

A STATEMENT FROM THE BWC DELEGATION:

A Church that Embodies Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Antiracism: The Journey to Beloved Community

Executive Summary:

A church with Christ at the center does no harm, does good and attends to the ordinances of God. This church forms disciples of Jesus Christ who affirm the Image of God in the other, practice inclusive ministry, embody racial equality and challenge systems that oppose or oppress human rights. This Beloved Community ensures policies and practices are just, are faithful to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and upholds the Great Commandment and the Gospel mandate that: "If one part hurts, every other part is involved in the hurt, and in the healing. If one part flourishes, every other part enters into the exuberance." (1 Corinthians 12:26b MSG).

Acknowledging that privilege comes in many forms and that individuals have experienced aspects of privilege in different ways, a church that actively challenges racist attitudes, behaviors, practices, and histories both individually and systemically, is building Beloved Community.

As we work intentionally to dismantle racism and create equity, it is imperative that we are patient with those who deny, defend, minimize and accept the sin of racism and still love those who defer this work to another group, organization, or realm beyond the church. It is also imperative that we are not silent in the face of injustice, nor are we tolerant of oppressive behaviors.

This Baltimore-Washington Conference delegation is committed to this journey toward Beloved Community for the transformation of lives, churches and communities. We invite you to join us.

A church with Christ at the center actively seeks to do no harm, do good and attend to the ordinances of God. This church produces effective, antiracist church leaders: disciples of Jesus Christ who affirm the Image of God in the other, practice inclusive ministry, and embody racial equality.

- A disciple is one who witnesses to Jesus Christ through acts of justice, compassion, devotion and worship under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, practicing works of piety and mercy.
- Affirming the image of God means respecting that all humans are equal, inherently good, bearers of God's light, and beloved creations of God, as seen at the creation in Genesis 1:27.
- Inclusive ministry means that leaders are intentional about including all in the reign of God.
- Equality means the state of being equal, especially in status, rights, and opportunities.
- Equity recognizes that each person has different circumstances and allocates the exact resources and opportunities to reach an equal outcome. "Equity acknowledges that everyone does not begin from the same starting place, that there are historic, systemic, and on-going inequities in our political, economic, educational, health, religious, and other systems, where discrimination "lives" within the structures themselves."

We seek to be a community of sacrificial and unconditional love for all people that ensures policies and practices are just, faithful and in keeping with the greatest commandment of God: Love God, self and neighbor with wholeness of mind, body, heart and strength. In such a community -- where personal and social transformation happens -- hearts, habits, and institutions are changed. This community commits to the thriving of each person, based on 1 Corinthians 12:12-27. "If one part hurts, every other part is involved in the hurt, and in the healing. If one part flourishes, every other part enters into the exuberance." (1 Cor. 12:26b MSG). This body:

A STATEMENT FROM THE BWC DELEGATION CONTINUED:

- Privileges the inclusion of all people and groups within the church.
- Discusses and responds to societal and racial injustice, even when conversations get difficult, uncomfortable and/or painful.
- Demonstrates that all are sacred and diversity is valued.
- Builds equity and just power systems with all people, particularly those who are Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC).

Acknowledging that privilege comes in many forms and that individuals have experienced aspects of privilege in different ways, an antiracist church is one that actively challenges racist attitudes, practices, and histories both individually and systemically as it seeks to be and build Beloved Community. This includes:

- Owning why we are the way we are without denial, minimization or whitewashing.
- Interrupting our implicit biases.
- Naming white supremacy before dismantling it, emptying the church from privilege, repenting and reconciling in meaningful ways.
- Tearing apart the notion of assimilation.
- Ensuring that dominant culture or white normativity is not the prescribed way of functioning.
- Partnering with the whole community to honor where we all come from and those things that we all share.
- Embracing the complexity of intersectionality, as this is not a binary issue.

A process of awareness and dismantling racist ideas, actions and policies that exist in the church as well as broader community includes:

- Finding ways to engage those who are at different places in antiracism lifework.
- Being patient with those who deny, defend, minimize and accept the sin of racism and those who defer this work to another group, organization, or realm beyond the church.
- Engaging and paying attention to everyone: understanding that there are multiple ways of being, thinking and doing.
- Eliminating barriers that prevent the thriving and flourishing of particular groups.
- Naming racism and/or other factors as drivers of inequity.
- Providing historical context and analysis for how particular groups have fared in the past, namely BIPOC.
- Critiquing the way that white supremacy and other forms of oppression impact discussions and decision making.
- Advancing policy interventions within the church and society that seek to address or repair the present day manifestations of past harms.
- Advancing policy solutions that are both targeted and universal; a universal goal shared by all groups, with a targeted policy intervention for how particular groups achieve this universal goal.

As a church, we seek to build and nurture Beloved Community, believing that as we embody, create and seek inclusion, diversity, equity and antiracism, we align ourselves with the reign of God. In these efforts, we strive to live as disciples -- intent on manifesting the love of God in all that we do and all that we are.