



Christ Central Family:

As the Elders, Deacons and Women Shepherds of your church, we want to speak from our hearts, recognizing that many in our church family are hurting. While Christ Central is committed to multicultural ministry, this letter is written in response to current events and the pattern of systemic racism we see in our nation. This is a long letter, but we hope that you will read it with care. We express our godly anger over the sin of racism. We reaffirm the God-given value and worth of our brothers and sisters. We lament in brokenness. We confess that well-meaning non-Black people - including even leaders and members of this church - have a role in perpetuating racism. We wholeheartedly repent. We also seek in this letter to identify actions we will take responsively as a multicultural church.

Racism is more than the racist beliefs and actions of individuals. It is a system of advantage based on race. It involves cultural messages, misuse of power, and institutional bias (*Be the Bridge 101: Foundational Principles Every White Bridge-Builder Needs to Understand*, <https://bethebridge.com/btb101/>). Racism is a particularly pernicious and destructive sin. At its core, it denies our humanity and equality as image bearers of God and divides us.

We lament the sin of racism and its effect upon our church, denomination, culture, and country. Racism continues to exist in thought, word and deed. The horror of racist killings continues. In response to these realities, we grieve as the prophet Jeremiah grieved: *My grief is beyond healing; my heart is broken. Listen to the weeping of my people; it can be heard all across the land.* (Jeremiah 8:18-19 NLT) We affirm that all people are created in God's image and that we are commanded to love all people as our neighbors as we love ourselves.

We are also commanded to confess our sins. Confession is especially important when the damage we have caused is compounded by a false hope that good intentions replace the need for repentance, and holding 'right beliefs' is adequate for sanctification. Accordingly, the non-Black leaders of Christ Central Church confess that we have been passive in the face of racism.



We have failed to consistently join our Black sisters and brothers in lament. We have too often heard their words, but not believed their truth. We have stepped back and burdened our Black leaders and congregants to educate the rest of us. We have been content to share an ethnically diverse church while not fighting against racism. We have failed to provide sufficient example and instruction to our non-Black sisters and brothers. We have been blind to our privilege of disengaging the fight against racism, and, therefore, are complicit in perpetuating systemic racism. For these and other sins, we repent and ask your forgiveness.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

As we prayerfully consider our path forward, we look to James who proclaims: *faith without works is dead*. (James 2:26) Words alone are not sufficient. In fact, simply nodding words of affirmation and confession without action will be hurtful to those who have watched well-meaning Christians do nothing for too long. Jesus asserts that the church will be known by the way we love one another (John 15). True love requires action.

We seek to approach this action in three different ways:

1. What will the leaders of the church do differently? We, especially the non-Black leaders of Christ Central, have been examining our own hearts. Going forward, we commit to the following:

- We commit to be anti-racist, actively and intentionally combating all forms of racism. Like Micah 6:8, we are called to *act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with our God*. (NIV) We commit to pursue very intentional conversations with one another and the members of Christ Central about our own history, sin, pain and path of sanctification.
- We commit to educate and disciple members about the depth of racial sin at Christ Central and in our community. Racial sin is sin - not a misstep, omission, blind-spot, political issue, civic concern or innocent mistake. It's sin. We do our church and community a disservice by calling it anything other than what it is. In our personal relationships, community groups and church body, we will rebuke racial sin in the same way we do other sin.



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- We affirm the benefit of affinity groups where members with a common cultural background can safely meet to grieve, wrestle with their faith, and encourage one another. While we yearn for oneness in the church (John 17:11), we also see a clear instance in Scripture where smaller affinity groups gathered to care for the needs of a specific group of people (Acts 6).
- We will share the burden of leadership that we have often placed solely upon our Black sisters and brothers. We are deeply grateful for their leadership, especially in these difficult conversations. But it is time for the non-Black Elders, Deacons and Women Shepherds to address racial sin in our midst and lead in repentance. In future FirstWeek gatherings, non-Black leaders will join Black leaders to lead discussions on racial sin, while collectively repenting of our complicity in racism.

2. What structures will we put in place? We commit to address the structure and curricula of our ministries to promote a deeper focus on racial inequality in an effort to promote repentance, forgiveness, healing, and sanctification. These structural changes will include:

- Establishing resources for Community Groups that focus on racial sin while challenging members to faithfully wrestle with their role in perpetuating sin, as well as their call to drive change.
- Creating a Resource Center for Intercultural Ministry to ensure that Christ Central is a place where all races and cultures are celebrated as image bearers of our Heavenly Father.
- Documenting our perspective on racial sin and the work of restoration and reconciliation that we believe God is calling us to in this multicultural setting of Christ Central.
- Expanding our curriculum for new members to include a deeper discussion on our value of diversity, as well as the importance of our denomination's *Race and Ethnic Reconciliation Report*. (https://www.pcahistory.org/pca/digest/studies/2018_Racial_and_Ethnic_Reconciliation.pdf)
- Implementing intercultural competency training as part of our officer training. Current Elders, Deacons and Women Shepherds will complete the Intercultural Development Inventory.
- Supporting the Unity Fund and African American Ministry (AAM) beyond our current financial support. (The Unity Fund was established under the *Race and Ethnic Reconciliation Report* to focus on encouraging diversity among Teaching Elders in the PCA.) (<https://pcamna.org/unity-fund/>)
- Expanding our internship program for seminary students, with the goal of encouraging diversity and mentoring future Teaching Elders on the importance of multicultural ministry.



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- Educating and encouraging the next generation of Ruling and Teaching Elders as our own Ruling and Teaching Elders voluntarily serving at our local Presbytery on both the Church Planting as well as Candidates & Examination committees.

3. What are the non-Black members of the congregation called to do? We begin with listening and learning. For many in the majority culture, it is tempting to readily share our perspectives and offer advice. Instead, we challenge each of you to listen more deeply and to humbly learn. Resist defensiveness, embrace a spirit of servanthood, and listen to our Black brothers and sisters. Accept and believe their stories. Ask questions. Hear the disappointment, anger and pain. Scripture calls us to grieve with those who grieve (Romans 12:15). Even though Jesus had an eternal perspective, he wept at Lazarus' death because he loved Mary and Martha. He shared their anguish (John 11).

- As an Appendix to this letter, we have included a list of resources, books and articles that we recommend to you. These are important resources designed to help us understand our collective history, as well as the sociological, cultural and psychological nuances that add complexities to this profoundly challenging time for our church and our nation. Please dedicate time to review these resources and then ask together, "How should we respond?"
- We believe that transformed hearts, growth, change and healing happen in the context of the relationships and community God ordains in His Church. To that end, we encourage all members to engage more intentionally in community. Take advantage of the various ministries, Community Groups, Bible studies, book clubs and affinity group meetings. Faithfully attend worship services and FirstWeek. These aren't just optional events. They are a means of grace and sanctification that have been established by your leadership to care for you.
- We call you to join us in prayer (James 5:13-20). Let us open our hearts to the words, lessons, and testimonies that we hear, allowing them to seep into our souls. Resist the temptation of complacency or distraction. Instead, set aside time to meditate on God's word. May we all pray fervently for others in our church family and community while we also prayerfully reflect on our own pain, fears, prejudices, and sin.
- Confess and repent. As you lament with your brothers and sisters, meditate and pray. Seek to understand how our actions and complicity contribute to racist systems.
- Finally, we call you to act. Let us seek God's will and prayerfully consider what He's calling us to do individually and as a church. Pastor Howard often says the gospel should infuse every aspect of our lives. After learning and prayerfully contemplating, look for opportunities in our community to engage.



For some in our congregation, it will be tempting to run away. These are hard conversations for everyone, but we encourage you to trust Christ even more, *for he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility... His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.* Ephesians 2:14-16 (NIV) As you wrestle with these issues, please reach out to any Elder, Deacon or Women Shepherd. We are eager to walk through this with you.

Now **to him who is able to do immeasurably more** than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, **to him** be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. Ephesians 3:20–21 (NIV)

Ask with us. Imagine with us.

The Elders, Women Shepherds, and Deacons of Christ Central Church

APPENDIX - Resource List

Books

Heal Us, Emmanuel: A Call for Racial Reconciliation, Representation, and Unity in the Church - Doug Serven (Gen. Editor) ([Amazon Link](#))

All Are Welcome: Toward a Multi-Everything Church - Leon Brown (Gen. Editor) ([Amazon Link](#))

Free at Last?: The Gospel in the African American Experience - Carl Ellis Jr. ([Amazon Link](#))

The Beautiful Community: Unity, Diversity, and the Church at Its Best - Irwyn Ince ([Pre-order Link](#))



Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America - Michael Emerson, Christian Smith ([Amazon Link](#))

Riff of Love: Notes on Community and Belonging - Greg Jarrell ([Amazon Link](#))

Articles

Presbyterian Church of America - [Report of the Ad Interim Committee on Racial and Ethnic Reconciliation to the 46th General Assembly 2018](#)

[The Bible and Race - Tim Keller](#)

Talks/Panel Discussion

Race & Reconciliation - Howard Brown

[Part 1](#)

[Part 2](#)

[Race Roundtable 15 - Christ Central Church](#)

Time to Reflect - [African American Ministries](#)

Racial Brokenness in America - Mission to North America PCA & African American Ministries

[Part 1](#)

[Part 2](#)

[Part 3](#)