



## **STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTABILITY AND APOLOGY ENDORSED BY BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND PRESIDENT ROBERT E. STATON**

**ENDORSED ON AUGUST 6, 2020**

History is full of watershed moments – moments that mark a shift in the way we engage the world around us. In the wake of the civil unrest following the killing of George Floyd, America is at such a watershed moment.

Presbyterian College, like institutions across the nation, finds itself drawn into the discussions of our times. Nationwide protests around police brutality, social and economic injustice, and the Black Lives Matter movement have become constant images in traditional and social media. As questions of racism and racial injustice rise to the forefront of our society, we recognize our responsibility as a church-related college in covenant with the Presbyterian Church USA to take an often uncomfortable look at where we stand.

We understand as an institution that it is not enough for us to remain neutral or silent on issues of race, that we have failed to adequately act to eradicate racism in our community thus far, and that we must be intentional in our efforts to end racism on our campus. It is our commitment to our alumni, current and future students, faculty and staff that we will not only work to recognize our failings of the past, but that we will work diligently to confront all forms of racism across our campus.

It is important to be clear that what we are addressing are not abstract discussions of racism. We are proud of the success and contributions of our Black alumni. They continue to represent PC's mission of moral and ethical development with a mission to serve others. Likewise, through their achievements inside and out of the classroom, our current students of color continue to impress and give great promise for success in the future. However, our current and former students of color, as expressed in written statements from the Multicultural Student Union and the African American Alumni Council, give detailed descriptions of racism experienced in our classrooms and across a variety of venues on campus. These are not solely incidents of the past, but continue to this day. In addition, these groups speak of the impact of the lack of diversity among our faculty and staff. Perhaps most significantly, they express a lack of faith that their concerns will be adequately addressed by our faculty, staff, and administration.

To address these concerns, we as an institution must commit to being anti-racist. As a recently deceased Civil Rights icon, Congressman John Lewis, stated, “If you see something that is not right, not fair, not just, you have a moral obligation to do something about it.” Racism is not right, just or fair, and we share a responsibility to oppose and eradicate its presence in our community.

Presbyterian College accepts responsibility, then, for its role in promoting and propagating systemic racism and privilege in suppressing persons of color, especially for Black students and

many others. We sincerely apologize for the many shortcomings and transgressions that have resulted from past policies and behaviors. As part of this ongoing reassessment and self-examination resulting from the work of our *Moving Forward Together Steering Committee*, Presbyterian College seeks to identify and correct areas of deficiency in a concerted effort to achieve equality and justice for all students, faculty, and staff.

For us to work effectively with our current and future students of color, as well as our alumni, moving forward, it is essential that we rebuild trust. This must be accomplished through actions rather than words.

To begin this process, the *Moving Forward Together Steering Committee* – consisting of faculty, staff, student leaders, and members of both the African American Alumni Council and the Board of Trustees, and working under the guidance of Dr. Booker Ingram, Director of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion – has proposed specific policies and changes to enhance our campus experience. The Committee has examined a number of issues, including curricular changes, strengthening and clarifying our response to student and faculty misconduct in regards to race, diversifying faculty and staff representation, and creating anti-racism training opportunities for members of the PC community. These changes are designed to not only increase diversity on campus (among students, faculty, and staff), but to create an inclusive environment where all members feel welcome.

As such, the Committee also recommends to eliminate the presence of any symbols or articles on campus that represent and foster hatred and division: those items that remain symbols of oppression and violence for any of our students only serve to further the divisions and pain that we have committed ourselves to end.

Let us be clear; Presbyterian College stands in support of racial equality and against deeply ingrained prejudices towards Black Americans and other people of color simply because of the color of their skin. We see this moment as a starting point rather than an end. We understand that much work must be done to fulfill the promise of PC and to create an environment that fully lives up to the ideals of the College.

However, we believe that this is an important first step. We welcome the efforts of all parts of the campus community to continue to build bridges and bring people together. In the spirit of the faith and values upon which PC was founded, values which remain at our core to this day, we once again express our unflinching commitment to create an anti-racist campus environment of which all students and alumni will be proud.