



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

College Park Church Elder Statement on Racial Reconciliation and Justice

August 4, 2020

The purpose of this Elder Statement is to provide a clearer explanation behind our gospel-centered approach with racial reconciliation and justice. Our elders are committed to living out our mission of igniting a passion to follow Jesus in our ethnically diverse local community and throughout the world. We desire for our church to look like heaven and to minister to our neighbors by taking time to better know and understand them.

You will see in this statement that we are committed to the authority of God's Word. We are committed to efforts of sharing the gospel in our own community and around the world. We're committed to extravagant grace.

The five-mile radius of our church includes people from different ethnicities, socio-economic backgrounds, cultures, and single/married homes, and College Park Church has a unique opportunity to model our Core Values of Biblical Unity in Diversity and Extravagant Grace. This issue is not our sole focus, but we desire to be a church that ministers well to different people groups, and we pray that the fruit of the gospel impacts those around us for his glory. We want to love well, grow in loving others as we would want to be treated, and exalt Christ in all things.

We deny and reject unbiblical and humanistic views that see the problem of mankind as primarily a result of differing cultural issues such as economic or social status (like Cultural Marxism), or human characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, health, etc. (like Intersectionality), or human structures and organizations (like Critical Race Theory and Liberation Theology). We agree that black lives matter greatly, but we do not endorse the worldview expressed in the manifesto of the Black Lives Matter organization.

We affirm our unswerving commitment to the authority of the Word of God. We have a view of truth that is based on the One who is truth (John 14:6) and whose Word is truth (John 17:17). No other philosophy or system of thinking will replace our trust in God's Word as breathed out by God himself (2 Tim. 3:16).

We believe that we can fellowship in unity, under the authority of the Word, being led by the Spirit, even with some different perspectives about methods, approaches, and priorities to ministry (Phil. 2:1-4). We can also give grace to others who believe in different solutions to problems of the world.

May God work in each of us individually and collectively to be more like our Savior—igniting a passion to follow Jesus!



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OUR VISION

The gospel-centered mission of College Park Church is “igniting a passion to follow Jesus.” As we read the New Testament, we see Jesus commanding his people to “make disciples” of all nations or people groups (Matt. 28:19). The power to do this is given by his Spirit and happens when his people work together in unity (John 17:11). The vision for our congregation is that we will embody the gospel.

Along with many other applications, one way our commitment to the gospel is demonstrated is through pursuing unity and love of the body of Christ across all racial divisions. By this, unbelieving neighbors will know we are Christians (John 13:34-35, 17:22-23). The unity of different ethnicities that the gospel created was first witnessed at Pentecost and in Antioch (Acts 2, 10-11) and will be fully experienced on the great day (Rev. 7:9).

We believe our Core Values of **Biblical Unity in Diversity** and **Extravagant Grace** compel us to live out a gospel-centered vision in which all believers can worship and serve together under the banner of Jesus in our church. We desire that the Church on earth will reflect the people of God in heaven.

Since our five-mile radius includes people from different ethnicities, socio-economic backgrounds, cultures, and single/married homes, College Park Church has a unique opportunity to model our Core Value of Biblical Unity in Diversity. We desire to be a church that ministers well to such different backgrounds, and we pray that the fruit of the gospel impacts those around us. We desire to see this diversity reflected in the life and ministry of our church as we minister and invite those around us to partake in the gospel’s work in our local church. We trust Jesus will build his church as he wills as we proclaim the gospel and love one another as Christ has loved us (John 13:34).

We desire to bring glory to God, to submit our wills to his Spirit, and to live in harmony with his revelation. We pray, “May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:10).

OUR THEOLOGY

Creation

The Bible teaches that the triune God created everything (Gen. 1:1), and the pinnacle of his creation was his image-bearers who reflect unity in diversity—male and female. God commanded them to multiply and fill the earth with new image-bearers who would manifest diversity and be unified under one ancestor—Adam, who came from God (Gen. 1:27-28).

All humans are united in our origin from the Creator God, and we exist to glorify him. Therefore, all humans are equal in value (Rev. 4:11).

¹ For the purpose of clarity, this paper uses the term “race” in its historical and contemporary context to refer to different ethnicities. We acknowledge that biblically there is only one race—the human race (Acts 17:26), yet we are trying to advance biblical thinking regarding cultural issues, including the terms that are commonly used.



Since all humans find their origin in their Creator, they are to be viewed and treated with dignity, love, and value as image-bearers of God himself (Luke 10:27-28; Col. 3:11).

The beauty and blessing of diversity in humanity is seen in genders, ethnicities, cultures, and talents, and it is most clearly seen in the original creation and renewed in redeemed humanity (Matt. 19:4; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:28).

We do not believe in the naturalistic, materialistic, evolutionary hypothesis that rejects the unity of humanity from the Creator and views humans as a product of chance and impersonal forces. Humans are products of divine love and creation (James 3:9).

Since all humans are created in God's image, human image-bearers should not show partiality toward one another based on ethnicity, social status, etc. or look down on other image-bearers, violating the intrinsic value and diversity of creation (Gen. 9:6; James 2:8-9).

Fall

The Bible teaches that mankind was created good, fell into sin, and rebelled against a holy God. A sinful nature was passed from Adam to all humans (Rom. 5:12). All are sinners (Rom. 3:23).

Sin is not an ethnic issue but a human issue. We believe that humans were created as image-bearers of God, but we have all inherited a sin nature at birth—including Jews and Greeks and all ethnicities (Rom. 3:9; Ps. 51:5).

Sin manifests itself in not loving God and neighbor and demonstrates itself in many ways. Racism (treating one race as superior to others) is not only a sin against image-bearers but also against God, and it is evident throughout history and in our culture today. Sin can cause humans to treat others as less than human (Rom. 1:28-32)

The partiality expressed in ideologies that lead to ethnic and racial superiority or oppression of any ethnic group is unbiblical. We often think more highly of ourselves and think of others as less than ourselves, resulting in the mistreatment of other ethnicities both historically and in some measure currently (Phil. 2:1-4; Luke 10:25ff).

We deny and reject unbiblical and humanistic views that see the problem of mankind as primarily a result of differing cultural issues such as economic or social status (like Cultural Marxism), or human characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, health, etc. (like Intersectionality); or human structures and organizations (like Critical Race Theory and Liberation Theology). We agree that black lives matter greatly, but we do not endorse the worldview expressed in the manifesto of the Black Lives Matter organization. The starting points of these theories are not biblical (a holy God and sinful humans), and their solutions are neither cross-centered nor redemptive (2 Cor. 1:18-25).

Silence is not the answer to sin issues, which has historically been a problem of the majority culture in the church (Gal. 6:1). The sin of omission is still sin (James 4:17).

Redemption

The Bible offers the solution to the problem of sin. The God who created everything and saw his image-bearers' rebel in sin also came to redeem his creation (Gen. 3:15; 2 Cor. 5:19). The gospel is that Jesus died, was buried, and rose again to save his people from their sins (1 Cor. 15:1-4). In all our discussion, this truth is of utmost importance.

The hope for all of humanity comes from trusting in the finished work of Jesus on the cross and his resurrection and living as those who are new creations in Jesus (2 Cor. 5:17).

This gospel of salvation in Jesus is not of works. There is no merit we can claim, and Jesus is to be the sole object of glory and praise in redemption (Eph. 2:8-10).



This salvation is not merited by good works but will yield good works of repentance by grace (James 2:26). Some of the works of a believer will result in Christians being agents of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18; Col 1:20; Matt. 5:9). This should be evident in the unity of believers across all ethnicities and cultures (Eph. 2:11-21).

The people of God should practice confession of sins, of which partiality is one, and show evidence of pursuing justice and unity and peace between ethnic groups which will show true unity in diversity because of the gospel of Jesus (Isa. 1:16-17; James 3:13-17; Micah 6:8).

The hope for humanity is not a political party or a social system that promises to bring lasting peace in human division and racial discord (James 4:1).

Racial reconciliation is not merely a political issue as God calls his people to go to the ends of the earth with the gospel of reconciliation to God which leads to reconciliation with other believers (Matt. 28:19; Eph 2:16). Racial reconciliation is a biblical issue. Jesus modeled the inclusion of those of various ethnic backgrounds bringing them into a relationship with God and thereby into the family of God. (John 4; Luke 4:25-27).

The sin of racism, like all sins, has historically affected the church, and in varying ways it can remain with us today (1 Cor. 12:13,25).

Salvation is evidenced by the fruit of good works that seeks unity among image-bearers (Eph. 2:12-19).

A multiethnic, multicultural church is possible, as the earliest church demonstrated (Acts 11:19-26).

Consummation

We live this day for that day; we believe that God will restore his creation in the end and is presently conforming us to the image of his Son (Rom. 8).

The final body of Christ will consist of ransomed people from every tribe, language, people, and nation (Rev. 5:9, 7:9). There will be total unity in diversity under the lordship of Jesus to the glory of the triune God.

The mission of the church is to share the gospel with all ethnicities (peoples) to achieve the blessed end seen in Revelation 5 and 7 (Matt. 28:19-20).

We reject a social justice gospel that seeks unity apart from centering the gospel on Christ and the hope he provides (Col. 3:11).

We believe that the redeemed should not limit the kinds of people to whom the gospel is sent—it is to go to all locally and around the world (Acts 1:8). All ethnicities will be represented in the new heaven and new earth and they will be there by God's grace and the gospel brought to them by God's people (Rev. 7:9; Rom. 10:11-12).

Our Practice

The Bible instructs us to be doers of the Word and not hearers only; the following are ingredients for pursuing racial reconciliation and justice in the church:

a. Prayer—

We affirm our commitment to prayer. God is the one who is building his church (Matt. 16:18), and he calls his people to pray as Jesus prayed in John 17.

We will diligently seek his face, follow the truth in his Word, seek unity for his body, repent where we have



sinned, forgive others who have repented, and embrace our need for his Spirit to accomplish anything for his glory (Ps. 27:8; Matt. 6:12).

The gates of hell will not prevail against the Church of Christ (Matt. 16:18).

Our High Priest, Jesus, is touched by our infirmities, and we believe prayer is a major means of his grace to his people (Heb. 4:15-16; Rev. 5:8).

b. Love God and neighbor—

We affirm our commitment to love. In defining his kingdom, Jesus clearly states that it consists of those who love him first and love their neighbor (Mark 12:28-31; John 14:15).

We must love our neighbor to the glory of God. This love “bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things” (1 Cor. 13).

This love does not exclude those different than us as demonstrated in the important story of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37).

c. Live under the authority of King Jesus and his Word—

We affirm our unswerving commitment to the authority of the Word of God. We have a view of truth that is based on the One who is truth (John 14:6) and whose Word is truth (John 17:17).

No other philosophy or system of thinking will replace our trust in God’s Word as breathed out by God himself (2 Tim. 3:16).

d. Pursue racial reconciliation—

We affirm that Christ has reconciled believers to God and one another positionally and that God calls us to live out these realities practically (Eph. 2:11-22, 4:1-16).

We are willing to acknowledge blind spots in this discussion and repent as God brings that need to our hearts—for his glory and our good, individually and collectively (Matt. 7:3-5).

We affirm repentance as a change of the mind, the heart, and the will. It involves the confession of specific sin and a change in our desire to forsake sin as individuals (1 John 1:9). We cannot repent for sins we’ve not committed. However, we believe that the sinful actions of our forefathers should not be ignored or minimized. We should renounce the sinful ways of the past that presently exist in our culture and recognize the need to repent if or when a sin issue still exists (1 Pet. 1:18; Daniel 9; Ezra 9).

Unity is difficult among ethnicities in a fallen world, but in Christ, there is hope for a unified body of God’s redeemed and we are to seek that end (Eph. 2:16).

God’s intent all along was unity, and sin alienated us from him and others. The blood of Christ reconciles sinners to God and each other (2 Cor. 5:15-21)

We believe that the gospel of the cross is sufficient to bring reconciliation to ethnically diverse image bearers (2 Cor. 1:23-25).

e. Pursue justice—

Actively seeking justice is an important way for us to love our neighbor as ourselves and to demonstrate the character of God and his concern for those unjustly treated (Micah 6:8, Matt. 22:36-40).

We affirm a biblical motive for pursuing justice. A definition of justice is the state of being when things are right



or as designed by God. The Old Testament prophets spoke against injustice and called for God's people to pursue justice (Isa. 1:17; Micah 6:8).

Jesus calls for justice, and he pronounces woes over the Pharisees when they neglected it (Luke 11:42; Matt. 23:23).

James is a practical epistle that admonishes believers to demonstrate their faith by works such as caring for the most needy, not showing partiality towards others, and speaking with grace (James 1:27, 2:1-13, 3:1-18, 5:1-6).

f. Practice empathy—

We affirm that we must practice empathy which is the ability to understand and share the feelings of others (Rom. 12:15). Jesus is a wonderful example of this reality. He became one of us to save us (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15).

The church is to be a place where, in the power of God, we become all things to all men to “save some” (1 Cor. 9:22).

We should not have a selfish faith that will not seek to know the sufferings of those around us (Heb. 13:3).

g. Engage this discussion with love and not with harsh and hurtful words—

We affirm that the tongue is powerful and can do much good and evil (James 3:1-12).

We must seek to understand then to be understood (James 1:19).

If the discussion involves sinful acts, the biblical pattern is in Matthew 18 and starts with personal one-on-one engagement with a brother or sister.

We will strive to be proactive in seeking someone who does not look like us and showing the love of Christ to them. This can include ethnicity but also age, gender, people with various disabilities or medical conditions, socio-economic differences, etc. (James 1:27).

As Christians, we will use our freedom to die to ourselves and to love our brothers and sisters (Gal. 5:13-15).

We should not unjustly use political terms to accuse others of being racist, radical fundamentalists, cultural Marxists, or Critical Race Theory advocates when it is not true (James 4:11).

h. Progress—

We affirm that a godly way to live out the values of the Word and our church could be summed up in the following words: love, listen, lament, learn, and leverage. We desire, as a church, to follow that pattern.

College Park Church is a body of believers who should be willing to acknowledge our imperfections (Matt. 7:3).

We believe that by the grace of God and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, we make good progress in becoming like the Church of eternity in Revelation 7.

i. Striving for unity, not uniformity—

We affirm that the Bible allows for different cultural expressions in the local church, without violating the “one faith” of Christ’s universal church (Eph. 4:5).

We believe that we can fellowship in unity, under the authority of the Word, being led by the Spirit, even with some different perspective of methods, approaches, and priorities to ministry (Phil. 2:1-4). We can also give grace to others who believe in different solutions to problems of the world.



We do not believe that the Bible elevates certain cultural expressions of faith over others. This includes, but is not limited to: musical styles, preaching styles, and vocal/body expressions in a church service (1 Cor. 12).

CONCLUSION:

The purpose of this Elder Statement is not merely to present clarity but to stimulate us to love and good deeds for God's glory (Heb. 10:24).

The triune God exists in three persons living in perfect loving unity. We desire for the Church to be a group of diverse people living in harmony, imaging the triune God. College Park Church is a gathering of redeemed sinners seeking to glorify our God and Savior Jesus Christ. We want to be salt and light in a broken and fractured world. We want to be agents of reconciliation and peace. Some do not believe that ethnic harmony is possible, but we dream of our church modeling the gospel in the power of our great God.

While we realize we are broken, we desire to follow Paul's admonition, "I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14). We pray for the grace to pursue his kingdom with diligence.

To God alone be the glory as we seek him to use us to bring racial reconciliation and justice!