

# 2008 Racial Righteousness

*Presented by the Commission on Christian Action, adopted by the delegates to the 123rd Covenant Annual Meeting.*

## Introduction

WHEREAS, in 1995 the Evangelical Covenant Church Annual Meeting adopted a Resolution on Racial Reconciliation;

WHEREAS, in 2008 the Evangelical Covenant Church Annual Meeting seeks to strengthen our commitment to racial reconciliation by emphasizing the need for racial righteousness;

WHEREAS, the word of God teaches us that:

1) All people are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27). Christ died for all people (1 Peter 3:18). All people have eternal worth and are called to be co-heirs of the kingdom of God (Galatians 3:28-29). However, our perception of the image of God in others has often been deeply distorted by divisions between people along racial, ethnic, socio-economic, and cultural lines (Acts 6:1, Ephesians 2:13). Our world is a place of deep injustice that is perpetrated and perpetuated along the lines of race and the divisions that accompany race in our world.

2) God reconciled us through Christ and gave us, as Christ's ambassadors, the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18, 20). Reconciliation is a comprehensive ministry through which God appeals to us to pursue righteousness (Psalm 34:14; Proverbs 12:28; Hosea 10:12-13; Matthew 5:6; Romans 14:19; 1 Timothy 6:11-12). Jesus spoke of righteousness in terms of the weightier aspects of the law: justice, mercy, and faith (Matthew 23:23).

3) Pursuing righteousness is about truth-telling (Proverbs 12:17-22); it is about acknowledging and challenging systemic and individual sins that cause or lead to oppression (Isaiah 1:12-17; 58:6-9; Micah 6:8; Amos 5:21-24); it is about speaking for the voiceless (Proverbs 31:8); it is about defending the rights of the poor and needy (Proverbs 31:9); it is about

faithfulness to God (Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17; 5:18; 10:4; Ephesians 6:14) and just relationships with our neighbors across racial lines (Luke 10:25-37). Pursuing righteousness is about seeking change and advocating for change, participating with God in our own transformation and joining with God in the transformation of our world.

4) Pursuing just relationships with all our neighbors encompasses more than asking God to forgive us our sins; it calls us to deeply repent and actively seek to heal our broken relationships (Psalm 32:3-5; Matthew 3:1-3; Acts 2:32-42; 1 Peter 2:24). John the Baptist called all who seek God to “bear fruits worthy of repentance” (Luke 3:8). The Apostle John reminds us that when we claim to walk in fellowship with God, and yet refuse to see the sin in our own lives and the world, we walk in darkness and do not practice the truth. But when we walk in the light, we have fellowship with each other and the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:6-7). Pursuing just relationships is a radical living out of Jesus command to love our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:29).

5) God alone knows what full reconciliation looks like, when every nation, tribe, people, and language will worship before the Lamb (Revelation 7:9-10). Even as we await the fulfillment of this promise, we journey toward reconciliation. Therefore, we are called to righteousness and to join in God’s work to establish the kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

We thank God that the Evangelical Covenant Church has been an effective instrument of God in mission, evangelism, and ministries of compassion and justice. We are grateful for God’s grace that is moving us toward becoming a multiethnic faith family. However, our progress has given us a deeper sensitivity to our failures, both past and present. We therefore resolve the following:

## Confession and Lament

- We acknowledge and name our sin and confess it, recognizing that we as a denomination have often overlooked, ignored, and failed to oppose racial injustice.
- There was a time when we identified too closely with the dominant culture and forgot our immigrant beginnings. We forgot what it means to be strangers and aliens and allowed our privileged status to blind us to the issues of racial injustice.
- We and our forebears have participated in racial injustice both by sins of omission and commission.
- As a church within our larger culture we have chosen to be proud of our national glory and achievement but have been slow to own and acknowledge our national shame and failure.
- For a season of our history we succumbed to a larger evangelical trend that truncated the gospel, limiting the good news to personal salvation at the expense of reaching out to our neighbor, allowing us to largely exempt ourselves from the struggle for racial justice and equality.
- Fearful of change, congregations often succumbed to “white flight,” relocating to other neighborhoods rather than choosing to embrace their neighbors.

## Response

- We resolve that the ECC and each Covenant church and ministry research and reflect on its own history of implicit and complicit participation in racial and ethnic injustice. This research and reflection should be inclusive of all of the groups that have experienced racial and ethnic injustice, beginning with Native American genocide and cultural destruction and African American slavery and disenfranchisement, because of the foundational nature of these histories in the North American context.
- We resolve that the ECC and each Covenant church and ministry continue its dialogue about racial sins by inviting members, beginning with Native and African Americans, to give voice to their stories of harm and suffering.

## Personal and Corporate Transformation

- We resolve that all churches and individuals within those churches seek to participate in the following:

*—the Invitation to Racial Righteousness, an interactive weekend experience gathering diverse churches together for reflection and education, giving voice to stories of fear, injustice, and suffering.*

*—the Sankofa Journey, an interactive experience exploring historic sites of oppression in the civil rights movement and present realities of injustice;*

*—the Mosaic Experience, a multicultural experience exploring historical and present day racial and ethnic injustices; and/or*

*—developing their own learning experiences appropriate to their congregation's context and mission.*

## Worship

- Because God's work of creation and redemption includes righteous, or just, relationships between our brothers and sisters in Christ, and because worship forms the center of our identity in Christ, we resolve to:

*—Celebrate our unity in Christ through worship, with an emphasis on baptism and communion as foundational to this unity.*

*—Confess, corporately and individually, sins of racial unrighteousness in worship.*

*—Be intentional about the planning and content of our worship as it forms us to bear the fruits of deep repentance, such as recognizing our participation in sin, speaking truthfully, and seeking justice and right relationships with our brothers and sisters of other races and ethnicities.*

*—Continue to include and incorporate the worship styles of the diversity of racial and ethnic groups that are represented in the ECC in our worship resources, such as *The Covenant Hymnal: A Worshipbook* and *The Covenant Book of Worship*.*