

The One Church | One Body Pledge

“In Christ there is no Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female” (Galatians 3:28). There is no difference between races, classes, or genders in the salvation that Christ brings to us all. This is essential to the work of Jesus Christ, and the early apostles made a clear choice to create a multiracial Christian community. Therefore, a multiracial body of Christ is not only admirable—it is intrinsic, mandated, and expected by God.

So, as Christian leaders, we are morally concerned about the deluge of incidents this year in the United States that have revealed how racial divisions have yet to be resolved or, as we would say, reconciled.

Painful incidents like the killings of Trayvon Martin, Jonathan Ferrell, and countless others have opened up a difficult but necessary national conversation about how black and brown individuals are disproportionately watched, followed, suspected, and targeted. One person can meet a tragic fate—but when one after another meets the same fate in the same way, it is irresponsible to dismiss this pattern as merely unfortunate.

The thread continues. We must admit that we have yet to achieve Dr. King’s dream that all of our children should be judged by the content of their character, not the color of their skin. This sad reality is evidenced most vividly in the nation’s criminal justice system, which still reveals stark contrasts in arrests, convictions, and sentencing for crimes committed by white Americans compared to those committed by non-white Americans. These racial disparities are significant and shameful, and it is time that we morally confront them.

Further, we are deeply concerned about this year’s Supreme Court decision that removed a key provision of the Voting Rights Act. We’ve already seen efforts in several states that could restrict the voting rights of poor, minority, young, and elderly citizens. We are concerned about attempts at voter rules and identification changes, voter intimidation, and gerrymandered redistricting that could be politically disenfranchising and morally devastating to the most vulnerable among us. The Court has now put the issue of voting rights back with the Congress, where it must be urgently and morally addressed.

All of these events, and too many more, painfully reveal the racial divides at the heart of our nation. Today, every black parent in the United States has good reason to fear for the safety of his or her child. Many white parents have little idea what black parents say to their children, especially their sons, to prepare and protect them. Many white Christians and churches have no connection to what is being felt and said in black churches nationwide—both about fear for their children and fear of losing their voting rights.

The United States has indeed made great progress on racial justice, but the idea that we live in a post-racial society is a dangerous myth. Our work is not finished.

Churches have offered protection to those in jeopardy and danger and must do so again, especially for young people of color. Churches were instrumental in achieving the Voting Rights Act, and they are now essential in restoring it.

By 2050, most Americans will be of Latino, African, or Asian descent. Who will help lead the way into a multiracial and multicultural United States? Who will provide a moral compass for the journey into our nation’s new demographic future? It is time for the multiracial body of Christ to be clear that *we are in this together*. These issues are all of our issues. We are one church. We are one body.

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Therefore, together we must pledge to:

- **Take our mission of racial reconciliation to a country divided by racial segregation.** Every denomination in the United States has experienced the dividing blade of racism. Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. observed that 11 a.m. on Sunday morning is the most segregated hour in America. Sadly, his prophetic words are still true today. The Apostle Paul compares the church to the human body, saying when “one part suffers, all parts suffer with it.” Christian churches have often been silent, blind, or actively complicit with acts of racial intolerance and injustice, hurting Christ’s body and causing suffering to our brothers and sisters. Racism is a sin that must be named, repented of, and healed. **The church must come together as a multiracial community of faith for the sake of the credibility of the gospel of reconciliation that we preach.** We must pledge to make this gospel vision a reality.
- **Take it upon ourselves to repair our criminal justice system and protect the safety and security of all our brothers and sisters and their children.** Racial profiling is a sin against God’s children and against God. We must oppose it wherever it occurs, commit ourselves to a racially just criminal justice system, and strengthen protections against racial profiling by government and civilians, a practice that particularly threatens the lives of people of color and other minority groups. **Christians must be among those who lead in defending minority children and their parents from danger in harmful environments.**
- **Take to the Congress the critical need to restore the integrity of the Voting Rights Act.** We will respond to the Supreme Court’s mandate to develop and enact an updated formula for Section 4 “preclearance” for any new regulations that could threaten the voting rights of minorities, including the young and the elderly—especially in those states and places where a history of race-based voter suppression has long existed. We must ensure public accountability for any proposed changes in voting procedures that threaten voting rights. **Protecting voting rights for all is not only a foundational democratic principle, but also is rooted in the theological imperative to build a multiracial community that protects “the least of these.”**

The public response to these events has revealed deep racial divisions that still exist in our country. Although there are many reasons to feel disheartened, we believe there is hope. We have hope in the power of God to change our hearts and lives—in both behaviors and laws—and to move mountains in our world. We have seen it before in the spiritual and social power of multiracial civil rights movements led by people of faith—and we can see that again today.

It is time for our diverse body of Christ to stand up for who we are. It is time for us to be a witness of racial justice and reconciliation to our divided society. It is time to speak the truth and to act on the gospel.