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Dear Church Leaders:

On January 21–24, Hope for the Future attendees met to work on specific policies, strategies and best practices to address barriers people of color in Mennonite Church institutions have experienced throughout the years. The work is necessary due to the very long history of racism/marginalization of people of color that necessitates continuing to work on becoming an anti-racist church. We also want to continue to prepare for the future generation of leaders of color in a church that will fully accept them.

We want to first acknowledge that many of our institutions have been working on becoming anti-racist and interculturally competent workplaces. Some of the institutions have been working on this for a long time; others are just starting. People of color who have attended Hope for the Future recognize the work that has been done. We also recognize that because we have not had a systemwide plan, our effectiveness has been limited. The most effective way to achieve our vision of becoming an anti-racist church is for change to happen systemwide across all our church institutions; that is why we developed the following material.

Hope for the Future V participants worked diligently in their separate caucus groups and as a whole and created various strategies, best practices and policies that address intercultural competence and undoing racism in Mennonite Church USA institutions. We are asking that, as leaders in Mennonite Church USA, you seriously consider the material we have enclosed. Taking steps to implement the recommendations further shows dedication and commitment to undo racism and bring about intercultural transformation in your organization. We realize that each institution has its own decision-making process. Please keep in mind the following questions as you consider the material we have enclosed:

1. What pieces of this do we already have in place as policy?
2. What pieces of this do we practice?
3. Do our policy and practice match? If not, what are steps to match both policy and practice?
4. What pieces do we not have in place?
5. What pieces can we implement immediately?

6. What pieces will need additional education and steps for implementation?
7. What pieces are not realistic and why?
8. What practices do we see could be implemented that are not noted?
9. Do we have an adequate evaluation model to monitor our progress?

Before our next Hope for the Future meeting, we will be sending out a questionnaire asking what has been useful and implemented and what you are finding hard to implement and why. Your response will be important not as a way to “judge” institutions but as a way for us to figure out how we can continue to work for systemic change across the church.

At our next meeting we will have time for institutions to report back with a set of questions we will send ahead of time. We will also work on accountability models to enhance what might already be in place or provide institutions without accountability/evaluation models options to consider.

Changing our institutional cultures and becoming an anti-racist church is difficult. Our assurance that it is possible is our belief in a God who can do all things and who has provided us a vision in Revelation 7:9 of the Church. Please feel free to call any of the Hope for the Future planners if you have questions or would like to talk further about how we might work together to transform our church.

God’s grace and peace to you,

Hope for the Future Planning Committee

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