

# Our Reaffirmation of Commitment to Diversity, Equity and Justice

We, the Board of Directors of United Church Homes, remain committed to an on-going process to support diversity, build equity and seek justice in the context of our ministry in the world.

Our organization is faith inspired and grounded in the Christian tradition expressed through the United Church of Christ.

We believe in the ethic of love as revealed to us in the person of Jesus who offered abundant life to all.

We believe that we are called by God to extend that love to our neighbors in their rich diversity of race, color, creed, national origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression, age, disability, ancestry, citizenship, ethnicity or any other descriptors within the human family.

This love compels us to respect the experiences of those who live under oppressive and unjust systems, as we work to dismantle structures that continue to divide and dehumanize others.

We make this commitment knowing that the work of transforming mindsets, policies and structures is a long but necessary road. We are steadfast in our desire to contribute to building a more just world for all on behalf of our residents, staff, and community partners.

Being an affiliated ministry of the United Church of Christ and a member agency of the UCC Council for Health and Human Service Ministries, we understand that social justice and equity are integral to the mission, vision and core values of United Church Homes.

In truth, facing into urgent issues of justice and equity is not new to us. It is an essential aspect of who we are going back to our earliest beginnings in 1916 as a ministry to indigent German immigrants. We carried this spirit into the later part of the 20th century as we opened affordable housing communities well beyond the borders of Ohio including Haitian immigrants, Hispanic Americans and African Americans. At the beginning of the 21st century, we established housing communities with the Omaha and Anishinaabe nations. And in 2012, we embraced an open and affirming policy that calls for the inclusion of residents and staff who identify as LGBTQ.

We are particularly aware of the significance of this moment in history. Seeing the confluence of the COVID-19 global pandemic, the elevation of racial injustice, the significant polarization in the U.S. along political and ideological lines in addition to severe climate changes is unparalleled in history. This confluence has been highlighted by recurrent incidents of police murders of African American citizens and contentious outcries based in hate. The increased number and strength of weather-related events is undeniable and compelling. And the disproportionate number of lost lives of those who are black and brown during the pandemic cannot be ignored. The compounding layers of these maladies have moved us to look deeply within, searching for meaningful responses to the challenges these realities present.

Renewed calls for racial justice lodged in the quest for the full acknowledgment, in policy and practice, that Black lives do, in fact matter, align with our sense of purpose. These urgent and pressing calls also remind us that as of yet, the value of the lives of Americans of African descent are not fully valued in this society. In response, we are reaffirming our commitment to actions that will advance equity and justice in the lives of those we employ, those we serve and, in society at large.

We, the Board of Directors of United Church Homes are committed to:

- Ensure that equity and inclusion remain embedded in the organization's values and we will operationalize these values in our policies and practices.
- Measure and evaluate organizational performance using a racial equity lens and undertake formal efforts to reduce racial disparities adding measures of accountability for those responsible.
- Educate our leaders and staff on how to understand and speak about race, to become equipped to undo implicit bias and identify systemic causes of poor health and housing inequality.
- Provide culturally competent care to encompass all those we serve.
- Ensure the make-up of our leaders and staff reflects the diversity of the community and remove any systemic barriers to advancement.
- Adopt racially equitable and inclusive approaches to purchasing and investment decisions.
- Identify opportunities to address and positively impact racial inequalities through local, regional, statewide and federal policymaking and advocacy.
- Share and honor this commitment when working with partners and collaborators and measure collective impact whenever possible.
- Continue to collect and share as we learn where progress is being made to add to the evidence on how to best address equity and inclusion and reduce systemic barriers.
- Be a resource for others committed to racial equity and inclusion.
- Educate, model, and empower the staff with leadership skills necessary to build communities where a culture of equitable relationships can flourish.
- Use informed data in all outreach initiatives to reach people from underrepresented, unheard and underserved communities.

(Adopted: November 12, 2020)

