



BUCKS COUNTY Courier Times

Guest Opinion: Pennridge pausing DEI a bad look

By The Rev. Dr. Kristopher D. Schondelmeyer

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On Monday, Aug. 23, Pennridge School Board [passed a motion](#) to immediately stop all administration-led Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) work and purged DEI content from district resources.

Dr. Bolton, the superintendent, went on record against the motion, but the board overrode his recommendation.

It was announced that a new school board level committee will be formed to determine “if” any diversity issues exist in our district. Education is supposed to prepare our children for the world. It’s vital we provide tools to allow them to form their own opinions, rooted in compassion for others. Reading and discussing diverse views is essential to their education. Efforts to limit this aren’t just happening in our community. This is a national movement trying to scare people into believing “Critical Race Theory” is poisoning K-12 students. They believe racism is not a problem in our country.

Our Session (governing council) committed last year to being a “Matthew 25 Church.” The initiative from our denomination (Presbyterian Church USA) has three focuses:

- Building congregational vitality
- Eradicating systemic poverty
- Dismantling structural racism

Some may perceive the action of our school board perpetuates structural racism. Structural racism is real, and it separates us from compassionate community where all are welcome.

In times like these we must search our own hearts. We’ve heard many say, “I am not racist,” or “I don’t see color...I just see people.” But those answers are naïve to the reality of the human condition. As Jesus illustrated, we can look clean on the outside...and say that we don’t see color...we can have clean hands but dirty

hearts. We all have embedded biases within us. As faith leaders, we admit it in ourselves. Psychological research has proven those biases are passed down from generation to generation.

Thinking critically about the ways race intersects with history doesn't mean a person hates America. We love this nation with all our hearts...not because we have ignored the sins of our ancestors, but in spite of them. Learning about MLK Day in elementary school, reading about the Trail of Tears in middle school, dialogues about Women's Suffrage and Civil Rights in high school, all these help us to become more compassionate people, and more informed and engaged citizens of this nation that we love...this nation that has always desired for the next generation to be better than the one before.

The Apostle Paul preached that "no longer is there Jew or Greek, slave or free, male and female." Messages like this got him arrested. Paul, like Jesus, knew it's hard work to nurture diverse communities where all can truly be one body. It was difficult then, and it's still difficult today. It requires people who truly recognize and admit racism is real, and the biases that create it lurk not just "out there," but embedded much closer to home...in our own hearts.

Only one board member had courage to vote against the motion, naming it for what it is:

"I just feel like this is for optics, quite frankly. The administration has made a recommendation. They have taken necessary steps and this just, to me, feels like a show to appease a portion of the community and it's not going to do anything to unify or help us build or work together."

Friends, she is right. This was a decision for optics...and it looks bad. That's not who we are. It cannot be who we are as a community. We're all children of God, each one of us, created to reflect sacred compassion. Those are the optics we should be displaying.

May sacred compassion wash over us all and cleanse our hearts...as our hands get dirty working to make this a community that reflects the love and compassion of Jesus Christ.

The Rev. Dr. Kristopher D. Schondelmeyer is pastor of the Presbyterian Church of Deep Run in Bedminster. The church's governing council has endorsed Schondelmeyer's guest opinion.