

A Pastoral Word on Race and Privilege

By the pastors of Franconia Mennonite Church and Salford Mennonite Church, September 2019

Introduction

We, the pastors of two neighboring congregations, Franconia Mennonite and Salford Mennonite, join hands to condemn any form of racial bias and all assumptions of racial superiority. We share much in common as Franconia Conference colleagues; we also acknowledge significant theological differences between us. But we are united – declaring with one voice – that any hint of white supremacy in society and church contradicts the person and mission of Jesus Christ.

Statement

Racism is an ugly, seeping wound throughout human history. Despite times of significant movement toward healing and hope, an underlying racial infection continues to fester chronically in countless hearts, minds, and prejudiced behaviors.

We speak as followers of Jesus Christ, who once boldly cleared the ancient Jewish temple in Jerusalem, declaring it to be a *“house of prayer for all peoples.”* (Mark 11:17) We join our voices with colonial Mennonites who in 1688 shared in crafting a statement denouncing slavery as incompatible with Christianity, the first public protest of its kind in America. We rehearse the vision of a new heaven and earth where *“every nation, tribe, people, and language”* are united and singing as one before God. (Revelation 7:9)

Life in the United States of America has exhibited a consistent reality: to be white grants access to privileges and power that are often denied people of color; to be of European descent grants assumptions of favor not experienced by other ethnicities and cultures. This racial bias and privilege is sinful; it is a contradiction of the good news proclaimed and demonstrated by Jesus Christ.

Therefore, at this time and within our settings of influence, we commit ourselves to:

- Denounce and confront any perspective that advocates racial superiority or inferiority;
- Examine and repent of our own unspoken assumptions of racial stereotypes and preferences;
- Advocate for racial justice and impartiality in schools, housing, employment, churches, business, and law enforcement;
- Seek out mutually transformative relationships with neighbors across racial and cultural differences;
- Deepen our own commitment to be agents of peace and racial conciliation in our circles of influence.

As children we sang these lyrics: *“Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world.”* Learning to sing the words was easy; learning to put the words into practice is a lot harder. Doing so, however, is absolutely essential for followers of Christ Jesus – morally and spiritually. God helping us, we can do nothing less.

“For the grace of God has appeared (in Christ Jesus) that offers salvation to all people.” (Titus 2:11)