

POLICY REGARDING ANTI-RACISM
East Central Ontario Regional Council

POLICY NAME: Policy regarding Anti-Racism	<i>Date Approved:</i>
	<i>Review date:</i>
Purpose: The purpose of this policy is to ensure behavior compliant with The UCC's declaration to becoming an Anti-Racist Denomination of October 2020	

Preamble

This document outlines the East Central Ontario Regional Council's policy and best practices regarding respect for the dignity and worth of every person and a commitment to eliminating racism in the life and ministry of the East Central Ontario Regional Council. This includes all communities of faith and those leading and attending gatherings of clusters, networks, staff-led training, and partner events.

Policy Statement

It is the policy of East Central Ontario Regional Council to acknowledge that racism exists and further, to enact its obligation to principles of procedural fairness and justice as defined by Church and protected by the Human Rights Code of the Province of Ontario.

The Regional Council acknowledge and reinforce that each person has the right to live, worship, receive services, and participate fully in an environment free of discrimination and harassment based on bias, bigotry or prejudice against a race or racialization of an individual or a group within Church and Canadian society. Racism will not be tolerated in ECORC and its member communities of faith. We are committed to eliminating racism.

Definitions and Understandings

The Institution/Structure – refers to The East Central Ontario Regional Council of The United Church of Canada.

Race - shall include: race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship and religions, in accordance with The United Church of Canada's Anti-Racism Statement and the prohibited grounds of Ontario's Human Rights Code.

Racism - is alive in Church and Society; we begin by acknowledging that racism exists. It is a learned behaviour based on fear and ignorance of the unknown and personalized perceptions and assumptions. Racism can be blatant, subtle, hidden or internalized and is often denied. It can be practiced culturally, environmentally, structurally, and institutionalized

Impact of Racism - It is our understanding that Racism will destroy the fabric of our pluralistic, multicultural society we live in, if it remains unchallenged and it is not stopped. ECORC faces its obligation to principles of procedural fairness, and Justice as defined by Church and protected by the Human Rights Code of the Province of Ontario.

The purpose of this Policy is:

To promote the vision and mission of ECORC towards Becoming an Anti-Racist Institution in this Region.

To strengthen Church and Community awareness of the existence of racism in all its forms, in Ontario, in order that we can eliminate it; and

To provide a model through behaviour and education, thereby creating the framework for all United Church of Canada members and adherents to work together in achieving the Strategic Directions of this Policy.

ECORC Commits to:

- * recognize racist attitudes and behaviours at all levels of the organization
- * recognize attitudes, language, humour that encourages racism
- * confront denial and micro aggressions in appropriate ways
- * address the issues of Anti-Racism and implicit bias at all levels of ECORC life (Regional Council, Teams/Forums, Communities of Faith, etc.)
- * unlearn racism
- * unite against racism
- * eliminate racism
- * Admit to and address the lack of knowledge of Canadian and Newcomer religious and cultural diversity

We encourage you to read the background information attached below.

Rationale and Background Information

“We are called to speak and act, not to be silent.....Today, and in the weeks, months, and years to come, our raised voices will articulate concrete actions for healing wounds and transforming systems and structures to a diverse and inclusive society”

ECORC statement of June 12, 2020

RACISM “is at its heart the belief that we are born different, deep inside our bodies, perhaps even in character and intellect, as well as in outward appearance. It’s the notion that groups of people have certain innate qualities that not only are visible at the surface of their skins but also run down into their innate capacities, that perhaps even help define the passage of progress, the success and failure of the nations our ancestors came from”.

An ecumenical partner of The United Church of Canada, defines Racism in the following way: Racism is the belief, reinforced by power and privilege that one race is innately superior to other races. Systemic racism occurs when the power and privilege of one racial group results in the exclusion, oppression or exploitation of other groups of different racial origin. Racism also manifests itself in individuals in the form of racial harassment when a person or persons belonging to a privileged group behaves in ways that intimidate, demean, or undermine the dignity of others on the basis of their race”.

Acknowledging and agreeing with ECORC’S declaration that “racism is present in our society and our church, and throughout time has manifested itself in many forms in varying degrees,” the core leadership anti-racism group of FNJT met in August 2020 to begin the process of standing together against racism in our Region. Following many discussions, we present to you the rationale, and an anti-racism policy, for consideration. Our assumptions and researched ideas are presented under the following categories:

The Theological case – through the lens of racism.

As believers our theological perspective is the foundation for understanding our solutions to racism and all forms of discrimination. Therefore, we offer three major areas of Christian thought, that make a contribution to our work in this area:

(a) The all encompassing nature of the Divine as understood in the Judaic-Christian Tradition. Living in the 21st century this leads us to recognize the integrity of the Search for God by those outside our Faith. (See General Council- “Report of the Commission on World Mission” - November 1966:137.)

(b) Created in the Image of God. Working against racism we do not view respect for human life as only one value among many. For us as Christians, being created in the mage of God is a non-negotiable Theological principle. Our understanding of the sanctity of human life flows directly from the proposition that it was not we who created God in our image but God created humanity in God’s image. This means that each of us in ECORC must wrestle with the sources of extremism, racism, and all other discriminatory practices that compromise human dignity. We

apply this principle towards all immigrants and refugees living and working in East Central Ontario, (towns and rural areas) as well as established non-white citizens of various cultures and religions.

(c) The Trinity – through the lens of racism. As followers of Christ, and Canadian citizens, we live in an age in which several diverse destinies are interconnected. The same is true of East Central Ontario geographical region. Therefore, when difference leads to subtle segregation and obvious conflict, we all lose. When it leads to mutual enrichment, all sides gain. The concept of the Trinity supports our sense of enlargement by the presence of others. Each particular person lives in the conscious presence of difference, co-existing within the spiritual energy of the Divine, while remaining secure and connected with God’s substance of Goodness and Wisdom.

The Trinity sustains and moves our body, mind, and spirit towards building concrete relationships with diverse neighbours throughout ECORC, making space for one another, overcoming long histories of estrangement and bitterness. Its spiritual power does not diminish difference. The three-persons are not threatened by one another’s presence and thoughtful activity. Their inter-dependence is a model of balance, respect for the particular and unique contribution each offers. Here we witness unity within diversity.

God calls us to respect the goodwill and dignity of those unlike us. Our Trinitarian principles stir us away from racism and an artificial uniformity. Their strength and glory is Diversity. The communication of our spiritual and theological values underlying the work against racism is crucial. To be deprived of these resources is to disadvantage any significant movement for moral and social change.

The Biblical Case – through the lens of Racism.

A Church with Purpose: Towards an Ecclesiology for The United Church of Canada in the 21st century, the report to the 41st General Council (2012), declares: “The church does not belong to humans but to God through Christ.....The UCC is governed by scripture...”

Writing as an Orthodox Jew, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks reminds us that “every great faith has within it harsh texts which, read literally, can be taken to endorse narrow particularism, suspicion of strangers, and intolerance toward others. Every great faith also has within it sources that emphasize kinship with the stranger, empathy with the outsider, the courage that leads people to extend a hand across boundaries of estrangement or hostility. The choice is ours. Will the generous texts of our tradition serve as interpretive keys to the rest, or will the abrasive passages determine our ideas of what we are and what we are called to do? No tradition is free from the constant need to reinterpret, to apply eternal truths to an ever changing world, to listen to what the message of scripture requires of us, here, now”.

In our focus as UCC members *Becoming an Anti-Racist Denomination*, the East Central Ontario Regional Council will be inspired and sustained by scripture, its biblical principles of Justice and Mercy as found in the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, Ezekiel. Within the **Hebrew Scriptures**, fertile interpretive potential exists in (a) the heritage of Abraham, which Jews, Christians and Muslims claim as their own, (b) the covenant with Noah – the moral basis of a shared humanity, (c) the story of Creation with its astonishing diversity of life forms, (d) the

concept of covenant which became the central form of relationship, laden with religious and moral significance....Covenant is the attempt to create partnership without dominance or submission. In Deut. 29:14-15 we are handed an interpretive key for our day, by Moses showing that covenants are intergenerational, reminding us that we are guardians of the past for the sake of the future. (Sacks 2003).

Racism keeps people enslaved. Part of our journey in Becoming an anti-racist church is the awareness from History that the use of the Bible for slavery was both strong and consistent. There was, however, a moral case to be made, and the morality for that case was made from the Bible itself. Here, the Bible's moral principles stood against the social practices to be found within biblical stories. Principle took precedence over practice and claimed for itself the sanction of the Bible (Gomes 1996). Racism in Canada is connected to the history of slavery and colonialism -(note that in 2012 the United Church repudiated the Doctrine of Discovery). A key for reading, interpreting, and applying the **New Testament** in the context of racism, is the understanding that biblical texts used to justify racism were all historically, social and economically conditioned. Today, in the Canadian context, these need to be "overruled and superseded by the biblical principles of love and charity towards neighbours as exemplified in the teachings of Jesus."

English Methodist evangelist John Wesley made this case against the slave trade in English North America - "inconsistent with an understanding of the New Testament's paramount teachings on spiritual rebirth, sanctification, and evangelism.....The Bible could not be used to justify actions contrary to the moral law of Christ" (Gomes 1996).

Both the Hebrew scriptures and the New Testament provide the moral mandate, and clear moral principles for our Becoming an Anti-Racist Denomination. For us in East Central Ontario Region, UCC Theologian Robert C. Fennell provides clarity through his statement that "The UCC has not relegated the Bible to the status of "mere myth", one more curious document in the vast smorgasbord of spirituality. Indeed, it remains central for the denomination, its life and its work" (Schweitzer, Fennell, Bourgeois : 2019).

The Ecclesial Case: Drawn from the UCC Anti-Racism Policy Statement

We believe we are all equal before God.

We believe racism is a sin and violates God's desire for humanity.

We believe racism is present in our society and in our church, and throughout time has manifested itself in many forms in varying degrees.

We believe that the struggle against racism is a continuous effort. Therefore, our anti-racism policy statement is only a first step. It provides the basis for the creation of a Church (and a Regional Council) where all are welcome, where all feel welcome, and where diversity is as natural as breathing.

We believe change is possible. We believe in forgiveness, reconciliation, and transformation and the potential to learn from stories and experiences.

We believe we are all called to work against racism and for a society in which the words of the gospel are realized among us.

We believe in a vision of society in which the words of the gospel are realized.

The Scientific case against Racism (one example)

The book *Superior* (2019) tells the disturbing story of the persistent thread of belief in biological racial differences in the world of science. “A worldwide network of intellectual racists and segregationists quietly founded journals and funded research, providing the kind of shoddy studies that were ultimately cited in Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray’s 1994 title *The Bell Curve*, which purported to show differences in intelligence among races”..... “At a time when racialized nationalisms are a resurgent threat throughout the world, *Superior* is a much-needed examination of the insidious and destructive nature of race science – and a powerful reminder that, biologically, we are all far more alike than different”.

Author of the above mentioned book, Angela Saini is an award-winner. Her work has appeared on the BBC and in the Guardian, New Scientist, Wired, the Economist, and Science. A former Knight Science Journalism Fellow at The Massachusetts Institute of Technology, she won the American Association for the Advancement of Science’s Kavli Science Journalism gold award in 2015. Saini has a Master’s in Engineering from Oxford University.

Since the Province of Ontario is influenced by British History, and East Central Ontario is consciously aware of its past, the scientifically researched data presented by Saini keeps us relevant and informed on the topic of racism, and helps us promote The United Church of Canada’s goal in Becoming an Anti-racist Church. You are invited to read her book, while I quote from one piece of scientific evidence for our document:

I saw it for myself at London’s Natural History Museum in early 2018, a package no fancier than a bunch of old bones.

The skeleton is laid out neatly in a small corner of the museum....this is the frame of one of the oldest dead bodies ever found in the country, some ten thousand years old. And it’s full of secrets. Almost as soon as the bones were discovered in caves in Cheddar Gorge in Somerset in 1903, giving their owner the name Cheddar Man, people began to wonder how this individual must have looked. They wanted to put a face to one of our early ancestors.

This is where the genetic study of the bones of our distant ancestors, of their ancient DNA, came in. It has achieved what the Human Genome Diversity Project couldn’t. The DNA of living people offers a limited and fuzzy picture of the past. When it comes to tracking human migration patterns over thousands of years, even archaeology and linguistics can’t provide all the detail that ancient DNA can. By around 2010 genetic sequencing techniques had developed far enough to tease out highly reliable samples of DNA from ancient specimens (a bone just behind the ear turned out to be best) and use them to help reconstruct entire genomes of long-dead people. The use of this technique has mushroomed in the last decade. It has been credited with solving historical mysteries at a stroke. Thousands of skeletons from all over the world have been analyzed already, and as the British public were about to learn in early 2018, Cheddar Man was one of them.

Scientists at the Natural History Museum and University College London revealed that Cheddar Man probably had blue eyes and curly hair – no surprise here. But what came as a real shock to many Britons was that his bones also carried genetic signatures of skin pigmentation more commonly found in sub-Saharan Africa. It was probable that Cheddar Man had dark skin. So dark, in fact, that by today’s standards

he would be considered black. The revelation.....made front-page news and television bulletins.

“The whole Cheddar Man thing, I was amazed initially at just how much press coverage it got,” I’m told by Mark Thomas, of University College London, who worked on the finding.....He is one of the world’s leading experts on ancient DNA, and from this position of authority he has a tendency to tell it how it is. For geneticists like him, the Cheddar Man discovery was unremarkable given what they already knew. They had more or less expected it.....Evidence as it stands indicates that, like the Cheddar Man, many other pre-farming hunter-gatherers who lived in Western Europe during this time and at least up until as recently as seven thousand years ago would have had light eyes, dark hair, and dark skin, and that the first farmers to come into the region later from the east brought with them their lighter skin and brown eyes”. (*Superior*, pages 110-112)

The Historical Case – through the lens of Racism

All religious practice declares that we inherit certain kinds of insight and perspective; and that to understand why we think as we do, we need to be aware of History, reminds a former Archbishop of Canterbury. He invites us to acknowledge and accept the fact that for most of the human race the values of society are still shaped by one or another history of religious belief.

The United Church of Canada has reflected on its history of racism in church and society. The institution has been aware, since 1947, “of racism directed against Jews, Chinese, Japanese, East Indians, and Eastern Europeans”. While in the late 1940’s the Church had spoken against racial discrimination experienced by the Japanese, and Chinese, it had also “asked the Government to prioritize immigrants who were of British stock and were healthy and able to work.” (GC12:73).

The February and March 1956 publications of *The Observer* validate the fact that racism was well and alive in Canada. “It wasn’t until 1960 that it (UCC) first referred to racism against African Canadians.....When the Church began to realize that the problem lay more with the society at large than with African Canadians, presbyteries and conferences began to address this in 1963, although Ministers were less inclined to deal with it at a congregational level where action was needed.” (L.M. Shepherd).UCC Minister, Rev. L.M. Shepherd points out that during the early 1970’s the then Board of World Missions did see that congregations remained stuck in an outmoded sense of Mission in which “Missionaries go from the West to the rest, from superior to the inferior, from the religious to the pagan to convert and develop” (*The Observer* February 1971:24) Needless to say, these are some of the attitudes and habits of thought that contribute to racism in the church.

Racism against Indigenous Peoples in Canada is now well documented, as is the fact that they were sidelined at presbytery meetings because of language barriers and decision-making processes based on British parliamentary procedures while they came from Indigenous churches where the consensus-based governance structures were the norm. Support for the development of self-governance began rising. This initiative helped the church realize the impact of British culture upon its own practice of ministry and its imposition of British culture upon the First Nations.

It seems as though Saskatchewan Conference took the lead in recognizing that “the cost of giving up talking of truth (historical truth, in this anti-racism context) is high: it means admitting that power has the last word”. Acknowledging the existence of racism against Indian and Metis peoples, the Conference, in 1979 decided to call for one year of repentance. This year gave them the opportunity to prayerfully prepare for an apology and to make amends with Indian and Metis peoples. This precedent set the stage for the 1986 GC apology to First Nations. (L.M. Shepherd) Rt. Rev. Bob Smith made the following statement at GC 1986: *We confused Western ways and culture with the depth and breadth and length and height of the Gospel of Christ. We imposed our civilization as a condition of accepting the gospel. We tried to make you be like us and in so doing we helped to destroy the vision that made you what you were. In her book A Church with the Soul of a Nation, Professor Phyllis Airhart informs us that beginning in the early 1970’s, the UCC began to uncouple Christianity from British Culture (page 223).*

Moderator Bill Phipps addressed the congregational reticence in the 1998 apology - “we know that many within our church will still not understand why each of us must bear the scar, the blame for this horrendous period in Canadian history. But the truth is, we are the bearers of many blessings from our ancestors and therefore, we must also bear their burdens”. (*GC Executive 1998*). *A Wall of History* slide show has been created by the National Church for education and training purposes. See also: <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/ideas/slavery-s-long-shadow-the-impact-of-200-years-of-enslavement-incanada-1.4733595> This is a 2 part series, CBC (Canadian context.)

The Educational and Training case – through the lens of Racism

Our East Central Ontario Region is in dire need of Cultural and Religious Literacy.

We need to build on our Church’s awareness and initiatives since 1947, and recognize Canada’s 1971 Multiculturalism Policy which moved away from concepts and practices for assimilation and integration of Indigenous and Immigrants into Anglo-Canadian culture (which is what the former UCC Board of Home Missions sought) towards Pluralism (The Observer, November 1978). UCC and Canadian History have brought us to consciousness of how we have engaged with those others who are now living in our midst throughout East Central Ontario. The Anglo-Saxon culture in Britain has also acknowledged that “a society in which religious and cultural diversity exists is invited to recognize that human history is not one story only. Even where a majority culture and religions exists, (as in East Central Ontario) it is part of a wider picture. Education will open up and highlight the many ways in which diverse traditions share a heritage at various points in history”. Faith Formation, in light of the Church’s declaration to Become an Anti-Racism Denomination, will be impacted.

For Church and Society visions and mission, the work and recommendations of Canada’s Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, and UNDRIP recommendations as they pertain to systemic racism help church members participate in public discussions and engage in advocacy. When connected to Biblical principles and spiritual values, through Christian, and Inter-religious education and dialogue, the foundations are strong. “However, it was not until 1980 when the UCC, through DWO, recognized traditional Indigenous teachings not as superstition, but as another religion with which to dialogue” (The Theology of the United Church of Canada, 2019:299).

How a Cultural and Religious Literacy program in the context of East Central Ontario's lived realities can be effective, will be addressed in the Anti-Racism Policy, as well as in our list of implementation strategies.

The Legal case – through the lens of Racism

As the article *It Cannot Be Business as Usual* in the Anglican Journal (Oct. 2017) and the Picton Gazette, September 19, 2019 story *Hatred, bigotry and anti-Semitism have no place in the County* prove, as well as the incidents at Madawaska Pastoral Charge in 2020, we as Church and Society- East Central Ontario Region need to maintain high vigilance regarding racism in our Communities. In addition, through the Holocaust story we are reminded that this historical evil took place in one of the most educated, most progressive, most cultured countries in the world. Biblically, we are aware that the Ministry and education of Jesus was carried out within the Jewish culture and tradition. Abrahamic, and non-Abrahamic communities of faith are spread across cities and rural areas of East Central Ontario Region. (see www.bancroftthisweek.com/?p=11153)

Promotion of all National (Church, and Government) Provincial and Municipal legal documents/rules against racism – both individual and systemic are crucial. They protect the legal rights and freedoms of all Citizens. One example – The Ontario Human Rights Commission and its publications. Nationally – the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. On a wider level – The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, authored by Canadian lawyer and scholar, John Humphrey.

The Business Case – through the lens of Racism

Orthodox Jewish Rabbi Sacks is clear about the fact that “the world is not a single machine. It is a complex, interactive ecology in which diversity – biological, personal, cultural and religious – is of the essence.....A primordial instinct going back to humanity's tribal past makes us see difference as a threat. That instinct is massively dysfunctional in an age in which our several destinies are interlinked. Oddly enough, it is the market – the least overtly spiritual of contexts – that delivers a profoundly spiritual message: that it is through exchange that difference becomes a blessing, not a threat.....we must attend to the particular.....we will make peace only when we learn that God loves difference and so, at last, must we. God has created many cultures, civilizations and faiths but only one world in which we live together – and it is getting smaller all the time”.

Our Ecumenical partners, The Anglican Church of Canada, published two articles of interest through the anti-racism lens. Please read *IT CANNOT BE BUSINESS AS USUAL* (page 4) by M.N. Sison and *AN UNHOLY TRINITY* (page 5), by Bishop Mark MacDonald, National Indigenous bishop of the Anglican Church of Canada – at the link below.

<https://www.anglicanjournal.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/aj-oct2017/-web.pdf>

May God grant The United Church of Canada in the East Central Regional Council wisdom to do the right thing with Faith, Hope, Grace, and Love.

Acronyms used:

DWO	Division of World Outreach (former)
ECORC	East Central Ontario Regional Council
FNJT	Formation, Nurture and Justice Team
GC	General Council
UCC	The United Church of Canada
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

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