

P R E F A C E

In 2007, Fortress Press published my previous book, *Understanding and Dismantling Racism: The Twenty-First Century Challenge to White America*. For me, that book represents the culmination of four decades of learning, analyzing, organizing, teaching, and writing about racism. It presents an updated analysis of how systemic and institutionalized racism continues to be embedded in the social fabric of our society, and how the struggle to dismantle racism and shape an anti-racist society must remain our highest national priority. Although I am a Christian and most of my anti-racism teaching and organizing has been focused on the church, I wrote that book for a general audience.

By contrast, this book, *Becoming an Anti-Racist Church: Journeying toward Wholeness*, is written very specifically from a Christian perspective and for a Christian audience. It seeks to apply the analysis of racism delineated in the previous book to the specific context of the church. Its goal is to focus a spotlight on how racism continues to be embedded in the church and how the commitment to shape an anti-racist church needs to be among the highest priorities for every Christian.

There are two primary assumptions upon which this book is based. The first is that the Christian faith stands absolutely and unconditionally in opposition to racism wherever it may be found, whether inside or outside the church. Second, it is my conviction that before the church can effectively participate in efforts to address racism outside the church it needs to be effective in addressing racism within the church.

This book is focused on a particular segment of the church: mainline Protestant and Roman Catholic churches in the United States, all of which are predominantly white. The tragic reality is that the churches of our nation are not only divided and disfigured by denominationalism, but they are just as severely divided and disfigured by racism. Over the course of history, this “white branch” of churches that trace their origins back to Europe has remained separate from all other churches, even while maintaining power over them. The purpose of this

book is to help equip Christians to address racism within these predominantly white churches and religious institutions.

Of course, most of these churches are not strangers to the task of addressing their racial separation and racism. The past four or five decades have been replete with programs of integration, diversity, and even anti-racism. Despite all that has been done, however, there has been no serious impact on racism either around us or within. I hope this book will make some small contribution to our next assault on the demonic evil of racism within the church.

As is true for most writers, I feel an overwhelming indebtedness and gratefulness to a host of people in the creation of this book. I have received irreplaceable assistance from many people in its writing. Even more importantly, over the past more than forty years, I have been taught, supported, and carried over the mountainous paths of learning about and struggling for racial justice. I have been privileged to learn at the feet of moral and intellectual giants, to walk with a courageous multitude on paths of justice, and to be welcomed into a community of indefatigable friends and colleagues. I thank you all. Above all, I praise God for a world and a universe with justice and righteousness at its center.