



# FAITH AND RACIAL JUSTICE

## **Bias, Prejudice, Racism & Systemic Bias**

*A One-Page Comparison for Interfaith & Community Dialogue*

**Interfaith Clergy Justice Community Forum – Eastern North Carolina**

### **Bias**

**Definition:** A tendency or preference for or against a person or group, sometimes without awareness. **Where It Happens:** Thoughts, instincts, everyday decisions. **Examples:** Feeling more comfortable with people who look like you; assuming someone is more capable based on background. **Why It Matters:** Bias shapes behavior and decisions, often unintentionally.

### **Prejudice**

**Definition:** A negative belief or attitude about a person or group before knowing them. **Where It Happens:** Assumptions, stereotypes, attitudes. **Examples:** Believing a group is “less intelligent,” “dangerous,” or “inferior”

without evidence. **Why It Matters:** Prejudice fuels discrimination and harms relationships.

## **Racism**

**Definition:** Prejudice and discrimination based on race, combined with social or institutional power. **Where It Happens:** Individuals, groups, institutions.

**Examples:** Racial slurs, exclusion, unequal treatment, policies that disadvantage certain racial groups. **Why It Matters:** Racism creates unequal opportunities and harms entire communities.

## **Systemic Bias**

**Definition:** Patterns of unfairness built into policies, practices, and structures—even without intentional discrimination. **Where It Happens:** Schools, housing, healthcare, policing, employment, government, faith institutions. **Examples:** Rules or traditions that consistently benefit one group more than others; repeated unequal outcomes. **Why It Matters:** Systemic bias keeps inequality in place unless intentionally addressed.

## **How These Concepts Connect**

- **Bias** is the tendency.
- **Prejudice** is a negative belief.
- **Racism** is prejudice plus power.
- **Systemic bias** is unfairness built into the system itself.