



April 23, 2008

To: Pastors, Specialized Clergy and Clerks of Session

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who lived and died and lives forevermore to set us free. In Christ's death and resurrection the dividing walls have been broken down, and we are one with Christ and with each other. But much in our world denies the power of Christ's victory.

Events in the last several weeks have brought those of us here in the Chicago area and throughout the country into a renewed awareness of the impact of race in our society. Members of our churches have been hurt, disturbed, angered and confused by what they have seen and heard in the news media and in political ads in relation to the issue of race and regarding Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago and their former pastor, Rev. Dr. Jeremiah Wright.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has responded, along with other denominations, to the invitation to enter into sacred conversations about race on Trinity Sunday, May 18, 2008. The Multicultural Church Ministry Team of the Presbytery of Chicago is writing to encourage you and your congregation to enter into such conversations. We believe that this is an important step in furthering the broader conversation that needs to take place in our communities, in our nation, and especially among the people of God.

As John Thomas, the General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ, has said:

“Sacred conversations are never easy conversations. This is especially true when honest talk about race confronts us with a painful past and won’t let us ignore the troubles of our present day. That is why sacred conversations require a readiness to see one another as sacred in spite of our differences, and why the sacred places where these conversations take place need to be respected.”

We ask you to consider the variety of forms this sacred conversation might take in your congregation: in Christian education classes and events, in sermons, in prayers and litanies, and whatever other forms might be most appropriate and engaging in your church community.

We encourage you to look at resources on the websites of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (www.pcusa.org), the United Church of Christ (www.ucc.org) and the National Council of Churches (www.nccusa.org). A PCUSA newsbrief dated April 7, titled "Peacemaking Program highlights resources to aid dialogue on race related issues," identifies some resources available from the office on Racial Justice as well as the Peacemaking Program. You can find it online at:

<http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08265.htm>. Additional resources for Antiracism work are posted at: <http://www.pcusa.org/racialjustice/tools-racism.htm#1>.

The Multicultural Church Ministry Team is putting together a packet of printed resources which you may request by calling Carlene Hyrams or Bonita Gilchrist at the presbytery office (312-243-8300, extensions 1312 and 1310, respectively.) If you find additional resources that you believe would be of value to other pastors and churches, please communicate that information via email Bgilchrist@chicagopresbytery.org.

Forty years ago the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, “Let us stand with a greater determination. And let us move on in these powerful days of challenge, to make America what it ought to be.” Let us rise to this challenge by the grace and power of God’s Spirit.

Faithfully yours,

Multicultural Church Ministry Team

A Mission Team of Advance Justice Mission Priority Leadership Team

The Presbytery of Chicago

The Covenant Partners of the Multicultural Church Ministry Team are:

Second Presbyterian Church, Chicago

Fourth Presbyterian Church, Chicago

Edgewater Presbyterian Church, Chicago

Pullman Presbyterian Church, Chicago

Ravenswood Presbyterian Church, Chicago

First Presbyterian Church, Evanston

Christ Presbyterian Church, Hanover Park

South Asian Presbyterian New Church Development, Wheeling

The team includes Presbyterian pastors, elders, seminarians and lay church members committed to multicultural ministry and outreach in the Presbytery of Chicago.