

Invitation to an *Imagination Collaboration*

How could we tire of hope?
—so much is in bud.

- Denise Levertov, “Beginners”

NOTE: The Rev. Anna Kendig Flores is the newly appointed Anti-Racism Institutional Assessment Coordinator for the PTCA. Here is her overview of the work, and opportunities, before us as a Presbytery in justice and anti-racism work.

Folks, it's been a *year*. A lot has happened to each of us, our communities and our nation and world... and yet there is so much the Spirit is inviting us to do. Denise Levertov's work has been on my mind, and this poem has been in my thoughts as she resists messages of death, disconnection and dissolution with reminders of hope, justice and healing.

It's with Levertov's energy of hopeful resistance that I want to *celebrate*, share some goals, and name *three perspectives* we might embody in our justice and anti-racism work in 2021.

Where we've been in 2020

- In February we hosted an anti-racism training through Crossroads. Most of our committee chairs and staff attended, as well as many members of PTCA congregations.
- In June we announced that we would be hosting a virtual “Anti-Racism Spiritual Pilgrimage” as a presbytery. Over the summer the Anti-Racism Task Force (all volunteers from our congregations) worked hard to engage with each congregation in our presbytery and we welcomed over 150 participants on Sept. 1st. Since then, journeyers have had lively conversations and gatherings, active engagement with the history, and have taken concrete anti-racist actions in our churches and private lives.
- Since July, the Working Group for the Institutional Assessment on Race and Equity has been guided by the process of Crossroad Anti-Racism, and moves into 2021 ready to keep having conversations that can lead to better understanding ourselves when it comes to race and equity. This volunteer group from our congregations has stayed faithful in their commitment to this work, despite the complexity of diving in the midst of very real an ongoing stressors due to COVID, systemic racism, and more.

Where we're going in 2021

- *Spreading the conversation* wider to share more about what's been happening in the pilgrimage and the institutional assessment
- *Connecting* with congregations that have unique anti-racism goals, whether you're just starting out, ready to get involved in local activism, or on the road to reparations work

- Turning those multi-congregational goals into *cooperative efforts*, convening conversation, etc.

Perspectives we can embody in our anti-racism efforts in 2021

Flexibility

My role as Anti-Racism Institutional Assessment Coordinator *will transform over time* as the Presbytery, the Anti-Racism Task Force, and the Institutional Assessment Working Group learn and set directions. Practicing adaptability and flexibility as we work together will be important, as the priorities and focus of our work changes over time. We will learn as we go what sort of duties, roles, and time that we really need from the PTCA in order to move deeper into anti-racist gospel mission and service.

“Failure lab”

We’ve talked about the idea of Failure Lab a bit in our Pilgrimage. Our attitude changes when we treat things that don’t go as planned – or even successes – as an *opportunity* to ask ourselves “what are we learning?” We are going to learn and change a lot in the next years as we pursue this work – and that is a tremendous gift!

Imagination collaboration

What if, instead of getting stuck in thinking of the enormous challenges and barriers to justice and wholeness, we ask ourselves a questions about *possibilities*: how can we collaborate and grow our potential for cooperative effort? In coordinating the presbytery’s anti-racism efforts, I hope to create forums for collaboration and connection for all of us. The hope is to lighten some of the load but still let all of us own the power of taking action. I’m very much looking forward to this “imagination collaboration” we’ll do *together*! Feel free to reach out to me with ideas, questions, or for a “virtual” coffee at **ptca.anti.racism@gmail.com**.