

NC4 Affirmation on Racial Reconciliation and Biblical Justice

June 2020

In light of current events, and in the interest of unity and support for all in our community, the elders of NC4 would like to state our beliefs regarding racial reconciliation and biblical justice.

NC4 derives its name from the New Covenant between God and his people made in the blood of Jesus Christ. Scripture declares that in this covenant Christ has broken down the “dividing walls of hostility” and created in himself “one new humanity” (Eph 2:14-15), calling people from every nation into his family (Rev 5:9) and pouring his Spirit out on them all (Acts 2:17). This reversed the effects of the Tower of Babel which had made ethnicity, culture and language sources of animosity. Now, unified in Christ, this diversity is a positive source of wonder and glory to God. Indeed, the beauty of our distinctive human heritages will outlast this life even into eternity (Rev 21:26) where a renewed humanity will worship God together with cultural identities intact and where the leaves of the Tree of Life will be for the “healing of the nations” (Rev 22:2). We therefore affirm the foundational Christian truth that the gospel stands opposed to all forms of ethnic, racial and cultural prejudice both in the life of the Church and wider society. Our ethnic and cultural heritages are good gifts to recognize, celebrate and affirm.

Scripture is also extremely clear that God cares deeply for the oppressed and downtrodden. Thus, how one treats issues of mercy and justice is a test that faith in Christ is genuine. The Lord repeatedly exhorts his people that without practicing righteous justice, worship is nothing but an empty ritual (e.g Amos 5:21-24, Matt 23:23). When Jesus declared his mission in Luke 4:18, he said “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed.” This can apply metaphorically to all humanity as without Jesus we are spiritually destitute, enslaved to sin and blind to our need for God. But Jesus’ own life demonstrates that it applies first and foremost to those for whom it applies literally: the physically poor, captive, blind and oppressed. The Church, which is the body of Christ, is specially called to be a voice for the voiceless and defender of the needy (Prov 31:8-9). Jesus says as we do for the “least of these,” we do for him (Matt 25:40). We therefore affirm the centrality of justice and mercy to genuine faith and recognize that reconciliation, including racial reconciliation, is an essential ministry of the Church (2 Cor 5:19).

Sadly, however, we also recognize the body of Christ has often fallen very short, denying this calling by its actions and attitudes. Racial injustice, inequity and inequality continue to be a blight on our society. Yet we must admit that silence, lack of compassion, inaction and even complicity towards these issues have not been infrequent among professed followers of Jesus. Therefore, repenting of any of the ways in which NC4 as a church may have fallen short, we denounce racial prejudice and injustice in all its forms, be it conscious or unconscious, explicit or implicit, individual or institutional. Racism is evil and a grievous sin to priceless human beings made in the image of God. We break all ties with principalities of ignorance, fear, hatred and violence used by Satan to bring division and discord. We commit to being a church that seeks to listen, learn and act in word and deed for a more just and flourishing society for all.

We affirm the value, beauty and joy that our Black and African brothers and sisters are to our community, as well as the full diversity of nations, ethnicities, cultures and languages represented within NC4. We appreciate you and stand with you today in the fight against

injustice. In accordance with our name, we commit to pursuing the fullness of what a New Covenant Christian community is, and that this reality would be embodied in our culture, practices and attitudes as a church. To that end we are earnestly discussing strategies to make a kingdom impact on this issue both within the church and in the community.

Walking this out together will take commitment, intentionality and, most of all, humility. We will no doubt make mistakes. But our unity in the Spirit, faithfulness to Christ, obedience to God and love of our neighbor demand nothing less than this pursuit. Only Jesus Christ can offer the hope and healing that humanity so desperately needs. It is only as we are disciplined to him that sin is uprooted and we are transformed into the kind of people who act justly, love mercy and walk humbly as He did (Mic 6:8). This is a process of continually applying the gospel to every area of life. So may God enable us to learn, grow and be reconciled in this area, becoming a foretaste of God's renewed society, so that we can in turn minister the grace and reconciliation of Christ to a hurting world.