



Newberg First United Methodist Church

A vibrant church that loves God, grows together, and serves others.

January 12, 2021

Dear Friends of Newberg First United Methodist Church,

Over the past several years, the Church and the public have become increasingly aware of the ongoing racial injustices committed in the United States by individuals and systems. The protests of 2020 in response to police brutality against black and brown bodies constituted the largest civil rights movement in history. Many white citizens seeking to be allies to persons of color discovered that simply not being racist is no longer enough—**we must now become actively anti-racist** in order to dismantle systems that oppress racial minorities. Therefore, the Church Council of Newberg First United Methodist Church is announcing a church-wide **2021 Focus on Anti-Racism**. Throughout the year, we as a congregation will intentionally learn, reflect, and take action to fulfill our baptismal vow to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves.

Rooted in the biblical assertion that **all people are made in the image of God** (*Gen 1:26*), the United Methodist Church recognizes racism as sin and affirms the ultimate and temporal worth of all persons (*UMC Social Principles: The Social Community*). In 2016, the UMC adopted Resolution #3376 “White Privilege in the United States,” which asks local churches with predominantly white memberships a) to reflect on their openness to welcome persons without regard to race and allow them full participation in the church and community, b) to discern and confess past and current participation in racist practices, and c) to work together to restore the broken body of Christ.

As part of our 2021 Focus on Anti-Racism, **the church will offer a broad range of opportunities to engage in the work of becoming anti-racist**. Such opportunities will include a worship series that celebrates Black History Month, book study small groups, movie viewings, workshops by guest presenters, legislative action, and more. These opportunities will be offered virtually or in-person, depending on the status of the pandemic.

The NFUMC Church Council asks that **each ministry group of the congregation commit to hosting at least one activity** to support our church-wide focus. Additionally, we ask **each member of the congregation make attending these opportunities a high-priority** for personal and congregational spiritual formation.

In order to grow during this 2021 Focus on Anti-Racism, the members of the NFUMC Church Council have covenanted together to take the following actions this year:

- Take the online course “You Are Here: First Steps for White Christians on Race and Racism” offered by The General Commission on Religion and Race of the UMC.
- Conduct a review of the images of Jesus displayed throughout the church and adjust our artwork as needed to represent more faithful, historical, and global perspectives on the identity of Jesus Christ.
- Read and discuss the book *So You Want to Talk About Race* by Ijeoma Oluo.
- Direct the church Finance Committee and staff to fully pay our church’s portion of the conference askings for Hispanic Ministries in the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference.

The work of becoming anti-racist will not always be easy. We acknowledge that people will enter this work with different life experiences and different interpretations of terminology, including *racism*, *prejudice*, *white privilege*, *white supremacy*, etc. We invite folks to engage in these conversations with humility and vulnerability, with an eagerness to listen and learn, and with a posture that presumes good intentions from all participants.

In addition to sharing events through our “Joyful News” weekly email, we have added a new page to our church website to organize and promote the activities and resources we will be using throughout the year for the 2021 Focus on Anti-Racism. Find it at newbergfumc.org/anti-racism.

May God bless our learnings, convict our hearts where needed, and lead us into co-creating a more just world for all.

In Ministry Together,

The NFUMC Church Council: Chris Lee, Meg Lewis-Price, Bob Knowles, Greg Pitman, Syd Wermlinger, Patty White, Sue Chambers, Brent Heimuller, and Rev. Casey Banks.