



RESTORATIVE RACIAL JUSTICE

A Call to Live in Flourishing Freedom

Birmingham, Alabama, United States of America • July 2022

Submitted by the BAPTIST WORLD ALLIANCE Racial Justice Action Group

Adopted by the BWA Executive Committee on July 9, 2022

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About the Baptist World Alliance

Founded in 1905, the Baptist World Alliance is a fellowship of 245 conventions and unions in 128 countries and territories comprising 51 million baptized believers in 176,000 churches. For more than 100 years, the Baptist World Alliance has networked the Baptist family to impact the world for Christ with a commitment to strengthen worship, fellowship and unity; lead in mission and evangelism; respond to people in need through aid, relief, and community development; defend religious freedom, human rights, and justice; and advance theological reflection and leadership development.

The Kingdom of God is a Call to Flourishing Freedom

The overarching call of Scripture is for the restoration of all creation into the fullness of the Kingdom of God with its promise of flourishing freedom in the presence of the triune Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Jesus taught us to pray, “your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”¹ As Miroslav Volf and Matthew Croasmun write, “The flourishing of human beings and all God’s creatures in the presence of God is God’s foremost concern for creation and should therefore be the central purpose of theology.”²

Yet many have traded this vision for flourishing freedom in the presence of the triune God for hollow shallows that ensnare. For many this includes the temptation, even when it is unconscious, for self-centered material wellbeing that lives as if bread alone is enough.³ The human propensity to grasp and gather for ourselves that which belongs to our brothers and sisters is an ancient sin that continues to crouch at the doors of our hearts individually and collectively.⁴ Across history this tendency has been aided by the sinful lie of racism – to posit one’s self or one’s group as if it is inherently superior – with its many guises that are structured and unstructured, collective and individualized, intentional and unconscious, propagated or inherited.

The Gospel of Jesus redeems us from the sinful chains of inherent superiority for the freedom of inherent co-dignity in the image of God that receives its ultimate expression in “every nation, tribe, people and language standing before the throne and before the Lamb” in the fullness of worship and equality.⁵ Crucially, this freedom is not the eradication of those elements that have most often contributed to racism – nation, tribe, people, or language – but the celebration of this beautiful diversity of co-dignity in equality.

To live with this vision of flourishing freedom requires repentance, reorientation, restoration, and the pursuit of just righteousness. In so doing it sets both the captor and the captive free.

For the believer, it is to respond to Jesus’ words, “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”⁶ In the midst of the sin of racism, love is lived out in the journey of repair and restoration. For the church, faith expressed in worship of the Lord should be outworked in such love that those who live in great affliction, suppression, and oppression, “hear and rejoice” and “taste and see that the Lord is good.”⁷ It is to recognize that as we joyfully model as a foreshadow the flourishing freedom found in the Kingdom of God, restorative justice embraces the call to live as those who seek to keep and preserve all of humanity as brothers and sisters.⁸

In response to the biblical vision and scriptural commission to live in flourishing freedom, we pursue restorative racial justice.

¹ Matthew 6:10, Luke 11:2.

² Miroslav Volf and Matthew Croasmun, *For the Life of the World: Theology That Makes a Difference* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2019), 11.

³ Deuteronomy 8:3, Matthew 4:4, Luke 4:4, John 4:34.

⁴ Genesis 4:7.

⁵ Revelation 7:9 (NIV).

⁶ John 13:14 (NIV).

⁷ Psalm 34:2, 8 (NIV).

⁸ Genesis 4:9.

A Longstanding Commitment

Founded in 1905, the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) draws upon a shared Baptist history of over 400 years, and today has formal member bodies in 128 countries and territories representing 51 million Baptists. At the inaugural BWA Congress held in London, England, 3,000 voices rang out the opening hymn:

*From distant climes, from every land,
Behold us, Lord, before Thee stand.*

When the BWA was unanimously constituted on July 17, 1905, it was by the acclimation of globally diverse delegates representing conventions and unions such as the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Jamaica Baptist Union, and the Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Society, USA. Though the BWA has at times failed to live according to a vision of racial and ethnic justice, since its inception the BWA has sought to model and work for flourishing freedom based on full equality.

Since 1905, the BWA has spoken up for human rights and against manifestations of injustice including officially adopting 62 resolutions or statements that directly address racial justice.⁹ These sixty-two documents represent fifteen percent of the BWA's official statements.

BWA Historian Lee Spitzer notes that the terminology used in such statements has evolved over the years reflecting changes in language, culture, and understanding through three distinct time periods.¹⁰

1. **Racialism (1905-1939)** – This period covered the First World War through the rise of Adolf Hitler and the beginning of the Second World War with BWA statements primarily focused on the problem of competition between races across the globe. During this time, Baptists highlighted three negative aspects of racialism: (1) antisemitism, primarily in Europe; (2) African American's lack of civil rights and freedom, especially in the south of the United States of America; and (3) prejudice against Asians such as Chinese and Japanese. For example, the 5th and 6th Baptist World Congresses (in Berlin, Germany and Atlanta, Georgia, United States of America respectively) adopted a resolution on racialism that reads in part:

This Congress deplores and condemns as a violation of the law of God the Heavenly Father, all racial animosity, and every form of oppression or unfair discrimination toward the Jews, toward coloured people, and or toward subject races in any part of the world.¹¹

2. **Race Relations (1948-1969)** – Statements from this period acknowledged the need for global equality and the "brotherhood" of all people, as well as the unity of the Church alongside its ethnic diversity through mutual understanding between people of different races. These principles were regularly reiterated and while noting that some progress had been made in Baptist and

⁹ Approved BWA resolutions, messages and proclamations can be searched at www.BaptistWorld.org/resolutions.

¹⁰ Lee B. Spitzer, "The Baptist World Alliance and Racialism – A Century of Concern and a Time for Change: An Historical Survey and Analysis of How the BWA has Addressed Racism and Racial Justice," presented to the Baptist World Alliance Racial Justice Working Group, August 26, 2021.

¹¹ Baptist World Congress Resolution 1934.7, "Racialism," adopted in Berlin, Germany, 1934; Baptist World Congress Resolution 1939.5, "Racialism," adopted in Atlanta, Georgia, United States of America, 1939.

international circles, there was also an acknowledgment that significant additional progress was needed. For example, the 7th Baptist World Congress assembled in Copenhagen, Denmark passed the following resolution:

Race relations is one of the perplexing problems which the Christian church must face in the world today. There are many conditions and attitudes which strain and impair human relations and cause great concerns; but we cannot solve the problem unless we face it forthrightly as Christians.

We have tried to ignore, evade, and attempt by platitudes to solve this most grave problem. It cannot be solved in this way. We must insist in human relations and intercourse of all people that the Christian approach be made in the matter of race relations. Appreciation for all ideals, aspirations, and personalities of all races must be insisted upon by Christians.

Whereas one of the major factors in the maladjusted country, city, or state, is the improper approach to, and an illogical dealing with, the minority within their boundary; and whereas men have tried to bring about a wholesome social order by force, by bribery, and other similar plans, and failed; and whereas the basis for better race relations is dependent upon better understanding between all groups, and a desire to build a Christian order and equality for all of the children of men: therefore, be it resolved that un-Christian practices and abuses of people, such as lynchings, race extermination, economic and racial discrimination, unfair employment practices, and denial of political rights are contrary to the principles of Christianity.¹²

3. **Racism / Justice (1970-2019)** – In 1970, for the first time at the 12th Baptist World Congress assembled in Tokyo, Japan, the BWA officially recognized lament and repentance as integral to addressing racism. The resolution reads in part, “We Baptists lament the presence of and repent for the sins of racism that have existed, and still exist, in some of our own places of worship and in some of our respective communities and nations.”¹³ During this period in BWA statements, racism, articulated in light of an emphasis on human rights, was seen as the root cause of racial disparities, oppression and discrimination, and cited as an example of social injustice. Human rights came to be understood as a general category that included opposing racial prejudice and working toward racial justice. The General Council of the BWA assembled in Vancouver, Canada, for example, passed a resolution that reads in part:

RECOGNIZES with gratitude that 1998 will mark the 59th anniversary of the United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights which has exerted great moral influence in the cause of justice, peace, and religious tolerance;

AFFIRMS that efforts in support of human rights depend upon God’s initiative to protect and restore human dignity in a broken world;

LAMENTS that the greatest problem associated with human rights is the lack of full and effective implementation;

¹² BWA World Congress Resolution 1947.2, “Resolution on Race Relations,” adopted in Denmark, Copenhagen, 1947.

¹³ BWA World Congress Resolution 1970.2, “Reconciliation and Racial Discrimination,” adopted in Tokyo, Japan, 1970.

OBSERVES with sadness the denial of freedom of expression, religious liberty, and other human rights, as well as the existence of child abuse, torture, and racism even in countries whose governments are members of the United Nations and are signatories to the Human Rights Covenants.¹⁴

In this most recent period, the BWA adopted two significant theological statements on racial justice. The first was the Harare Declaration adopted by the BWA General Council in Harare, Zimbabwe in 1993 following the work of a 36-member special commission that was led by Jimmy Carter as Honorary Chair and John Peterson as Chair. One result was that the work of this commission was extended and eventually renamed as the Special Commission on Baptists against Racism and Ethnic Conflict. The commission led in the planning of an International Baptist Summit Against Racism and Ethnic Conflict held January 1999 at the historic Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia, United States of America with President Jimmy Carter, Dr. Coretta Scott King, and Dr. Billy Graham serving as the honorary summit co-chairs. The Summit intended to:

(1) challenge Baptist unions and conventions around the world to actively confront issues of racism and ethnic hatred within their area; (2) ensure that every individual who attends this Summit returns home committed to work for racial and ethnic reconciliation; and (3) make a positive statement to the Baptist world, the wider Christian community, and the secular world that Baptists are totally committed to oppose racism and ethnic conflict in the name of Christ.

Adopted at the conclusion of the summit, the Atlanta Covenant remains the most robust BWA theological statement on racial justice highlighting the systemic nature of racism, embracing a radical commitment to eradicate racism, and calling for concerted action to dismantle racism and racist structures around the world.

At the BWA General Council meeting in Havana, Cuba in 2000, the BWA committed to a decade of racial justice and encouraged "member bodies to submit an annual report of initiatives to enact the Atlanta Covenant and combat racism."¹⁵ Eventually reports highlighting concrete member body initiatives to advance racial justice were submitted from Angola, Belgium, Bulgaria, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, England, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Italy, Latvia, Lebanon, Mexico, Myanmar, Nepal, New Zealand, Scotland, Serbia, Sweden, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.¹⁶

In 2007, on the 200th anniversary of the passing of the act to abolish the slave trade in the British Colonies, the BWA Annual Gathering met in Accra, Ghana. This Gathering included a historic visit to the Cape Coast Castle, a former slave castle that was frequently used in the transatlantic slave route. During the visit the BWA held a memorial and reconciliation service that included statements of repentance from groups that had most perpetuated and benefited from the sin of enslavement. At the conclusion of the service, BWA General Secretary Denton Lotz said, "Let the word go forth that Baptists repent and ask forgiveness and seek reconciliation with one another for freedom and

¹⁴ BWA General Council Resolution 1997.1, "Human Rights," adopted in Vancouver, Canada, 1997.

¹⁵ BWA General Council Resolution 2000.4, "Racism," adopted in Havana, Cuba, 2000.

¹⁶ Neville Callam and Julie Justus, eds. *Baptists Against Racism: Reminders at the End of the Decade* (Falls Church: Baptist World Alliance, 2010), v.

justice.”¹⁷ The following day the BWA General Council unanimously affirmed Rev. Dr. Neville Callam from Jamaica as the first General Secretary of the BWA from outside of Europe and North America. Rev. Dr. Callam would serve from 2008 – 2017.

Towards Restorative Racial Justice: A Biblical and BWA Foundation

Despite these significant efforts by the BWA family, racial injustice remains a pervasive sinful scourge around the world and at times within the BWA family. Writing in 2010, Rev. Dr. Callam poignantly quoted a former General Secretary of the Baptist Union of Norway who at a BWA meeting in Aman, Jordan, in 1987 acknowledged:

[T]here is a considerable gap between the content of our resolutions, the good will and wish behind these strong words, and our ability to follow up the intentions of the resolutions within the BWA. The gap is no smaller when it comes to the relationship between the resolutions, the official BWA stand on the one hand, and that which reaches the national Baptist conventions and local churches in a way that will cause any change in priorities, attitude and program making on the other.¹⁸

Within society, racism has not been eradicated. On the contrary, in recent years, we have seen bolder and new manifestations of racism. While our societies worldwide are constantly changing, those changes do not always take the form of progress. This is all the more so as some have allowed a Kingdom vision of flourishing freedom to give way to idols of nationalism, ethno-centrism, and xenophobia often framed in the concepts of safety and security. The recalcitrance of evil systemic racism is evident in the fact that even important gains of past historic movements such as the Civil Rights Movement in the United States of America and the struggle against Apartheid in South Africa have recently been called into question.

No definition of racism is final. However, in one of the plenary sessions of the BWA 1999 International Baptist Summit Against Racism and Ethnic Conflict, Rev. Dr. John Kinney defined racism:

Racism, rooted in the belief that a group or groups of people are by heredity and nature intrinsically superior to the rest of humankind, demands, supports, and legitimates the use of power in order to define, devalue, dominate, and discriminate against those considered inferior. Racism provides the social, rational, and philosophical justification for debasing, denying, and doing violence to persons on the basis of ethnic identity. Racism emerges as a dogma, which is deliberately cultivated and transmitted by a “dominate” group and informs pervasively the principles of human relationships and the character of social institutions. Left unmasked and unchallenged racism claims an ontic status, a life of its own, which assumes cosmic validity. Racism invades the human spirit as a demonic power possessing the soul of people and nations, grotesquely disfiguring the character of community, and distorting the consciousness of future generations.

Racism includes racial prejudice and racial discrimination that can be manifested consciously and unconsciously in ideological dimensions and in individual agency. However, it cannot be limited to

¹⁷ Robert Parham, “Global Baptist Pledge to Fight Racism at Historic Site Related to Slave Trade” *Good Faith Media* (July 9, 2007), available at <https://goodfaithmedia.org/global-baptists-pledge-to-fight-racism-at-historic-site-related-to-slave-trade-cms-9159/> (accessed June 24, 2022).

¹⁸ Callam and Justus, *Baptists Against Racism*, vi.

solely these categories as it would risk overemphasizing individuals, leaving the power imbalances that produce racism untouched. Racism is often not an irrational behavior but has a rationality based on material conditions of systemic imbalance and differences of power that become embedded in the structures of society.

Racism implies the coupling of prejudice and power.¹⁹ Like other forms of social sins, its predominant way of transmission is institutional. In many places around the world, the primary institution of sinful transmission has been through the hegemony of colonial and white supremacy.

As Baptist theologian Walter Rauschenbusch observed more than a century ago, social institutions have the capacity to powerfully impact the hearts and minds of people. Thus, they are privileged spaces through which both social evil can propagate and moral striving and social transformation can be sought.²⁰

Given the interconnectivity of prejudice and power and individual agency and corporate structures, cycles of confession, repentance, and engagement are important for individuals and institutions to excise ever more fully the root and branches of racism in light of the flourishing freedom offered in the Kingdom of God. We must continue to use our voice and resources in prophetic action.

To all the BWA has articulated and undertaken in the area of racial justice, an additional commitment is needed to more fully embrace flourishing freedom: restorative justice.

Restorative justice is interwoven into the biblical witness. The Pentateuch takes seriously concepts of:

Life – Establishing an equality of all humanity not based on capacity, function, age, relationship, or in-group membership, but on the inherent and indelible image of God found in each person.²¹ The Law given to Moses recognizes equality under the law, proportionality, and payments of restitution.²²

Legacies of Slavery and Oppression – The legacy of Hebrew slavery was used as a countervailing value to the human tendency to dominate and dispose of people. As the Lord had redeemed the people from enslavement in Egypt, they were not to “consider it a hardship to set your servant free.” Moreover, freed slaves were not to be sent “away empty-handed” but to be “liberally” supplied with animals and seed as part of a process of restorative justice.²³

The principle of restorative justice was to be extended to migrants and refugees within the community including equal legal treatment. Among many examples, Moses admonishes, “I charged your judges at that time, ‘Hear the disputes between your people and judge fairly, whether the case is between two Israelites or between an Israelite and a foreigner residing among you.’”²⁴ Again, Moses

¹⁹ The Episcopal Church, *Seeing the Image of God in Others: Antiracism Training Manual of the Episcopal Church* (2011), available at https://www.episcopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/02/antiracism_book-revise3.pdf (accessed December 27, 2021).

²⁰ Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981 [1917]).

²¹ Genesis 1:27.

²² See for example Exodus 21:12-36.

²³ Deuteronomy 15:12-18 (NIV).

²⁴ Deuteronomy 1:16 (NIV).

commands, "Do not deprive the foreigner or the fatherless of justice, or take the cloak of a widow as a pledge."²⁵

Generational Social Memory and Longing for Restoration – Despite political prominence, on his deathbed Joseph anticipated the coming enslavement of the Hebrew people. He noted that they would need the very aid of God to depart Egypt and that he desired to have his bones removed from the land of oppression at that time and restored to the land of origin.²⁶ The Scriptures recognize that those who have lived through the trauma and violence of oppression, enslavement, torture, and forced exile, can experience an agony seared on collective consciousness that extends a weariness into bones that may last generations. The Scriptures recount the importance of removing the bones of Joseph as a collective resistance to the colonization of their bodies on racial demarcations, and Joseph's reburial as an important symbol of social healing on a journey of just restoration.²⁷

The Exodus and Mount Sinai – In the narrative of the Exodus and the journey of the freed Hebrew people to Mount Sinai, principles of restorative justice are prominent. First, the Hebrew people, who had been enslaved along racial lines, were to receive reparations as part of their restoration to freedom. That reparations were an original intent from the Lord and not an afterthought, happenstance, or act of generosity is clearly evidenced. In a prophetic vision to Abram, the Lord said, "Know for certain that for four hundred years your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own and that they will be enslaved and mistreated there. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions."²⁸ In the commissioning of Moses at the burning bush prior to his return to Egypt, the Lord pledges:

I will stretch out my hand and strike the Egyptians with all the wonders that I will perform among them. After that, he will let you go. And I will make the Egyptians favorably disposed toward this people, so that when you leave you will not go empty-handed. Every woman is to ask her neighbor and any woman living in her house for articles of silver and gold and for clothing, which you will put on your sons and daughters. And so you will plunder the Egyptians.²⁹

When the Hebrew people leave Egypt, this promised pledge from the Lord is fulfilled.³⁰ Significantly, the fulfilled compensation is not based on individual claimants, type, or length of experienced oppression, preconditioned on approved expenditures, or the character or perceived worthiness of the particular individual. Rather, the redemption enacted by the Lord included a mass payment of reparations to the whole of a group enslaved along the lines of race for their benefit and the benefit of their future generations as a crucial part of restorative justice in a holistic vision of flourishing freedom.

Second, restorative racial justice requires changed legal and social patterns as indicated by the fact that the freed Hebrew people were first directed to Mount Sinai. Before they could enter the land of promise, they had to become the people of promise. When they left Egypt, they were not yet ready to enter the Promised Land because they needed to experience a disorientation and reorientation in their legal and social patterns. At Mount Sinai a new legal code was forged and for the first time,

²⁵ Deuteronomy 24:17 (NIV).

²⁶ Genesis 50:24-25 (NIV).

²⁷ Exodus 13:19, Joshua 24:32, and Hebrews 11:22.

²⁸ Genesis 15:13-14 (NIV).

²⁹ Exodus 3:20-22 (NIV).

³⁰ Exodus 12:35-36.

individuals who had been oppressed were both given equal access to the law and invited to become custodians who would shape and uphold the structures of a new society to be rooted in equality.

Around the world today, minorities often face discriminatory structures, patterns, and limited access to legal and political recourses for change. Manifestations can include housing redlining that segregates neighborhoods and communities, underfunded education institutions that suppress long-term achievement, restricted voting rights in principle or in practice, and extrajudicial violence without accountability for the perpetrators. Freedom is foundational but restorative justice requires a more intentional journey through a period of wilderness to a reconstructed legal code.

Third, these transformed structures and patterns were to help enact a vision of flourishing freedom. While the legacy of slavery was to remain a potent memory that tempered greed and oppression, Mount Sinai was also a positive call to a hopeful future that promised increasing equality for men and women, citizens and non-citizens alike.

On the journey of restorative racial justice, it is essential for a society to honestly and painfully address the deficits and gaps that may exist or may even be perpetuated between racial and ethnic groups. However, the political and social vision guiding this effort must be more than addressing shortcomings or it will at best lose momentum and at worst foster a culture of pitted self-interests. Rather, the transformation must be shaped by a vision of flourishing freedom that allows for all people to enjoy lives of meaning and fullness with equality for all.

Finally, the narrative of the Exodus and Mount Sinai is a reminder that for the believer the journey of restorative racial justice is part of our missional witness. Throughout these passages the Lord frequently reveals his motivation as compassion for those who are suffering, anger at those who are oppressing, and as a missional witness that would draw people to new or renewed faith. For example, in Moses' commissioning, the Lord says, "When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain."³¹ One of the stated rationales for the plagues was so that "the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord."³²

In the Old Testament, the Exodus and Mount Sinai narrative is the defining salvific paradigm and is the first instance in which the Scriptures use and define the term "redemption." The holistic redemption portrayed integrates liberation from racial enslavement and racial oppression combined with financial reparations; transformed legal, economic, political, and social structures; a compelling vision of flourishing freedom that establishes equality for all; and for the believer is part of a missional witness that draws participants and observers into a fuller understanding of the Lord. Old Testament scholar Christopher Wright synthesizes:

To work for political reform, the replacement of tyranny with democratic freedoms, to devise programs of economic uplift and community development, to campaign for redistribution of resources, social justice, the restraint of state-sponsored violence or genocide and so forth are all positive things in themselves and Christians who engage in them can assuredly motivate their efforts by reference to the character and will of God as revealed prominently throughout Scripture.

³¹ Exodus 3:12 (NIV).

³² Exodus 7:5 (NIV).

But to *confine* oneself to such an agenda without also seeking to lead people to know God through repentance and faith in Christ, to worship and serve him in covenant love, faithfulness, and obedience (in other words without effective evangelism and discipling) simply cannot be considered an adequate expression of exodus-shaped redemption and is certainly not holistic, exodus-shaped mission...

Mission that claims the high spiritual ground of preaching only a gospel of personal forgiveness and salvation without the radical challenge of the full biblical demands of God's justice and compassion, without a hunger and thirst for justice, may well expose those who respond to its partial truths to the same dangerous verdict. The epistle of James seems to say as much to those in his own day who had managed to drive an unbiblical wedge between faith and works, the spiritual and the material. If faith without works is dead, mission without social compassion and justice is biblically deficient.³³

Similar to the Pentateuch, the Psalms and Prophets also highlight restorative justice as an integral component to biblical faith. One example is Psalm 72 which reads in part:

- ¹ Endow the king with your justice, O God,
the royal son with your righteousness.
- ² May he judge your people in righteousness,
your afflicted ones with justice.
- ³ May the mountains bring prosperity to the people,
the hills the fruit of righteousness.
- ⁴ May he defend the afflicted among the people
and save the children of the needy;
may he crush the oppressor...
- ¹² For he will deliver the needy who cry out,
the afflicted who have no one to help.
- ¹³ He will take pity on the weak and the needy
and save the needy from death.
- ¹⁴ He will rescue them from oppression and violence,
for precious is their blood in his sight.³⁴

Where the Exodus focuses on the unjust lived experience of those who faced racial oppression, this psalm exalts government leadership when it is in pursuit of equity and justice. The Psalmist petitions King Solomon to enact restorative justice for the poor and those unable to lift themselves from the power and violence of empire, by imploring the theological concepts of justice, equity, and redemption. The psalm outlines that flourishing freedom and prosperity for all people is only possible when those in legal and governmental control act on behalf of those in poverty, oppression, or who are experiencing unjust violence. For the believer, the political implication is to learn to be guided less by party apparatus, ideology, or by slogans of faith, but by a vision of restorative justice on the journey towards flourishing freedom that will find its fullest expression in the eternal presence of the triune God.

³³ Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006), 284-285, 288.

³⁴ Psalm 72:1-4, 12-14 (NIV).

Like the Old Testament, multiple passages in the New Testament expand Jesus' teaching on how the Kingdom of God includes holistic flourishing freedom and that in the interim between the resurrection and the return of Jesus, believers are to work for restorative justice on behalf of those who experience the wide array of injustices present in the world. One prime example is that of Zacchaeus.

Whereas the Exodus focused on the lived reality of the oppressed and Psalm 72 highlighted the responsibility of those in government power, Zacchaeus demonstrates the actions an individual who has benefited from previous arrangements can take to further restorative justice. The Gospel of Luke writes:

Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man too, is a son of Abraham."³⁵

Zacchaeus was representative of an oppressive and unjust system that damaged many individuals with economic exploitation. He was in the eyes of society a "sinner" which was why the people began to "mutter" when Jesus decided to visit his home.³⁶ However, Zacchaeus found in Jesus a Kingdom of flourishing freedom that could only be entered with repentance evidenced by reparation.

In Zacchaeus, as also in the story of the rich young ruler, reparations are not treated as an option but as an obligation.³⁷ Wrong done that assaults or deprives human beings of their right to maintain their dignity or fulfill their potential and that interrupts their flourishing, must be appropriately restored. Zacchaeus demonstrates the double requirement to give a general donation to the poor and to pay reparations to those who had been wronged.

Not only did Zacchaeus' actions bring just restoration to those who had been abused, reparations also had the profound effect of freeing the oppressor as well. Jesus offers liberation to the oppressed and oppressor. Though pursuing actions of repair and restoration may seem costly to those who have benefited most from unjust realities, paradoxically, in the Kingdom of God actions of justice lead to unanticipated freedom. Whether from an idolatrous greed, security, or personal comfort, Zacchaeus had also been bound and corrupted through his decisions to cheat others. Reparations and restorative justice are about liberating persons who are oppressed and who are oppressors. In Jesus the goal is the transformation of individuals and communities, reconciliation between people, and the invitation to participate in ongoing flourishing freedom.

While particular ways in which restorative racial justice is pursued is necessarily linked to specific contexts, restorative racial justice has deep biblical roots and is part of our Scriptural commands and Gospel witness. It has also been anticipated by previous BWA statements. This is most notable in the Atlanta Covenant in two ways; a covenant written to "promote social justice" and to seek "restoration of relationships."³⁸

³⁵ Luke 19:8-9 (NIV).

³⁶ Luke 19:7 (NIV).

³⁷ Matthew 19:16-30, Mark 10:17-31, and Luke 18:18-30 (NIV).

³⁸ Atlanta Covenant, "Preamble," adopted at the International Baptist Summit Against Racism and Ethnic Conflict in Atlanta, Georgia, United States of America, 1999.

First, the Atlanta Covenant recognized the potential of racial injustice to branch into every fabric of ministry and society. As one example, the Atlanta Covenant repeatedly highlights how racism can intertangle with mission and evangelism, and that “too often colonialism brought culture and not Christ, thus denying the power of the Gospel and creating a syncretistic religion devoid of Christ and His power.”³⁹ The Atlanta Covenant continues:

We note with appreciation the rich heritage of Baptist communities to international mission. Notwithstanding the noble intentions, sincere motives, and significant contributions in the area of education, health, church planting; we note that racism has often tainted these efforts, and expressed itself in the form of paternalism, and in the manipulation of resources has caused much pain and frustration.⁴⁰

The principle of restorative racial justice, though not the language, is presented as the solution to address this branch of racial injustice in its call to shift the development of mission strategies, mission financial resources, mission personnel, and mission policies solely from agency decisions to restored co-equal relationships.

Second, within the BWA, the Atlanta Covenant began to draw a clearer connection between racism and economics and financial restitution as part of the biblical response to racial and ethnic injustices. In the section on a biblical basis for racial reconciliation, the Atlanta Covenant issues “A Call to Work for the Elimination of Unfair Trade and for a Just World Economy” and further recognizes within that section that “Love must express itself in the administration of just and equal laws for all.”⁴¹ The Covenant also directly “resolve[d] to promote economic development as a way forward towards racial justice.”⁴²

In other words, what is the clear guidance of Scriptures and what has been implicit in the longstanding engagement of the BWA is now being made more explicit. A Kingdom vision of flourishing freedom requires restorative racial justice.

Restorative Racial Justice Begins with Repentance, Lament, and Inventory

Racism is theologically indefensible.

The image of God overturns inherent superiority for inherent co-dignity and worth that is to be embodied in holistic human rights across culture, society, and political and legal structures. The Church should be a foreshadow and leading advocate of “one new humanity”⁴³ in Christ such that, “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”⁴⁴

³⁹ Atlanta Covenant, “The Biblical Basis for Reconciliation between Nations and Races, No 6. A Call for the Study and Affirmation of the Relationship between the Gospel and Culture,” 1999.

⁴⁰ Atlanta Covenant, “Resolutions, No 5,” 1999.

⁴¹ Atlanta Covenant, “The Biblical Basis for Reconciliation between Nations and Races, No. 4,” 1999.

⁴² Atlanta Covenant, “Resolutions, No 2,” 1999.

⁴³ Ephesians 2:11-22 (NIV).

⁴⁴ Galatians 3:28 (NIV).

Baptists have unapologetically been strong advocates for human rights dating from the 17th century to the present. However, within the Baptist movement as well as within society there have been wrong and sinful attitudes, actions, and structures that have perpetuated racism. The Scriptures are clear that in the reality of sin believers are to “Repent then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.”⁴⁵ In restorative racial justice, repentance is necessary.

In addition, the disparity between a vision of flourishing freedom and the reality of many individuals and societies requires ongoing lamentation. We echo the promise of the psalmist, “My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise.”⁴⁶

First, we lament that many still embrace racial myths. Among others, one myth is the spurious notion that white European civilization is uniquely founded on Judeo-Christian values and is the highest form of human development. As Professor Douglas Waruta writes:

Backed by what has come to be known as Western rationalism, enlightenment, technological inventions, global mercantilism propelled by insatiable greed rather than rules of trade fairness; militarist conquests of the weaker members of the human race; religio-cultural programs including “Christian missions” and philanthropic charities; and above all, the power of ideas through Eurocentric educational orientation and objectives, print and recently electronic media, the myth has almost become a reality.⁴⁷

The detrimental exerting of superiority of one nation, ethnicity, or human community over another has existed for thousands of years, ever since “the Lord confused the language of the whole world.”⁴⁸ While the Tower of Babel was an indictment of unrestrained technological advancement, the human record shows that:

The temptation for human beings to worship their racial, cultural, and technological achievements and to despise whoever is not as endowed as themselves did not go away; it followed human beings to wherever they were scattered. The Bible is replete with stories of human beings linking their fortunes with their race or group and investing in cults of self-adoration we commonly call idolatry.⁴⁹

Christianity has played an important role in the establishment and maintenance of the crimes of racial oppression that since the 15th century have disproportionately and primarily benefited people of white European and Euro-American descent. For example, *Dum Diversas*, issued by Pope Nicolas V in 1452, authorized the Portuguese “to invade, search out, capture, vanquish and subdue all Saracens (Muslims) and pagans whatsoever placed... and to reduce their persons to perpetual slavery.”⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Acts 3:19 (NIV).

⁴⁶ Psalm 51:17 (NIV).

⁴⁷ Douglas W. Waruta, “Socio-Historical Structures of Racism” in *Baptists Against Racism: United in Christ for Racial Reconciliation*, ed. Denton Lotz (Falls Church: Baptist World Alliance, 1999), 27.

⁴⁸ Genesis 11:9 (NIV).

⁴⁹ Waruta, 24.

⁵⁰ See Mark Charles and Soong-Chan Rah, *Unsettling Truths: The Ongoing Dehumanizing Legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery* (Westmont: IVP Books, 2019).

European colonialism and its project to accumulate land and wealth played a foundational role in structuring much of the racial oppression experienced in the modern world. As Baptist ethicist T.B. Maston wrote, "Race and color prejudice and conflict were created, to a considerable degree, by the discovery of America, the establishment of trade routes to India, and were increased tremendously by the developing slave trade. The last (slavery) heightened the white man's sense of superiority. In addition, the Industrial Revolution contributed enormously to the wealth and prestige of the white peoples of Europe and North America."⁵¹

Baptist theologian Willie J. Jennings notes that it was the colonial enterprise for profit that marks the historic point in which "the refashioning of bodies in space to form racial existence" takes place.⁵²

Since the 16th century this racial exploitation has resulted in cumulative benefits for White Europeans and their descendants across borders. These benefits, sometimes summarized in terms such as "White privilege," still shape life across the world today in a way that runs counter to a Kingdom vision of flourishing freedom. Concurrently, non-White populations in and outside Western countries continue to struggle against the aftermath of violent mechanisms that have consistently secured and protected White privilege for the previous five centuries. In African, Asian, and Latin American countries, patterns and practices established by white colonialists outlasted formal colonial rule – such as environmental degradation, systematically stolen treasures and goods, economic instability, population decimation via murder and disease, the aftermaths of slave trades, human rights violations, ethnic rivalries, and more – and still negatively impact the trajectories of millions of lives.

Restorative racial justice must continue to lament and decry this history and to take concrete actions to address this multigenerational reality.

Restorative racial justice must also counter a corresponding myth that certain ethnicities, especially those of African and indigenous descent, are inferior and uncivilized and deserving of nothing but pity and contempt. For example, stories of Africa are too often "stories of poverty, diseases, mismanagement, starvation, and misrule and serve very well to confirm the myth of the primitive and helpless African."⁵³

Together these myths often taint communities and their diasporas with distorted images and must be continuously challenged and upended by a biblical commitment to co-dignity and flourishing freedom. As Duke Kwon and Gregory Thompson identify, reparations must include "the deliberate repair of White supremacy's cultural theft through restitution (returning what one wrongfully took and restoration (restoring the wronged to wholeness)."⁵⁴

Second, we lament that actions and structures of racism remain a pressing reality for many around the world. While it is not possible to articulate every such reality, several examples of the ongoing root and branches of racism and ethno-centrism include:

⁵¹ T. B. Maston, *Christianity and World Issues* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1957), 91.

⁵² Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 63.

⁵³ Waruta, 30.

⁵⁴ Duke L. Kwon and Gregory Thompson, *Reparations: A Christian Call for Repentance and Repair* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press), 17.

In Africa, ethnic identities can contribute to tension and conflict evidenced horrifically in the Rwandan genocide and in the Middle Belt of Nigeria where fused ethnic and religious identities are leading to the decimation of entire communities.

In Asia Pacific, aboriginals in Australia continue to deal with the effect of past laws and policies that resulted in dispossession of their land and that continues to manifest today in diminished physical health and increased mental health challenges and family breakdowns.

In the Caribbean, self-disparagement due to the demonization of blackness and the glorification of whiteness has led to the continued widespread practice of bleaching in countries such as Jamaica.

In Europe and the Middle East, many migrants and refugees have faced racial profiling, hate speech, and increased tension in public discourse that has led to abuse such as discrimination in the labor market and attacks on their accommodation.

In North America, longstanding discriminatory racial patterns and their legacies continue in various places across the United States evidenced as people of color face greater difficulties in securing home ownership or fair home appraisal, less funding per student for education, increased extra-judicial violence, and greater contact with the criminal justice system with harsher sentencing and more violent and deadly encounters with law enforcement officials.

In Latin America, indigenous communities are more likely to feel the impact of intentional environmental destruction, and where millions of African descendants, in countries such as Brazil and Colombia, comprise the majority of those who live below in the poverty line.

The Covid-19 pandemic has more publicly revealed ways in which people of color have been affected by public health challenges which have long lasting economic impact. It has also increased nationalist populist politicians around the world who have used the opportunity to denounce or restrict fair immigration. In the United States, for example, the rise of public officials who blamed the pandemic on China corresponded to an increase in violent attacks against Asian American and Pacific Islander individuals and communities. The pandemic has further evidenced disparities in access to vaccines and medical equipment both within and between countries as many Euro-American countries hoarded vaccines.

Third, we lament that there is still much that has not yet been uncovered, documented, or fully understood. To use several examples that have been brought more to the fore in recent days:

Brazil – At the Valongo Wharf in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil one million enslaved Africans arrived, more than any other single location in the world, and yet there remains no concrete plan for preservation despite a governmental pledge to that effect.

Canada – Two hundred unmarked graves were detected by archeologists at one of the 139 residential schools in Canada that throughout the 19th and 20th centuries received 150,000 first nation children forcibly taken from their parents by the Canadian government.

Haiti – When a slave revolt in Haiti secured its freedom, France and the United States forced the freed slaves to offer 150 million francs in reparations to their former slave masters in France. Approximating between \$20 and \$30 billion USD today, Haiti was forced to annually pay off this unjust amount for 122 years.

Europe – Baptist response, including that of the BWA, to the Jewish holocaust in World War II remains largely unexamined but is being chronicled in a multi-volume series by BWA Historian Lee Spitzer.

United States – Malcom Foley recently graduated with a Ph.D. from Baylor University with a dissertation focused on the way in which Protestant sermons engaged or ignored racial lynching that occurred in their area from the late 19th to early 20th centuries. BWA Vice President Jennifer Lau has highlighted ways in which racial injustices have been experienced by people of Asian descent in the United States and Canada.⁵⁵

As we seek to learn from the past, we help uncover stones that have hindered healing and forgotten gems of prophetic engagement that challenge and equip us for the journey ahead. We must continue to enter the sufferings of humanity and bear the pain of one another as we pursue restorative racial justice in light of flourishing freedom.

Fourth, we lament that racism impacts the whole of creation and is often interwoven into a wider array of justice related issues. For example, religious intolerance and religious restrictions can be influenced by racial prejudice or discrimination such as the rise of anti-Semitism and anti-Islamism in some locations.⁵⁶ Immigration policies, media descriptions, and treatment of migrants can promote racially distorted views or at times xenophobia. The economic world order continues to disproportionately advantage those countries that most economically benefited from colonial exploitation. In Africa, where millions are still subject to abject poverty, the legacy of colonialism still runs deep. Africa has attained political freedom, but economic exploitation continues to enslave and impoverish the people of the continent. Many African countries owe huge debts of high interest rate to the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, with stringent conditions attached to the debts. Unfortunately, racism and the legacy of racism can still be found in the policies and practices of some Christian mission organizations, aid agencies, conventions, and unions, and in local churches.

As we seek to lament, we affirm with Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., “We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the hateful words and actions of the bad people but for the appalling silence of the good people.”⁵⁷

The emphasis of this lamentation, or spiritual inventory, is not meant to merely shame and blame. Rather, lamentation should lead us in two directions. The first is to seek to understand the generational pain within many communities and to join in this pain with the love of Christ. As Jesus calls, “Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”⁵⁸

Second, it is to lead us to appropriate confession, repentance, and prophetic engagement. Lamentation should lead the believer from disorientation to reorientation around the Kingdom of God. Lamentation should be more than regret; it should be a posture of humble engagement. Where there have been advancements in the long struggle for racial justice, in the reality of ongoing

⁵⁵ Jennifer Lau, “The Multiracial Face of Racism,” presented to the Baptist World Alliance Racial Justice Working Group, July 29, 2021.

⁵⁶ See Raimundo C. Barreto, “Racism and Religious Intolerance: A Critical Analysis of the Coloniality of Brazilian Christianity,” *Mission Studies* 38 (2021): 398-423.

⁵⁷ Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” (London: Penguin Classics, 2018).

⁵⁸ John 15:13 (NIV).

lamentation we must continue to live as ambassadors of reconciliation.⁵⁹ Through Christ's redemptive work, a new humanity has been created which should be the framework of our relationship with one another. For four centuries, the best of our Baptist tradition has accorded equality to all in terms of dignity, worth, and human rights. We must continue to live unapologetically for restorative racial justice as reconciled humanity celebrating the beauty of many diverse parts as a mark of the overflowing generosity of God's creation.⁶⁰ In so doing:

Let us give our children a century of reconciliation.
Reconciliation based on an encounter with truth...
Reconciliation based on prophetic revelation...
Reconciliation based on revolutionary grace...
Reconciliation based on the radical transforming power of redeeming love...
Reconciliation based on and anchored in liberation and healing...
Reconciliation based on love and justice...
Reconciliation based on non-violence and the Spirit of Jesus Christ.⁶¹

It is as we pursue restorative racial justice that we help to live as those who with anticipatory faith believe and work for flourishing freedom.

Restorative Justice Involves Intentional Actions to Repair and Restore

As we seek to "follow justice and justice alone," our prayers and faith in Jesus Christ lead us to pursue intentional actions of repair and restoration in a multitude of areas.⁶² This should include direct Kingdom engagement with family care, education, criminal justice, politics, poverty, and immigration from local communities to national governments and multilateral institutions.

One area of necessary engagement is in reparations which are "targeted initiatives intended to concretely repair a harm against a person or persons resulting from the collective action of others."⁶³ Specifically with regard to restorative racial justice, reparations are the set of actions to redress the harms, violence, and disparities caused by racism including the egregious injustices and long legacies of slavery, colonialization, and racial segregation.

Even as we acknowledge that every situation and context require a unique reflection, reparations have been a longstanding right recognized since 1969 in the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination which reads in part:

⁵⁹ 2 Corinthians 5:11-21.

⁶⁰ Paul Fiddes, "The Theological Indefensibility of Racism," presented to the Baptist World Alliance Racial Justice Working Group, July 29 2021.

⁶¹ Otis Moss, Jr., "Necessary Paths to Authentic Reconciliation," in *Baptists Against Racism: United in Christ for Racial Reconciliation*, ed. Denton Lotz (Falls Church: Baptist World Alliance, 1999), 168.

⁶² Deuteronomy 16:20 (NIV).

⁶³ Ashley V. Reichelmann and Matthew O. Hunt, "White Americans Attitudes Towards Reparations for Slavery: Definitions and Determinants," *Race and Social Problems*, available at https://link.springer.com/epdf/10.1007/s12552-021-09348-x?sharing_token=8qJSFFC20uzPIWYOUJly4Pe4RwlQNchNByi7wbcMAY6Rhn_L0VKIC4eN5gN9wrVXWZxWyV24W3gDTs9nA0z7wKiuguh9Miz8hygR3SvzLaSGfkKwFEFDdN77yAPYHNhaeyr1UbFZRBMUUM-leQiXxLJEL12fIDM3TaUplh81YrY%3D (accessed on June 28, 2022).

State Parties shall assure to everyone within their jurisdiction effective protection and remedies, through the competent national tribunals and other State institutions, against any acts of racial discrimination which violate his human rights and fundamental freedoms contrary to this Convention as well as the right to seek from such tribunals just and adequate reparation or satisfaction for any damage suffered as a result of such discrimination.⁶⁴

There are many historic examples of reparations.

South Africa remains one of the premier examples of reparations. In 1995, newly elected President Nelson Mandela established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) which undertook a national truth-telling initiative to confront and address the nation's long history of apartheid and institutional racism. The TRC investigated human rights violations committed during apartheid and provided a platform for perpetrators and victims to testify. Perpetrators were promised amnesty in exchange for the truth and survivors were promised reparations. While not going as far as the TRC recommendation, in 2003 the South African government paid approximately \$85 million USD to more than 19,000 victims.

Peru modeled its Truth and Reconciliation Commission (CVR) after that of South Africa with the mandate to, among other things, "draw up proposals for reparation and dignification of the victims and their relatives."⁶⁵ The Comprehensive Reparations Plan recommended by the CVR "is based on the State's legal obligation to provide reparations to victims for not having guaranteed respect for human rights and not having fulfilled their duty to protect their citizens."⁶⁶ Peru established both a Collective Reparations Program and an Individual Economic Reparations Program that have collectively offered reparations to more than 100,000 people.

Even though reparations for slavery have been treated as a controversial topic in the United States, the United States government has pressured countries such as Germany to pay reparations to the victims of the Holocaust, and has itself "distributed reparations to seven groups: Japanese-Americans, the Ottawas of Michigan, the Chippewas of Wisconsin, the Seminoles of Florida, the Sioux of South Dakota, the Klamaths of Oregon, and the Alaska Natives."⁶⁷ To date, African Americans are among those who have not been offered reparation.

For the believer, there is a strong biblical foundation for reparations. From the Old Testament to the New, the Bible is the story of God's redemption of people from slavery to freedom. This occurs spiritually, from slavery to sin to freedom in Christ, and historically as the groaning of all creation is made new and ultimate flourishing freedom found in the triune God. As has already been considered, from the Pentateuch to the Psalms to the Prophets to the New Testament, the Scriptures clearly demonstrate that holistic mission witness must include restorative justice inclusive of reparations. As

⁶⁴ Article 6, International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, Adopted and Opened for Signature and Ratification by the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2106 (XX) of 21 December 1965 and entered into force on 4 January 1969, in accordance with Article 19, available at <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/cerd.pdf> (accessed on June 28, 2022).

⁶⁵ Guillerot, Julie, "Reparations in Peru: 15 Years of Delivering Redress" in *Reparations, Responsibility & Victimhood in Transitional Societies* (September 2019), 8, available at: <https://reparations.qub.ac.uk/assets/uploads/Peru-Report-ENG-LR-2.pdf> (accessed on June 28, 2022)

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁶⁷ Reichelmann and Hunt.

Paul writes, "Let no debt remain outstanding except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law."⁶⁸

All Christians should passionately speak out against any historic or contemporary violent extraction and commoditization of any people, as well as the legacies it leaves in its wake, and seek to replicate the covenant-keeping God who is redeeming sin and pain into the shalom of holistic flourishing freedom. Racial injustice is almost always directly linked to economic violence that plagues communities for generations. Therefore, Christians, regardless of their race, must refrain from "remaining silent behind the anesthetizing security of stain glass windows" and act courageously to pursue reparations as a crucial element of restorative racial justice.⁶⁹

On one occasion Jesus was asked how to inherit eternal life. Jesus answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind;' and 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"⁷⁰ For Jesus, such love involves financial care even if the individual is not the originator of the wrong and may even be perceived as an enemy of the one who had been oppressed.

To embrace inherent public square co-dignity is to pursue neighbor love that is actioned, in part, by following the teaching of Jesus in providing financial restitution. The Church must be the advocate, especially in European and American contexts where the White church is intertwined with the development of empires that created racial wealth gaps, if the nation is to heal from the vestiges of racism and understand that closing racial wealth, education, health, and legal disparities will be beneficial to the wellbeing of the society.

One argument frequented against reparations is that a current generation should not be held responsible and culpable for the actions of previous generations. This argument can be summarized as "the objection from intergenerational justice, which states that justice between generations is problematic because those who pay reparations at a particular time, must be the ones directly guilty and at fault for the harms and wrongs done to the group for which reparations are requested."⁷¹ This limited understanding not only denies neighbor love, it fails to account that longstanding and structured injustice and inequality results in considerable generational social, economic, and political power for one group over others.

The call for reparations is not an individual imperative alone, rather it is also a biblical and collective mandate directed at governments and institutions who provided support and have benefited from racial injustice, and most especially those that profited from slavery. Collective repentance is part of the Christian tradition. It is rooted into the Old Testament practice of priests seeking forgiveness on behalf of the community and modeled in the communal prayer Jesus taught us to pray; "forgive us our debts, as we have also forgiven our debtors."⁷²

Collective action is also part of the Christian tradition. Neighbor love directs the follower of Christ to bear a special responsibility in taking anti-racist actions that address the causes, consequences, and cures for advancing reparations as part of restoring the just wellbeing of society. Governments and

⁶⁸ Romans 13:8 (NIV).

⁶⁹ Martin Luther King, Jr., *Why We Can't Wait* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), 27.

⁷⁰ Luke 10:27 (NIV). See also Matthew 22:34-40 and Mark 12:28-31.

⁷¹ J. Angelo Corlett, *Race, Racism and Reparations* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 199.

⁷² Matthew 6:12 (NIV).

institutions are to be held accountable to provide specific redress for those who have borne the brunt of systemic injustice and to help undo centuries of economic and political exclusion.

Though at times painful, Christian leaders must be aware of ways in which their respective institutions, such as churches, seminaries, mission and aid agencies, and conventions and unions, have benefited from racial injustice, contributed to racial injustice, or stood silent in the face of pervasive racial injustice. Writing within the United States context but with broader ramification, Kelly Brown Douglas asserts, "Reparations must involve an interrogation of the ways in which fundamental aspects of Christian theology have been used to legitimize white supremacist realities that are now a part of the collective theological consciousness."⁷³ Christian leaders must seek ways to redress previous injustices while also engaging in public advocacy for restoration and modeling an intentional reconciliation through policies, hiring practices, scholarship prioritization, community support, strategic developments, and financial commitments.⁷⁴

The Church has a theological responsibility to engage in reflective truth-telling that addresses racial and ethnic superiorities, including that of White supremacy, and supports the rooting out of the many social and structural systems that continue to exacerbate racial disparities, even as such engagement may well mean overturning the tables of power and economics within our temples.⁷⁵

Reparations necessarily compel political and social engagement and are part of holistic mission and Gospel witness. Each unique specific instance requires deep listening, humble reflection, and courageous action. In this process, several cautions must be posited. First, moral clarity and Kingdom restoration must remain the most compelling interest. Second, in the face of the most intractable experiences of racial injustice, financial compensation alone is never adequate nor is any amount truly sufficient. Generations of wrong cannot be easily or quickly undone and it is impossible to fully account for multilayer damages. Historically, where racial reparations have been disbursed, the political will has often fallen short of the recommended financial amount. It is one reason why reparations must acknowledge the past while being structured as more forward-looking in their implementation. The past cannot be undone but the present can covenant together to write the future in restored reconciliation.

Nonetheless, flourishing freedom and restorative neighbor love should challenge faith leaders to "disturb the status quo and cause meaningful, thoughtful conversations about a species of biblical preaching that envisions economic justice as the ethical imperative for the twenty-first century, particularly for people of African descent."⁷⁶

Restorative Racial Justice Is a Call to Live as a Foreshadow of the Flourishing Freedom Found in the Kingdom of God

⁷³ Kelly Brown Douglas, "A Christian Call for Reparations," *Sojourners* (July 2020), available at <https://sojo.net/magazine/july-2020/christian-call-case-slavery-reparations-kelly-brown-douglas> (accessed on June 28, 2022).

⁷⁴ As one example, Princeton Theological Seminary has researched and developed substantial actions plans towards reparations. See "Princeton Seminary and Slavery: A Journey of Confession and Repentance," available at <https://slavery.ptsem.edu> (accessed on June 28, 2022).

⁷⁵ Building upon Matthew 21:12-17, Mark 11:15-19, Luke 19:45-48, and John 2:13-17, Wale Hudson-Roberts, "Racism through Institutional Lenses," presented to the Baptist World Alliance Racial Justice Working Group, June 24, 2021.

⁷⁶ Joseph Evans, *Reconciliation and Reparations: Preaching Economic Justice* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 2018), 5.

Justice, a core attribute of God, is about fairness and equity and the equitable recognition of the image of God in all people.⁷⁷ Time and time again, the Bible reveals that God is a God of justice, loving the whole world and causing God's resources to rain down on both the just and unjust alike.

In the Nazareth Manifesto, Jesus defines his ministry in terms of justice as he told the crowd that the vision of Isaiah for the releasing of prisoners, giving sight to the blind, and the releasing of the oppressed would be fulfilled in him.⁷⁸

For James, the Jesus community is a counterculture to the dominant culture that treats people based on privilege. Being a member of the Christian community demands the exercising of justice according to God's standards in relation to showing proper care for widows and orphans.⁷⁹ Favoring the rich and mistreating the poor violate the basic command from the Hebrew Bible and Jesus' teaching to love your neighbor as yourself.

With a Kingdom vision of flourishing freedom that requires justice, the work of racial justice is unfinished and our continued engagement is necessary as we seek to be guided by "the spirit of peace and the power of everlasting love."⁸⁰

As a foreshadow of this flourishing freedom, Baptist churches, conventions and unions, mission and aid agencies, and healthcare and education organizations are called to live intentionally multiethnic. As Coretta Scott King admonished in her address to the BWA International Summit on Baptists Against Racism and Ethnic Conflict, "There are other important challenges which we must meet as Baptists concerned about racism. We must make sure that all of the hierarchies of churches and organizations reflect the diversity we seek in the pews. We must strengthen our educational outreach to teach young people about the critical importance of tolerance as a Christian value. And we must do a better job of incorporating the symbols and traditions of many cultures into our worship services, sermons, and prayer."⁸¹

As part of this intentionality, Baptists are called to again develop theological education and reflection that more clearly focuses on racial and geographic exegesis as part of highlighting the rich diversity found within the Scriptures. For example, our faith is deepened as we conscientiously acknowledge that the first church to be called "Christian" was primarily comprised of persecuted refugees and migrants, located in the modern-day country of Syria, and that two of the three leaders that commissioned Paul and Barnabas as missionaries to Europe were African.⁸² As part of a program of education, seminaries should help model and equip students in areas of restorative racial justice as part of a core ministry of the church, service in the community, and ongoing social change. Conventions and unions are requested to develop standards of practice that prepare leaders to live as ambassadors of reconciliation.

⁷⁷ Deuteronomy 10:17-19.

⁷⁸ Luke 4:16-20.

⁷⁹ James 1:27.

⁸⁰ John Lewis, "Together, You Can Redeem the Soul of Our Nation," *The New York Times* (July 30, 2020), available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/30/opinion/john-lewis-civil-rights-america.html> (accessed on October 5, 2021).

⁸¹ Coretta Scott King, "Statement and Greetings at BWA Rally," in *Baptists Against Racism: United in Christ for Racial Reconciliation* (Falls Church: Baptist World Alliance, 1999), 157.

⁸² Acts 13:1-3.

Prophetic advocacy must remain an enduring hallmark of Baptist witness as we yearn for the full restoration found in the presence of the triune God. Evidence of racism and racial prejudices are noticeable on all continents and have led to the emergence of new manifestations of evil that are at times further compounded by racial echo chambers in national medias and worldwide internet forums. Baptists have a long history of promoting freedom, justice, and peace across the globe and are called to recommit to develop grassroots groups and public advocacy initiatives. We reaffirm that “peace with justice has been an enduring dream and a continuing vision of the people of God in general, and of Baptists in particular and whereas peace among nations, races, generations, classes, and the sexes continues to escape us,” we pledge to “work faithfully as instruments of His peace for the things that make for peace – justice, truth, and righteousness – to the furtherance of the great goal of peace on earth and good will among men.”⁸³

Though values, practices, and advocacy are all essential, a vision of flourishing freedom requires the Church to embrace a call to mission. We celebrate that God’s worldwide mission requires a worldwide church. As Karen Kirew rightly challenges, what is needed today is:

A ministry of resurrecting the good, the good that is absent or even difficult to see, champions the cause for wholeness, healing, compassion, justice, reconciliation, and love. This ministry nurtures the belief that possibilities of the evidence of goodness abound despite our limitations as human beings. This ministry is about a journey that ultimately is about the good of people in the life of God; the good portrayed in the lives of those who are sent; and the good encouraged in the lives of those whose hope is invisible. In other words, the ministry of evangelism resurrects the good by offering Jesus through whom God’s sacrificial acts of salvation and redemption have come and through whom a new state of being and new and courageous ways of living are experienced.⁸⁴

There is an ongoing urgency for a collaborative and comprehensive mission strategy with Baptists passionately living on mission with a vision of the flourishing freedom offered in Jesus Christ. Nurturing this commitment to the Mission of God are the ongoing ordinances of Baptism and Communion. In Baptism we experience our redeemed identity reconciled as one humanity: “For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body – whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free – and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.”⁸⁵

In Communion, the Church regularly confesses its sins of division between Christ and between one another and having taken every step necessary to pursue restoration, celebrates and lives out reconciliation.⁸⁶ For as Paul writes, “Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all share the one loaf.”⁸⁷

⁸³ BWA Executive Committee Resolution 1973-07.2, “Peace with Justice,” adopted 1973.

⁸⁴ Karen Kirew, “Holistic Evangelism” in *Baptist Preaching: A Global Anthology*, ed. Joel C. Gregory (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2014), 141.

⁸⁵ 1 Corinthians 12:13 (NIV).

⁸⁶ Matthew 5:23-24.

⁸⁷ 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 (NIV).

It is in these ordinances, alongside other spiritual disciplines, that we are nurtured in our transformation into the likeness of Christ and in our covenant with one another to live a Kingdom vision of flourishing freedom that requires restorative racial justice.

Many competing visions and idols seek to counter or replace the truth of the Gospel and tempt us to live as if restoration is not doable, reparation is not practical, and reconciliation is not possible. Therefore:

Human beings ought not to allow their God-given freedom to be contaminated by distorted understandings, false pride, or the pursuit of power. When, through his life, death, and resurrection, Jesus Christ secures victory over sin, God swings the door wide open for the renewal and reinvigoration for what it means to be truly human. God enables people to see the self and the other as equally valid expressions of God's mysterious action in creation and redemption. Then, the way of the follower of Christ will reflect the grammar of that mutual respect and *agape* love that are perfectly inhospitable to any claim of inherent superiority of one person over another. Our Christocentric faith reflects our Lord's action in breaking down the walls that separate people from one another, releasing them for the wholesome enjoyment of *Ubuntu*, the principle of human solidarity and reciprocity.⁸⁸

We are resolved to continue to press for the full establishment of racial justice based on inherent co-dignity through our convictions, commitments, and actions.⁸⁹

In so doing, we faithfully hold to a vision of flourishing freedom that finds its fullest expression in the triune God and embraces as one component to this defining eschatological reality a radical commitment to restorative racial justice.

⁸⁸ Neville Callam, *From Fragmentation to Wholeness: Race, Ethnicity, and Communion* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 2017), 21.

⁸⁹ Appendix 4 outlines a renewal of convictions, commitments, and actions for restorative racial justice.

Appendix 1: Harare Declaration

In 1993, spurred by the official report of the Special Commission of Baptists against Racism, the BWA General Council adopted the Harare Declaration during its meetings in Zimbabwe. The statement, which expanded upon the need for the Baptist family to love all of God's children equally regardless of race and ethnicity, was used as liturgy during worship at the same meetings.

1. We affirm that:
 - 1.1. God's healing has come in the presence of human alienation.
 - 1.2. God's reconciling love is made known in the midst of fragmentation.
 - 1.3. God's redemption is revealed, as the presence of Jesus Christ unmask and defeats the power of sin.
2. We resolve therefore, that as members of the body of Christ:
 - 2.1. We will seek to stand as a prophetic witness that exposes and challenges the sin of racism.
 - 2.2. We will endeavor to serve as Christ's presence, healing that which is broken through a ministry of reconciliation, uniting us with God, neighbors, and ourselves.
3. We affirm that:
 - 3.1. In the beginning, God made humankind in harmony with the Creator, with neighbors, with nature and with self, a harmony shattered by the demonic rise of human self-centeredness.
4. We resolve therefore that:
 - 4.1. We will announce courageously God's new and true humanity where the dignity and value of every person is affirmed and celebrated.
5. We acknowledge that:
 - 5.1. Racism is rooted in the sinfulness of humankind and is evident where a group or groups of people:
 - a. Assert that by heredity and by nature they are superior to the rest of humanity.
 - b. Oppress others through economic and political means to find security and self-acceptance, privilege, and power.
 - c. Project onto another group or groups their own anger, hostility, hatred, and failures in order to rationalize feelings of superiority.
6. We resolve therefore to:
 - 6.1. Respond to God's intention of wholeness for all, seeking to bring people together, as brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, whatever may be their ethnic identity.
7. We affirm that:
 - 7.1. All people are made in the image of God and have the potential to live in the way God intends people to live.
8. We resolve therefore that:
 - 8.1. We will work strenuously to ensure that our own and our congregational attitudes, enhance and affirm love and respect for all God's children.
 - 8.2. We will address the vital issue of congregational attitudes in a variety of creative ways being challenged by God's Word which says, "be not overcome by evil but overcome evil with good."

For example:

- a. Through EVANGELISM which proclaims the Gospel of Jesus Christ to be the power that brings radical change to human attitudes and behavior.
- b. Through WORSHIP events which celebrate the richness and wholeness of the body of Christ as it is experienced in its ethnic fullness and beauty.
- c. Through EDUCATION programs that develop curricula with biblical and ethical values that make people sensitive to the evil of racism.
- d. Through FELLOWSHIP experiences and initiatives that bring different people together and help validate and affirm persons of various ethnic backgrounds.
- e. Through PROPHETIC ACTION that addresses matters of justice, peace, and other major issues, which can produce understanding and combat racial attitudes among people.

9. We further resolve that:

Our attitude towards God's children should be modeled on the example of the Christ who gave his life so that all may have opportunity to experience the grace of God experienced through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior.

10. Our Response:

As followers of Jesus Christ, we commit ourselves to seek to carry out the spirit and intent of this declaration. In the power of the Holy Spirit we covenant to recognize and accept all humankind as God's creation, revealed in God's Holy Word and further, to accept and affirm with joy the unity and diversity of our membership in the community of faith.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ "Harare Declaration," Adopted during BWA General Council in Harare, Zimbabwe, August 4-10, 1993.

Appendix 2: Atlanta Covenant

The Atlanta Covenant, which arose out of the International Baptist Summit Against Racism and Ethnic Conflict, held in Atlanta, Georgia in January 1999, is a comprehensive statement on the BWA's stance against racism/ethnic prejudice. It is also a call to the worldwide family of Baptists to work to stop these evils and to observe a Decade to Promote Racial Justice.

A Call to Baptist Churches to oppose racism and ethnic conflict and to actively work to establish a united witness for Christ and His Kingdom.

Preamble

As delegates to the Baptists Against Racism Summit at the historic Ebenezer/Wheat Street Baptist Churches, center of civil rights struggles in the USA and related to the ministries of Martin Luther King, Jr., in Atlanta, Georgia, January 8-11, 1999, and,

- a. having heard the pain and consequences of systemic racism on individuals and peoples on all continents,
- b. having been confronted again with the urgent and biblical call to justice and racial harmony
- c. recognizing our failure through apathy, silence, and hostility to address consistently the issue of racism and ethnic conflict.

We resolve to affirm the provisions of the Harare Declaration, which states:

We acknowledge that:

Racism is rooted in the sinfulness of humankind and is evident where a group or groups of people:

- a. Assert that by heredity and by nature they are superior to the rest of humanity
- b. Oppress others through economic and political means to find security and self-acceptance, privilege, and power
- c. Project onto another group or groups their own anger, hostility, hatred, and failures in order to rationalize feelings of superiority.

Therefore:

We covenant, with God's help, through a ministry of reconciliation,

1. To promote social justice through efforts to eradicate racism and confront ethnic conflict.
2. To seek for reconciliation between people, restoration of relationships, and in the words of Martin Luther King, Jr. "to bring forth the beloved community."

The purposes of this international summit are outlined as follows:

1. To challenge Baptist Unions and Conventions around the world to actively confront issues of racism and ethnic hatred within their areas;
2. To seek to ensure that every individual who attends this Summit returns home committed to work for racial and ethnic reconciliation;
3. To make a positive statement to the Baptist world, the wider Christian community, and the secular world that Baptists are totally committed to oppose racism and ethnic conflict in the name of Christ.

The Biblical Basis for Reconciliation between Nations and Races:

1. The God we worship is a God of Liberation and Freedom:

- "To proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of prisons to those who are bound..." (Isaiah 61:2, Luke 4:18)
- "For freedom Christ has set us free..." (Galatians 5:1)
- "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." (II Cor. 3:17)

Therefore, as Baptist followers of Jesus Christ, who has come to liberate all humanity, it is incumbent upon us to proclaim this freedom to all people. The Gospel call to freedom is above nationality and race and gender. It is a call to work and actualize the Kingdom of Christ both in individuals and in society. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who has faith (Romans 1:16).

2. Humanity is in the Bondage of Sin and Alienation:

- "But the Lord called to man and said to him, 'Where are you?' And he said, 'I heard your voice in the garden, and I was afraid, ...and I hid myself.'" (Gen. 3:9-10)
- "And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage." (Ex. 1:14)
- "So with us we were in bondage to the elemental spirits of the universe..." (Gal. 4:3)
- "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23)

Because of humanity's sin, humankind is alienated from God and from one another. The form of this alienation is common to all nations and races. Wars, treachery, slavery, economic exploitation, pride, the lust for power, greed all come from the heart of sinful man. Ethnocentrism and racism are a sign of this sin and alienation. The power of sin expresses itself in many ways. When one nation or race thinks it is better than the other it is living in sin. Indeed, racism is sin. It is part of the bondage under which unredeemed humanity lives.

3. Racism and Ethnic Conflict are contrary to God's Word: Jesus Christ is the Power of God that enables Racial and Ethnic Peace!

- "Do not mistreat foreigners who are living in your land. Treat them as you would an Israelite and love them as you love yourselves. Remember that you were once foreigners in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God." (Leviticus 13:33,34)
- "I now realize that it is true that God treats everyone on the same basis. Those who fear him and do what is right are acceptable to him, no matter what race they belong to. You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, proclaiming the Good News of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all." (Acts 10:34-36)
- "So there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles, between slaves and free people, between men and women; you are all one union with Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are the descendants of Abraham and will receive what God has promised." (Gal. 3:26-29)
- *"After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb...crying out with a loud voice, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb!'" (Rev. 7:9-10)*

The call of Christ is a call to all humanity. It is a call to all nations and races, to all peoples and tribes. Racism and ethnic conflict are a denial of the Gospel and a hindrance to mission and evangelism. It denigrates the individual created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27) and denies the universality of the Gospel. Those men and women who practice racism or harbor racist thoughts, not only deny the

Gospel of Christ but put their own fellowships in danger for they neglect the Christ of the Gospels and deny the unity for which Christ died.

1. A Call to Baptist Churches for Action against Racism and Ethnocentrism: What we must do now! The Call of the Gospel requires Christ's Followers to be Agents of Reconciliation: *"God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself...and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation."* (II Cor. 5:19)

2. A Call for a Renewal of Worship and for Cleansing:

With the Prophet Isaiah we proclaim that solemn assembly and iniquity is not endured by the God of Scripture (Isaiah 1:13): *"When you spread forth your hands I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow."* (Isaiah 1:15-17)

Segregated and homogenous unit worship engenders separation and often prevents racial and ethnic reconciliation. Baptist conventions and unions are encouraged to work towards structures that encourage the unity for which Christ prayed (John 17).

3. A Call for Commitment to Holistic and Interracial Mission and Evangelism: Jesus' prayer for unity was missiological in nature: *"That they may all be one... so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."* (John 17:21) Our lack of unity is a hindrance to evangelism. In the face of the unbelieving world, separate worship and church life contribute to inflexible structures which prevent the love and unity of Christ to be visibly expressed in the world. The reconciling Gospel unites Christians in worship and is a prophetic judgment over against secular prejudice and racism!!

4. A Call to Work for the Elimination of Unfair Trade and for a Just World Economy: The world economy tends to be divided between the rich North and the less affluent South. The less affluent South predominately includes people of color and different ethnic units. Traditionally the rich North has been viewed by the world as "Christian". We deplore the fact that in our day secularism has captured the former "Christian" nations only to make them more nationalistic, ethnocentric, and greedy for power and money.

We call upon our Baptist brothers and sisters worldwide to continue in their life and witness the incarnational mission of Christ who commented on his followers: *"...for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me."* (Matt. 25:35-36). In so doing they shall be encouraged to be a witness against a materialistic and godless culture of hedonism.

Love must express itself in the administration of just and equal laws for all. Baptists churches are encouraged to unite together to combat government systems that enhance and perpetuate racial and ethnocentric prejudice.

5. A Call for the Protection of the Rights of the Aboriginal and Tribal Peoples:

Often the land of indigenous peoples has been taken over by either internal or external immigrant groups. Racial and ethnic prejudice prevents them from being fully integrated into the larger society. Economic deprivation and historical prejudice have often led to segregation in tribal areas. Today these tribal areas are very often under attack and have become an excuse for governments not to allow freedom and interdependence. In addition, economic restraints have prevented the full citizenship which others enjoy.

We must not allow our silence to be interpreted as affirmation of the status quo. Such silence has often made evangelism more difficult and even has hindered the proclamation of the Gospel. We must continue to share the Gospel as an inherent right of these peoples.

6. A Call for the Study and Affirmation of the Relationship between the Gospel and Culture:

The prophetic call of Christ is one of redeeming culture and yet affirming culture. The Biblical view in Revelation of all nations and peoples coming to Christ (Revelation 7) is not a call for the denial of culture, but rather an affirmation of the awesome spectrum of God's grace expressed in so many different languages, ethnic groups, and nations. The Christian faith necessarily affirms culture as the vehicle of people's identity and tradition. Where culture is contrary to Scripture, we must be witnesses of that light and salt of Christ.

Therefore, there is necessarily a prophetic protest of the Church over against unredeemed culture. At the same time we must affirm that positive and historic reflection of God's glory among the cultures of all peoples. This applies to all cultures, North and South, East, and West.

Too often colonialism brought culture and not Christ, thus denying the power of the Gospel and creating a syncretistic religion devoid of Christ and His power. Jesus said, *"When I am lifted up from the earth I will draw all humanity to myself."* (John 12:32) Let us exalt Christ among the nations and in all cultures. Let us not fear the varied cultural expressions of the Christian Faith but affirm the Good News of Christ taking form in that culture!

7. A Call to Repentance:

Scripture affirms that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). Racism and ethnic conflict is not limited to one race, culture, or ethnic unit. However, it is a blot on the so-called Christian nations of the North, that often being white, they have fostered and engendered racism in their treatment of nations. We rejoice that unjust structures such as *apartheid* in South Africa have been defeated. We confess that in North America and Europe many churches remain segregated and that in the former "Christian West", racism and ethnic conflict is still too often prevalent.

Where there is division and hatred, we call upon our churches to work for reconciliation and peace.

Resolutions

1. We resolve to be committed to racial justice as an integral part of proclaiming Good News in Jesus Christ.

- a. To witness to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord in ways that ensure that the Good News will impact every area of life.
- b. To recognize that our proclamation of the Gospel has not always included the need for repentance from sin, especially the sin of racism.
- c. That our proclamation of Good News and promotion of racial justice must be intentional, sincere, and undertaken with integrity.
- d. To affirm that because all humankind is made in the image and likeness of God, every person is important and has the potential to be a new person in Christ; we must work for reconciliation and justice for all.
- e. To ask the BWA to continue to expand its ministry of reconciliation in specific areas where Baptists are in conflict.

- f. To declare the notion that church life based on racial homogeneity reduces the ability of people to understand each other's worth.
- g. To both share the Good News of Jesus Christ with others and be willing to also receive it from those of another ethnic background.

2. We resolve to promote Economic Development as a way forward towards racial justice.

- a. Support the biblical meaning of Jubilee 2000 initiatives as outlined in the 1998 BWA General Council resolutions.
- b. Affirm the creativity and programs of indigenous people; empower their leadership.
- c. Call Baptist churches to create within our own institutions models of economic justice and to develop alternative economic models in efforts of economic globalization.
- d. Call Baptist churches (poor and rich) to participate in cooperative economic initiatives in the communities they serve for the economic development of their community. This must be partnership without paternalism.
- e. Educate all Baptists in the issues and dynamic of economic literacy.
- f. Encourage Baptist churches in developed countries to partner economically with churches in developing countries. Initiate transformational trips to establish relations, to create environments for partnering to being, for mutual discovery of resources.
- g. Secure church focus on the most vulnerable in society, encompassing the economics of survival and the economics of liberation.

3. We resolve to understand the universality of Jesus Christ as a way to address issues of racial justice.

- a. Recognizing that each individual and culture experiences Jesus Christ in their own context, no one of these can fully represent the historical Jesus as a first century Jew.
- b. We recognize that the almost exclusive use of white images of Jesus has limited our understanding of and witnessing to the incarnation.
- c. Therefore, we recommend to our unions and churches that:
 - they request their publishing ministries to use multi-racial images and idioms throughout their worship and education materials
 - distribute and use each other's ways of worship
 - encourage churches of different races and ethnic groups to celebrate significant events and communion together
 - promote times of personal spiritual reflection and repentance upon our own racism and encourage the BWA day of prayer
 - ask the BWA to produce major visual worship resources reflecting our diversity for use in our churches

4. We resolve to call the churches to develop a program of *Education* to promote a Christian lifestyle that demonstrates just and racial harmony.

We therefore recommend the following:

- a. All ministers and church leaders be encouraged to undertake training in racial justice, reconciliation, and re-distribution of resources.
- b. All churches seek to use the rich diversity of art and music to teach and celebrate racial harmony.
- c. Develop a community education program.
- d. Promote positive role models from all cultures in all education material.

- e. Observe Racial Justice Sunday.

5. We note with appreciation the rich heritage of Baptist communities to international mission. Notwithstanding the noble intentions, sincere motives, and significant contributions in the area of education, health, church planting; we note that racism has often tainted these efforts, and expressed itself in the form of paternalism, and the manipulation of resources has caused much pain and frustration.

- a. We strongly encourage the continuing movement of Baptists towards a mission philosophy that empowers all Baptists to evangelize and disciple all people groups around the world.
- b. We ask all mission agencies to:
 - Intentionally include the recipients of the gospel in the development of strategies, expenditure of resources, approval of mission personnel and development of policies.
 - To jointly adopt policies and strategies, to expand resources and appoint missionaries.
 - To present the Gospel in the context of the receiving culture without compromising the core of the Gospel.
- c. We call with a sense of urgency for an International Summit on mission, comprising all Baptist mission agencies and partners to address, explore and develop a comprehensive, coherent, global mission strategy.

6. We resolve to discover and hopefully increase resources and support by:

- a. Encouraging Baptist churches, conventions, and unions to inventory their resources (both human, financial, and in-kind) to determine ways they are willing to contribute to and support the decade to promote racial justice.
- b. Calling individuals within the Baptist family whose vocation concerns eradicating racism and battling ethnic conflict to regional meetings to discuss ways to create a networking of support for those directly affected by racism and ethnic conflict and to accomplish the goals of this Summit.
- c. Exploring alternative sources of funding for supporting and increasing emphasis within the Baptist World Alliance for promoting racial justice and ethnic reconciliation.
- d. Designing ways to collect and communicate the stories of individuals and peoples who have experienced racism and ethnic conflict in order to capture the imaginations of hearts and support of Baptists everywhere.

We therefore call Baptist unions and conventions to:

A DECADE TO PROMOTE RACIAL JUSTICE (2000-2010) by:

- a. efforts to eradicate racism wherever it emerges**
- b. engaging in the struggle against ethnic conflict.**

Finally, brothers and sisters, we admonish one another with the words of Scriptures:

"Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things...and the God of peace will be with you." (Philippians 4:8-9)

It is our prayer that we who have met in Atlanta will return to our churches and Baptist conventions/unions with a new vision, and empowered by the Holy Spirit will be ministers of racial and ethnic reconciliation and peace through Jesus Christ our Lord!

To God be the glory, great things He hath done!⁹¹

⁹¹ "Atlanta Covenant," *International Summit of Baptists Against Racism and Ethnic Conflict*, January 8-11, 1999, Ebenezer Baptist Church, Atlanta, Georgia, USA.

Appendix 3: Statement Process and Development

In light of the biblical mandate to pursue racial justice and building upon the BWA's longstanding legacy of standing against racism, in October 2020 the BWA Executive Committee established a Racial Justice Working Group with the charge to produce reports, resources, suggested initiatives, and concrete recommendations no later than the July 2022 General Council which would gather in Birmingham, Alabama, United States of America and have a special focus on racial justice. As part this effort the Racial Justice Working Group was further asked to prayerfully pursue a process to increase racial justice within the BWA family and increase the BWA's prophetic voice in the world today by combatting global racism. The members of the Racial Justice Working Group were Elijah M. Brown (USA), Co-Chair; Karl Johnson (Jamaica), Co-Chair; Everton Jackson (Jamaica); Cassandra Jones (USA); Michael Okwakol (Uganda); Silvia Rapisarda (Italy); and Marsha Scipio (Trinidad and Tobago / USA).

The Racial Justice Working Group established a number of priorities including (1) drafting a robust theological statement on racial justice that would build upon previous statements and resolutions and would stand alongside the Harare Declaration (1993) and the Atlanta Covenant (1999); (2) planning an Annual Gathering at Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama, United States of America that focused on racial justice with special forums, collaboration across all commissions, and a justice pilgrimage; and (3) establishing actions and initiatives that would further help institutionalize racial justice as an ongoing commitment of the BWA family.

As part of the development of a Birmingham Statement, from June to October 2021 the BWA facilitated several virtual Racial Justice Roundtable discussions with participants representing all six regions of the BWA. Together the Racial Justice Roundtable participants revisited previous BWA statements on racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related prejudices with the goal to renew BWA's commitment to racial justice and to frame a perspective that speaks biblically, clearly, and prophetically to the ways in which we can advocate for and promote racial justice in the persistent midst of this sinful evil in the twenty-first century. The Birmingham Statement incorporates the contributions made by all participants of the Racial Justice Roundtables and includes excerpts from presentations given by select speakers.

The themes of the Roundtable papers were:

Racial Justice and the BWA

1. Racism Through Institutional Lenses.
2. Racism – Theologically Indefensible
3. The Multiracial Face of Racism
4. The History of BWA's Response to Racial Justice

Restorative Justice and Reparations

5. A Theological Case for Reparations
6. Baptist Reparations
7. Restorative Justice

A small group was developed to incorporate the work of the Racial Justice Roundtables into the formation of a theological statement. Members of this group included Elijah Brown, Karl Johnson, Raimundo Barreto, Dorett Campbell, Wale Hudson-Roberts, Everton Jackson, Marsha Scipio, and Jenny Stewart. Over a period of seven months, the Birmingham Statement on Restorative Racial Justice was drafted and edited over multiple rounds before its adoption by the Racial Justice Working Group in June 2022. The BWA Executive Committee discussed and adopted this Statement on July 9, 2022. The Statement was then circulated to the BWA General Council and ultimately distributed across the BWA family with members in 128 countries and territories.

Appendix 4: BWA Racial Justice Convictions, Commitments, and Actions

Since 1905, the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) has maintained a strong theological and prophetic commitment to racial justice. In light of the clear commands of Scripture and the ongoing persistence of this sinful reality around the world, in October 2020 the BWA Executive Committee established a Racial Justice Working Group that established a number of priorities including (1) drafting a robust theological statement on racial justice that would build upon previous statements and resolutions and would stand alongside the Harare Declaration (1993) and the Atlanta Covenant (1999); (2) planning an Annual Gathering at Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama, United States of America that focused on racial justice with special forums, collaboration across all commissions, and a justice pilgrimage; and (3) establishing actions and initiatives that would further help institutionalize racial justice as an ongoing commitment of the BWA family.

At the recommendation of the Racial Justice Working Group and the adoption by the BWA Executive Committee of the Birmingham Statement, “Restorative Racial Justice: A Call to Live in Flourishing Freedom,” the BWA also adopts the following BWA Racial Justice Convictions, Commitments, and Actions.

BWA Acknowledges

- That racism is a sin against humanity and God. It is idolatry and open rebellion against God’s creation and violation of God’s purpose for all people. As an ideology, it was furthered in the modern world on the myth of white supremacy and the false notion of the inferiority of people of color. This myth often taints racially discriminated groups and their diasporas with distorted images of themselves.
- That the combined phenomena of globalization and mass migration across the globe have contributed to increased racialized anxieties and multiple forms of xenophobia.
- That the effects of racism today, cannot be captured only as a black and white phenomenon. There are countless examples of racial prejudice around the world on every continent. A global historical approach to the modern understanding of race and racism that takes the transnational history of the racialization of the global order seriously is imperative. In every situation, contextual particularities must be interwoven with that larger picture so that local stories of racism and xenophobia can be addressed in nuanced ways and effectively transformed.
- That a concerted global effort to protest and speak out against racism is increasingly necessary. As Baptists worldwide, we are also called to join those efforts to denounce racism, promote racial and religious literacy, and demonstrate ways of covenanted living and overflowing love for our fellow humans and for the whole of creation. We must work together with other sectors of our societies to protest racial inequality and promote and exercise restorative racial justice as part of flourishing freedom.
- That despite the numerous BWA resolutions passed, covenants approved, and declaration of a decade long emphasis on racial justice, the desired outcome of the eradication of racism and racial prejudice has not been realized.

BWA Reaffirms

- The Harare Declaration (1983) and the Atlanta Covenant (1999).
- The intent of the declaration of the decade 2000-2010 to promote racial justice through (a) efforts to eradicate racism wherever it emerges and (b) engagement in the struggle against ethnic conflict as a continuous work.

BWA Affirms

- That racism is theologically indefensible because there is only one race with God as our common ancestry who gave the divine image to humanity. The idea of one human race contradicts the assumption of racism as different races among the human population with one of these races being able to discriminate against or claim superiority to another race.
- That it is the image of God that accords equal rights to all in terms of dignity, worth and human rights. Therefore, all lives matter because God has made human beings in the divine image from which human beings derive worth.
- That through Christ's redemptive work, a new humanity has been created which should be the framework of our relationship with one another (Eph. 2:14-15; Gal. 3:28). Therefore, there is one new humanity in Christ. As such, the Church is meant to be a witness to the values of the Kingdom of God and loving our neighbor as ourselves.
- That despite the reality of ethnicities, people in diverse societies are bound together by covenantal commitment to the common good and not by a single ethnic identity. Therefore, there can be no ranking and no hierarchy in celebrating diversity, only a valuing of different cultures which have developed through history and under the guiding influence of the Holy Spirit of God.
- That justice which is a core attribute of God is about fairness and the equitable recognition of the image of God in all people (Dt. 10:17-19). Justice, which is a prominent theme in both the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament, is rooted in the concept of the "Imago Dei" (Gen. 1:26-27) and Jesus' mission as summarized in the "Nazareth Manifesto" (Lk 4:16-20).
- That Jesus defines his ministry in terms of redemptive justice and that the vision of justice in the early Jesus communities emerged from the standards already outlined in the Jewish Scriptures as well as the teachings of Jesus.
- That racial justice is the systemic fair treatment of people of all races and ethnicities that results in equitable opportunities and outcomes for all. To achieve racial justice, structural and systemic changes are necessary to eliminate disparities to ensure equal access to opportunities and racial and ethnic equity. Therefore, deliberate action guided by conviction, commitment and dedication must be taken to build transformational systems and restorative racial justice.
- That while racial justice is not the same as social justice, racial and ethnic minorities are normally victims of social inequalities and inequity in terms of access to resources and privileges.

BWA Confesses

- Its complicity, knowingly or unknowingly, in the perpetuation of racial injustice through its administrative and organizational structure.
- Its failure to follow up deliberately and systematically in a sustained way on its commitment to join the struggle against ethnic conflict and engage in efforts to eradicate racism wherever it emerges.
- Its sin of commission, omission, and collusion by way of corporate responsibility with Baptists (conventions, unions, mission agencies, churches, members) who historically might have actively participated in racialized oppressive schemes, systems, structures, and operations and failed to exercise their prophetic responsibility by speaking truth to power and advocating for the liberation of God's people guided by a Kingdom value of Gospel truth and flourishing freedom. Where this disposition still exists, whether in member bodies, ministry partners, regional bodies, or the global body, we humbly confess, O Lord.

BWA Pledges within the Global Family

1. Conduct its own inventory to see if it has contributed in any way by commission or by omission to racial injustices. As appropriate identify ways to lament, repent, reconcile, and transform structures that can make a lasting impact on BWA operations and ministry.
2. Translate the Harare Declaration (1993), Atlanta Covenant (1999), and the Birmingham Statement (2022) into as many languages as possible and ensure its broad and consistent circulation for ongoing recommendation and updates.
3. Continue to speak out prophetically against all forms of prejudice, seeking to bring justice and uphold human rights where there is injustice.
4. In creating statements:
 - Confer with our member bodies and regional bodies to seek assistance in understanding the nuances of particular situations.
 - Make sure to speak as a global voice.
 - Seek ways to support and help train advocates in each region so they can speak out within their spheres of influence.
5. Continue to use its unique platform to speak out at the international level against racial injustice and raise specific funds for its advocacy ministry. This includes an intentional involvement in the public square to facilitate conversations and actionable recourse around restorative justice, and where appropriate to engage and join with additional social initiatives focused on restorative racial justice.
6. Ensure that all BWA covenants (with member bodies, officers, and members of committees and commissions) include the BWA theological conviction and commitment to live and serve as a global family based on co-dignity and equality in flourishing freedom.

7. Seek to engage and equip member bodies to enable them to replicate to the extent that they find appropriate all these initiatives at the national and local levels, speaking into their unique situations.

BWA Encourages and Requests our BWA Regions

1. Continue to engage in theological reflection and dialogue on restorative racial justice including as necessary lamentation, reparation, and an ongoing call to pursue flourishing freedom.
2. Continue to actively monitor and review the manifestations of racism within their geographical bounds and seek all mediums through which they can speak out against these, including formal resolutions, regional representation with appropriate bodies, and collaborating with the BWA to foster robust engagement at the global level.
3. Develop advocacy engagement on reparations within their regional body or within the member bodies of their region.
4. Regularly exchange views and experiences among General Secretaries and other key leaders with the goal of mutual learning and dialogical growth.
5. Request BWA Regions to identify two historic Baptist Racial Justice Champions from within their region, one male and one female, and to establish a permanent Racial Justice Day around these individuals that can be annually celebrated regionally and globally.

BWA Encourages and Requests our Member Bodies and Ministry Partners

1. Continue to seek to understand instances of racial injustice in their country and to speak out prophetically to local and national governments and work for restorative racial justice.
2. Research and acknowledge the impact of slavery, colonialism, or other violent racial injustices as it applies to their country to:
 - a. Inventory and lead an effort of remembering.
 - b. Implement reparatory actions to those harmed by egregious racial injustices, including those inflicted under the umbrella of slavery, colonialism, and racial segregation in various parts of the world.
3. Identify churches and individuals already on the journey of restorative racial justice and partner with them to help equip, train and influence others.
4. Promote the development of covenants of equality in the establishment of partnerships such as in mission, evangelism, and humanitarian aid. These covenants should foster urgent engagement in the Mission of God while simultaneously empowering mutuality in strategies, policies, personnel, prayerful listening, and funding. This may at times require seeking new approaches or models for one or both partners.

BWA Encourages and Requests our Local Churches and Seminaries

1. Teach, train, model, and influence members and students to embrace a vision of flourishing freedom that denounces racism as idolatry, engages in restorative racial justice, and speaks and lives prophetically as Christ to a world where every human has co-dignity, worth, and rights.
2. Develop theological education and reflection that includes racial and geographic biblical exegesis as part of prayerful study and exposition, incorporate restorative racial justice into teaching curriculum and Bible study programs, and create standards of practice that prepare leaders to live as ambassadors of reconciliation.

BWA Pledges

1. Continue to seek to develop resources and to encourage the BWA family to inventory their resources (human, financial, and in-kind) to support efforts of restorative racial justice around the world.
2. Commit an immediate \$100,000 USD to empower restorative racial justice engagement within and by our BWA family
 - a. Commit \$30,000 USD in grants available to the six BWA regions to help research, establish, and highlight racial justice champions within the region.
 - b. Commit \$30,000 USD in grants available to BWA member bodies that would help at least one member body in each region empower efforts of restorative racial and ethnic justice initiatives, training, education, or advocacy.
 - c. Commit \$10,000 USD to help foster listening, learning, relationship building, and global engagement among grant recipients and to help sponsor at least two grant recipients or beneficiaries to an upcoming BWA Annual Gathering or Congress.
 - d. Commit \$30,000 USD in pursuit of advocacy work at the United Nations, other multilateral institutions, or in national capitals on behalf of restorative racial justice and reparations.