



WALKING TOGETHER IN CHRIST

Standing With People of Color

Updates from the Standing With People of Color Committee

In the third chapter of the Letter to the Galatians, the Apostle Paul proclaimed:

“In Christ’s family there can be no division into Jew and non-Jew, slave and free, male and female. Among us you are all equal. That is, we are all in a common relationship with Jesus Christ. Also, since you are Christ’s family, then you are Abraham’s famous ‘descendant,’ heirs according to the covenant promises.”

(Galatians 3:28-29, The Message)

And in the Letter to the Colossians, Paul wrote:

“So if you’re serious about living this new resurrection life with Christ, act like it... You’re done with that old life. It’s like a filthy set of ill-fitting clothes you’ve stripped off and put in the fire. Now you’re dressed in a new wardrobe. Every item of your new way of life is custom-made by the Creator, with his label on it. All the old fashions are now obsolete. Words like Jewish and non-Jewish, religious and irreligious, insider and outsider, uncivilized and uncouth, slave and free, mean nothing. From now on everyone is defined by Christ, everyone is included in Christ.” (Colossians 3:1, 9-11, The Message)

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Goals for 2025

Set by SWPOC
Coordinating Committee

- Develop team for ongoing work after 2025, with broad representation of church
- Connections made or attempted with all districts, congregations, church agencies, and specific communities and groups within the church
- Launch and equip racial justice educator/organizer network
- Invite each district and all congregations to conduct educational efforts as part of this initiative
- Lift up a minimum 10 contemporary stories of Brethren working for racial justice
- Equip and accompany organizers to develop at least 5 organizing projects at any level of denomination, community, congregation

Prompted by a query from congregations in the Southern Ohio and Kentucky District, the Annual Conference in 2022 declared:

We recognize the struggles faced by many of our sisters and brothers of color and believe the church should be agents of change. We encourage congregations, districts, agencies, and other denominational entities to continue to follow the teachings of Jesus by living out the great commandment of loving our neighbor as ourselves. We understand the great diversity that the word neighbor implies. So, we encourage congregations to study the teachings of Jesus and how they apply to our relationships with all people of color, to express solidarity with all people of color, offer sanctuary from all forms of violence, and identify and dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions, and then begin to live out those findings by being Jesus in the neighborhood.

In response, a Standing with People of Color coordinating committee composed of people from the Southern Ohio/Kentucky District, staff from On Earth Peace, and representatives from the Church of the Brethren Discipleship and Leadership Formation staff, developed a vision for an initiative focusing on Coordination, Connection, Education, and Action.

Individuals and groups within the Church of the Brethren have worked to understand the biases that people inherit simply by being born into the dominant culture and venture to address problems of discrimination. The Standing with People of Color coordinating committee has offered a way for those working on these issues to come together. We have been blessed to hear stories of the efforts being made within congregations and communities.

As part of this initiative, the Holy Spirit has moved our siblings in Christ to promote Bible study, book study groups, dialogue, publishing of articles, and other actions as we seek to walk together with followers of Jesus from many ethnic groups. More than 85 people have been trained to facilitate circles of sharing and listening using the 7 Prompts, and they are leading sessions in their congregations, districts, and communities. The 7 Prompts guide and Beloved model have brought together communities across the church to listen and explore. Yet, we know that the work is far from done and we continue to pray, to plan, to organize, and to challenge others in the church toward the vision of Revelation 7:9.

GOOD NEWS AND EXPERIENCES OF GROWTH THROUGH THE STANDING WITH PEOPLE OF COLOR INITIATIVE

After participating in a 7 Prompt Conversation facilitators training, Harriet Hamer of the Crest Manor (Indiana) congregation shared this gem about the experience: ***“People were willing to be vulnerable.”***

After a 7 Prompts event sponsored by the Crest Manor congregation, Reynaldo Hernández commented, “The discussion subjects grew more challenging toward the end. They called for more creative thinking and risk of discomfort.” Reynaldo also noted, ***“as it stands, it needs to be followed up by an action-oriented workshop.*** GlendaRae [Hernández] in particular, having extensive experience in the field of anti-racism, sensed that the session ended with loose ends in that it did not lead us in an action direction. ***There is a good comfort level in talking about race. There is less of a comfort level in taking action to be a reconciling and alliance-creating force.”***

Shared Stories

More Nuggets

The West Charleston and the Lower Miami congregations (S. Ohio and Kentucky), two churches with a wide range of diversity, met together. Caleb Kragt observed, "The conversation at tables was rich and engaging. I hope everyone gets to experience the blessing of sharing deeply around a multicultural table as folks dive into these prompts."

The Pacific Northwest District set aside half of their usual district conference business to experience all seven of the "7 Prompts. A main takeaway for Colleen Michael was Barbara Daté's recommendation to engage further with someone expressing an opinion different from one's own: "Help me understand."

Looking to the Future

As the Standing with People of Color coordinating committee looks to the future, we seek to help the Church of the Brethren grow in love and respect for all ethnic groups long beyond the 2025 Annual Conference.

We ask each district and congregation to conduct educational efforts to help members understand more deeply the bias that we have absorbed as a result of being born into this unjust and hierarchical culture. We must look to the hope that we have in the teachings of Jesus that call for his followers to the love of neighbor.

We call on the church to work for racial justice at all levels of denomination, congregation, and community by developing projects with specific goals in partnership with communities of color.

Above all, we hope to lay a foundation for the deep renewal of the church, to help us more faithfully follow Jesus, dismantling racism where we discover it and becoming a dependable sanctuary from all forms of violence—a Beloved Community that cherishes all people as children of God. **We call on the people of God to pray for sisters and brothers who face discrimination because of their race or culture and to pray that the Church of the Brethren would be a loving community for people of all races, every nation, every tribe, and every language.**



Church of the Brethren
Continuing the work of Jesus. Peacefully. Simply. Together.

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