

“Connect Church: A Biblical Response to Societal Inequities and a Call for Unity in the Body of Christ”.

Recent events have heightened our awareness that racial inequities continue to exist in our society. The denomination of churches, to which Connect Church belongs, regrettably has not always spoken or acted with God’s wisdom and love on this matter and too often has not properly supported our brothers and sisters of color. Despite intentional and sustained efforts as a denomination, including the adoption of the “Resolution on Racial Reconciliation,” we acknowledge our churches continue to struggle with overcoming the influence of these inequities and must move from words to actions.

Accordingly, we acknowledge that many brothers and sisters in the body of Christ, including some within our Connect Church family, have suffered injustices, encountered discrimination, and faced mistreatment that others in the body of Christ have not experienced. These painful experiences are now brought to the front of their lives with the recent events and societal unrest, and which have highlighted the continuing need for improvements.

As followers of Christ, we sympathize with our brothers and sisters who have experienced real pain from racial inequities. We confirm that, as God is our Refuge (Ps 46:1), the body of Christ should be a refuge for those who suffer injustice. We confirm that, as God gives comfort to the brokenhearted (Ps 146:3), the body of Christ should bring healing to those who have suffered harm. We confirm that as God hears those who cry out to Him (Job 34:28), the body of Christ should listen and be a voice for those who do not have an adequate platform to speak for themselves (Prov 31:8-9).

Therefore, as Christians, we acknowledge that:

- Each and all persons should be held with dignity and esteem and with equal worth because **“God created man in His own image”** (Gen 1:27).
- Each and all persons should be treated with grace, justice, equality, forbearance, forgiveness, and love, because **“God doesn’t show favoritism”** (Acts 10:34).
- Each and all persons are equal at the foot of the cross, as Jesus Christ, who is our Lord and the head of our church, equalizes all with His mercy and His grace.
- We, as members of the household of Christ, are commanded to take our responsibilities seriously to build a community that represents God’s kingdom as He intended.
- We, as the Body of Christ, are to find our pre-eminent identity in Christ Jesus. All other identities invariably bring a degree of conflict, but our identity in Christ supersedes all other identities.
- We, who are servants of Christ, are to support those who are oppressed, downtrodden, or are humbled by life’s circumstances because **“the Lord helps the oppressed but brings the wicked to the ground.”** (Ps 147:6).
- We, who are followers of Christ, are to **“Learn to do what is good. Pursue justice. Correct the oppressor.”** (Isaiah 1:17a).
- We, who are ambassadors of Christ, should **“As citizens of heaven, live your life worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or am absent, I will hear about you that you are standing firm in one spirit, in one accord, contending together for the faith of the gospel. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves.”** (Philippians 1:27,2:3).

And commit and call on all in Christ to:

- Remember that altogether we are one family in Christ: **“There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to one hope at your calling – one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all...”** (Ephesians 4:4-6)
- Strive to **“keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace”** (Ephesians 4:3).
- **“Carry one another’s burdens; in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”** (Galatians 6:2).
- Bear with each other in love – including and especially when there are differing perspectives– **“with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love.”** (Ephesians 4:2).
- Speak in God’s language – the language of love – **“But speaking the truth in love...”** and we commit to guarding against communication which is not Godly: **“No foul language should come from your mouth, but only what is good for building up someone in need, so that it gives grace to those who hear.”** (Ephesians 4:15,29).

- Focus on that which is good – ***“Finally brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable—if there is any moral excellence and if there is anything praiseworthy—dwell on these things.”*** – (Philippians 4:8).
- Avoid being seduced by the world’s views – whether to maintain our comfort or to advance our preferred culture – but instead let us enjoin together to advance the Kingdom of God by demonstrating in real ways how well we love each other. ***“I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another. ³⁵By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”*** – (John 13:34-35).

Recognizing that much needs to be done to put practical application to racial inequities, we commit ourselves to engaging in ministry opportunities that specifically address both the symptoms and the underlying causes of the struggles faced by our brothers and sisters of color.

Let us draw our wisdom, strength, and compassion from the Lord, and keep in our remembrance our shared hope for our eternal future to frame all that we think, say, and do in this time. Let us communicate words of life – words of love – words of hope – which are found only in Christ Jesus.