

Reclaiming Jesus: A Confession of Faith in a Time of Crisis

Rise & Shine, November 25th

Genesis 1:26

Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

Question: If "we" are made in God's image, and "they" are made in God's image, can we justify harming the "they" in order to protect or uphold the "we?"

Statement I

WE BELIEVE each human being is made in God's image and likeness. That image and likeness confers a divinely decreed dignity, worth, and God-given equality to all of us as children of the one God who is the Creator of all things. Racial bigotry is a brutal denial of the image of God (the *imago dei*) in some of the children of God. Our participation in the global community of Christ absolutely prevents any toleration of racial bigotry. Racial justice and healing are biblical and theological issues for us, and are central to the mission of the body of Christ in the world. We give thanks for the prophetic role of the historic black churches in America when they have called for a more faithful gospel.

THEREFORE, WE REJECT the resurgence of white nationalism and racism in our nation on many fronts, including the highest levels of political leadership. We, as followers of Jesus, must clearly reject the use of racial bigotry for political gain that we have seen. In the face of such bigotry, silence is complicity. In particular, we reject white supremacy and commit ourselves to help dismantle the systems and structures that perpetuate white preference and advantage. Further, any doctrines or political strategies that use racist resentments, fears, or language must be named as public sin—one that goes back to the foundation of our nation and lingers on. Racial bigotry must be antithetical for those belonging to the body of Christ, because it denies the truth of the gospel we profess.

Galatians 3:28

There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

Question: How can we strive to become “one in Christ Jesus,” when those we seek to become one with often strive to separate from us?

Statement II

WE BELIEVE we are one body. In Christ, there is to be no oppression based on race, gender, identity, or class. The body of Christ, where those great human divisions are to be overcome, is meant to be an example for the rest of society. When we fail to overcome these oppressive obstacles, and even perpetuate them, we have failed in our vocation to the world—to proclaim and live the reconciling gospel of Christ.

THEREFORE, WE REJECT misogyny, the mistreatment, violent abuse, sexual harassment, and assault of women that has been further revealed in our culture and politics, including our churches, and the oppression of any other child of God. We lament when such practices seem publicly ignored, and thus privately condoned, by those in high positions of leadership. We stand for the respect, protection, and affirmation of women in our families, communities, workplaces, politics, and churches. We support the courageous truth-telling voices of women, who have helped the nation recognize these abuses. We confess sexism as a sin, requiring our repentance and resistance.

Letter Signatories:

- Bishop Carroll A. Baltimore, President and CEO, Global Alliance Interfaith Network
- Rev. Dr. Peter Borgdorff, Executive Director Emeritus, Christian Reformed Church in North America
- Dr. Amos Brown, Chair, Social Justice Commission, National Baptist Convention USA, Inc.
- Rev. Dr. Walter Brueggemann, Professor Emeritus, Columbia Theological Seminary
- Dr. Tony Campolo, Co-Founder, Red Letter Christians
- Dr. Iva Carruthers, General Secretary, Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference
- The Most Rev. Michael B. Curry, Presiding Bishop and Primate, The Episcopal Church
- Rev. Dr. James Forbes, President and Founder, Healing of the Nations Foundation and Preaching Professor at Union Theological Seminary
- Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, General Secretary Emeritus, Reformed Church in America
- Rev. Dr. Cynthia Hale, Senior Pastor, Ray of Hope Christian Church, Decatur, GA
- Rev. Dr. Richard Hamm, former General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
- Rev. Dr. Joel C. Hunter, Faith Community Organizer and Chairman, Community Resource Network
- Rev. Dr. Jo Anne Lyon, General Superintendent Emerita, The Wesleyan Church
- Bishop Vashti McKenzie, 117th Elected and Consecrated Bishop, AME Church
- Rev. Dr. Otis Moss, Jr., Co-Convener National African American Clergy Network
- Dr. John Perkins, Chair Emeritus and Founding Member, Christian Community Development Association and President Emeritus, John & Vera Mae Perkins Foundation
- Senior Bishop Lawrence Reddick, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church
- Fr. Richard Rohr, Founder, Center for Action and Contemplation
- Dr. Ron Sider, President Emeritus, Evangelicals for Social Action
- Rev. Jim Wallis, President and Founder, Sojourners
- Rev. Dr. Sharon Watkins, Director, NCC Truth and Racial Justice Initiative
- Dr. Barbara Williams-Skinner, Co-Convener, National African American Clergy Network; President, Skinner Leadership Institute
- Bishop Will Willimon, Bishop, The United Methodist Church, retired, Professor of the Practice of Ministry, Duke Divinity School

Prayer of Self Dedication (BCP p.832)

Almighty and eternal God, so draw our hearts to you, so guide our minds, so fill our imaginations, so control our wills, that we may be wholly yours, utterly dedicated unto you; and then use us, we pray you, as you will, and always to your glory and the welfare of your people; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. *Amen.*