General Assembly Committee on Representation
Statement on Recent Fear-Based Provocations about Diversity and Inclusion
January 25, 2025 | Portland, Oregon

COMMITTEE ON Representation

To Our Siblings within the PC(USA),

For over forty years, the role of the General Assembly Committee on Representation (GACOR) has been to continually invite the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to pursue God's dream for the Church around broad and equitable participation and diversity, and to speak clearly to dynamics that impede it.

At this historic moment in our nation, we wish to take this opportunity to review our shared history and speak to the possibilities of the present moment.

Beloveds, we must remind ourselves that **we have already been doing this work for equity, representation, and diversity for generations**. While the entire legacy of the PC(USA) and its historical denominations certainly does include movements that reinforced or supported the Doctrine of Discovery, segregation, slavery, Indian Boarding Schools, and other shameful realities in U.S. history, *we also have a concurrent legacy of liberation and healing movements*, often led by Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color, LGBTQIA+ voices and more, that spoke and acted with prophetic courage to the issues of each age that: "The unity of believers in Christ is reflected in the rich diversity of the Church's membership. In Christ, by the power of the Spirit, God unites persons through baptism regardless of race, ethnicity, age, sex, disability, geography, or theological conviction. There is therefore no place in the life of the Church for discrimination against any person." (F-1.0403)

When the PC(USA) was created in 1983, **our denomination both continued and strengthened the commitment to full participation, inclusiveness, and representation** by creating Committees on Representation (CORs) at every level of our denomination.

The GACOR's Theology of Representation states: "The… Spirit that calls us to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God,[1] is the Spirit that equips us with unique gifts and talents, making us the body of Christ, and each of us its members[2] - in all of our particularities and variabilities. Therefore, we cannot say to any of our members 'I have no use for you.'"[3]

We urge our congregations, mid councils, and national church to *courageously continue* the faith-based work of representation and diversity, not because of some secular notion of "Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)" but rather under the framework of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, a testimony to freedom, inclusion, and unity through diversity. (F-1.0403)

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[1] Micah 6:8
[2] 1 Corinthians 12:27 (cf. Romans 12:5)
[3] 1 Corinthians 12:21-26

We must be crystal clear in this moment that our faithful witness to this Gospel has *never* been beholden to the expectations or rules of secular governments or administrations. Instead, we march in step with the rhythm of the witness of the ministry of Jesus Christ, who welcomed the outcast. The harmony we create is within communities of diversity, mutual care, and peacemaking.

We are therefore called to persevere in faithfulness, and to understand that even to be persecuted for our faith *is a way to imitate Christ.* As GACOR, we approach this work, indeed, this call, with great passion, diligence, patience, and humility.

On the heels of a weekend remembering the legacy of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., we close with his words, echoing the words he preached, "Paul's Letter to American Christians," to the Commission on Ecumenical Missions and Relations, United Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) on June 3, 1958 in Pittsburgh, PA, saying, **"Never succumb to the temptation of becoming bitter. As you press on for justice, be sure to move with dignity and discipline, using only the weapon of love."**[4]

May it be, and Amen

Anna Kendig Flores, Teaching Elder, *Co-Moderator*
Amanda Pine, Ruling Elder, *Co-Moderator*
Nicole Cruz Talkington, Teaching Elder
Lauren Sanders, Teaching Elder
Adolfo Santana-Cordero, Teaching Elder
Matt Schultz, Teaching Elder
Nathan Sobers, Ruling Elder
Joshua Young, Teaching Elder

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[4] **On the function of Love:** "You see, what happened is that some of our philosophers got off base. And one of the great problems of history is that the concepts of love and power have usually been contrasted as opposites, polar opposites, so that love is identified with a resignation of power, and power with a denial of love. It was this misinterpretation that caused the philosopher Nietzsche, who was a philosopher of the will to power, to reject the Christian concept of love. It was this same misinterpretation which induced Christian theologians to reject Nietzsche's philosophy of the will to power in the name of the Christian idea of love.

"Now, we got to get this thing right. What is needed is a realization that power without love is reckless and abusive, and that love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is love correcting everything that stands against love. And this is what we must see as we move on." - Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr from his speech *Where Do We Go from Here* in Atlanta on August 16, 1967