BIPOC led community organizations.

Authenticity:

- We see each other as individuals first (i.e., I'm talking with Ainsley, not a Black man, or I'm working with Megan, not a female pastor), while acknowledging the impacts of systemic racism, racial identity, and their intersection, especially the ways in which our own privileged embodiment may be at play.

Community

- We actively engage in our local and global community while resisting paternalism and White saviorism.
- We seek to learn from our community as much as we seek to serve it.
- We are deeply aware of our interdependence on communities near and far, and commit to maintain good partnerships with our siblings.

Humility:

- We listen more than we talk, especially when feeling defensive.

- We practice curiosity rather than certainty.
- We are willing to question the “way we’ve always done things.”

Intentionality

- We push ourselves past loving the idea of diversity to actually loving Black and Brown individuals.
- We hold paradox in racialized dialogue, understanding that these conversations will be nuanced, complex, and not without missteps.
- We create space for open dialogue and the development of relationships with those who are different from us.
- We take a holistic approach to our work, recognizing the importance of individual change, strengthening interpersonal relationships, as well as looking at how the system is functioning in policies, culture and power dynamics.

MISSIONS + SERVICE

In order to avoid missions and service that perpetuate performative justice, White saviorism, and paternalism in our work, it is imperative that HPC engages in ongoing self-reflection with an eye toward the future. In other words, we must not just feed hungry bellies now, but as we do that work, we must also be forward thinking enough to consider how we might affect food insecurity from a systemic standpoint in the future. We can participate in the necessary self-reflection that is an ongoing part of our racial deconstruction while also actively pursuing justice in real and practical ways.

To that end, we suggest the following action steps:

1. Educate the congregation on the importance of the loan to The Housing Partner, Inc., what makes their work necessary, and how their work helps to dismantle systemic inequity.
2. Continue to identify strategies and target resources to address root causes of inequity. Strategies should be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely.
3. Volunteer in and partner with BIPOC communities, while letting those communities tell us what they need (i.e., avoid paternalism).
4. Have the Race Equity Committee explore forming a Truth, Reconciliation and Reparation Council of Churches for Louisville.

**HOW MANY BOOKS ARE THE ADULTS GOING TO READ BEFORE
THEY DO SOMETHING?**

- HPC Youth