

STATEMENT on DIVERSITY and INCLUSION (updated March 10, 2021)

Over the past year, our nation has renewed attention to systemic racism that pervades the institutions of our society. The church is not exempt from systemic racism. As much as we want to say that Christianity in general, and our congregation in particular, have put the sins of racism and prejudice behind us, it simply isn't true. Christian worship has often been called "the most segregated hour in America." Perhaps we don't actively discriminate against people based on race. But do we do enough to dismantle the structures and systems that benefit white people and inflict harm on our siblings in Christ who are black or brown?

In scripture, we read, "*There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus*" (Galatians 3:28). We profess to live a faith that seeks equity for all people regardless of race or gender or nation of origin or economic status. But the fact remains that, while all people matter, some people are threatened more than others. The insistence that Black Lives Matters is an affirmation that God calls us to stand with the most vulnerable, the most oppressed, the most threatened in our community.

In July, 2020, this congregation became a Matthew 25 Congregation. This means that, alongside other initiatives, we are committing ourselves to work toward dismantling structural racism in our church and in our society. The poet, Maya Angelou, is attributed to have said, "*When we know better, we do better.*" We do know better; and we need to do better – as individuals, as a congregation, as a nation.

Our congregation continues to engage in the difficult conversations that are required of us to know better. We are committed to maintaining a posture of listening, so we can hear the stories we need to hear. We continue to pray for wisdom, so that we can discern a way forward that more fully reflects the Beloved Community that God calls us to be.

Peace,

Rev. Jack Barden