

# **Racial Reconciliation Statement of Faith**

Rolling Hills Community Church

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We believe the truth from God as revealed in the Bible is our guide for understanding Him, our relationship to God as well as our relationships with one another. This paper attempts to glean truth from God's written Word, that will guide us toward healthy and fruitful relationships with one another. This is especially true for our nation which continues to suffer great pain from racial division and injustice. We must follow the voice of God and His Word over the plans of man or we risk further harm to our relationships with each other and our very souls. We believe as we follow God, our lives will be enriched with joy and He will be glorified.

## **Racial Reconciliation Defined**

We believe we share a God-given humanity with all people and therefore are committed to the fair and just treatment for all and are committed to confront any individual and/or systemic actions that bring mistreatment to anyone on the basis of their race or ethnicity. We understand race to include characteristics such as skin color, whereas ethnicity also encompasses cultural factors such as nationality, tribal affiliation, religion, language and traditions of a particular group. We recognize and value the unique contributions each brings to the beautiful diversity within humanity.

## **We are all made in God's image**

We believe every person is an image bearer of God. Human dignity comes from who each of us was created to be (Genesis 1:26-27). Therefore, human dignity and uniqueness from the rest of creation isn't based on gender, race or ethnicity. Nor is it based on our talents, personality, our intellect, or even our performance or contribution to society.

Human dignity, equality and unity reflect the heart of our Creator and therefore should not be based on political ideologies. These are clear biblical mandates in how we are to love and respect one another. We are of value because we carry the image of God. That's who we are. We have the ability and responsibility to see the image of God in ourselves and in everyone around us.

Therefore, we stand for treating all people with the same value and respect, and condemn the sin of racism in all its forms.

## **Racism is sin**

Since the fall of humanity (Genesis 3; Romans 5:12, Genesis 9:6), relational disunity and selfish pride have been significant problems. Not only did sin separate us from God, it separates us from one another.

Racism is the elevation of one race above another. It robs people of their dignity and worth as image bearers. We stand in opposition to the sins of prejudice, bigotry, racism and ethnocentrism in all its forms, whether in thought, word or deed. Therefore, these sins stand in

opposition to God's love and the value He has assigned for all (Romans 2:11). Jesus' hope to the world, the Gospel, brings loving, eternal hope for all nations, all people and all ethnicities (Matt 28:18-20; Galatians 2:11-21).

### **God's call to love and reconciliation**

Jesus is calling together a multi-ethnic people who will be together for all eternity (Rev 7:9; Galatians 3:28). God's heart is to unify people from every nation, every tribe, every language... forever.

Jesus desires all who know Him to live in unity and be ambassadors of reconciliation to God (ultimately) and with one another (John 17:20,21; John 10:16; 2 Cor 5:15-21; Gal 3:28; 1 Peter 2 & 3).

Furthermore, Jesus sums up the Law and the Prophets by saying we are to love God and love others (Matt 22:37-40). The apostle Paul says that without treating people with love we will be ineffective as followers of Jesus in all we say, know, believe or give (1 Cor 13:1-3). Love is a self-sacrificing action on behalf of another. This love is not extended only to people like ourselves, but extends even to our enemies (Matthew 5:43-48). We cannot love others and be involved in racism. Nor can we claim to be mature followers of Jesus and not love others (John 13:35; 1 John 4:7-8).

Racism is not only a modern issue (Romans 5:12). Injustice due to race or ethnicity shows up as an issue within the early church and was confronted and corrected to align with God's heart for all people (Eph 2:14; Acts 6:1-6; Luke 10:25-37; John 4:1-42). The apostle Paul teaches that the cross of Christ has taken away the 'enmity' and the 'wall of separation' between the Jew and Gentile as well as all people groups.

In Acts 6, we find an example of a majority group demonstrating both the need and wisdom of listening to the minority. When there was an issue of injustice, the majority chose to listen to the minority group and act to reconcile the injustice. We are committed to listening and becoming aware of the unjust burdens others are carrying, and we commit to carry them as well (Galatians 6:2). We will listen, learn and lament (or rejoice) with those whose life experiences are different than our own.

We commit to welcome in and raise up followers of Jesus and ministry leaders from every race and ethnicity within our church and community.

### **God Subverts traditional views of Power**

We believe God expects us to pay not equal, but special attention to anyone who is being mistreated or marginalized (Proverbs 31:8-9). Therefore, we need to look for opportunities to use whatever power and means we have to help those who have less and are being mistreated, marginalized or overlooked because of it (Isaiah 58:2, 6-7).

We believe neither God nor His Word says that power and authority are intrinsically evil. In fact, they are necessary in any society (Rom 13:1,3-4). However, power and authority are to be used in sacrificial service for the benefit of others, just as God has done for us (Philippians 2:5-11). So racial reconciliation isn't about flipping power between groups, but it is about using what power and influence one possesses for the benefit of those who have less.

We recognize that the ultimate power struggle is not people against people, but sinful, weak people against an all-powerful holy God (Genesis 3; 1 John 3:4-10). This is the fundamental root of all human suffering.

### **Both Corporate & Individual Responsibility**

God expects us to move both individually and corporately to oppose racism and bring racial reconciliation. We are all products of our community and our community is, to some degree, a product of us (2 Samuel 21; Joshua 7; Numbers 16; 1 Samuel 15:2; Deut 23:3-8). When power and wealth are used selfishly and with prejudice, it creates mistreatment and oppression for those without either. Daniel confessed this type of sin to God, even when there was no evidence he personally participated in such behavior (Daniel 9:5-7; Ezra 9:5-6, Is 6:5-7). God depicts the human world as a profoundly inter-related community, the godly must live with a sense of responsibility for their community as well as its structure and systems.

Therefore, like Daniel, we recognize, confess, and condemn the corporate and historical sins of the Christian church and our nation when it has not confronted the racial sins of slavery, racism and bigotry. We grieve the long history of racial injustice in our nation. We lament over these sins carried out against our fellow image bearers. We, the people of God, commit to walk in a manner worthy of God's calling on us and to allow the Holy Spirit to work in us to bring about and preserve unity and peace (Eph 4:1-3). We will speak out against injustice (whether individual or systemic) and proclaim truth and act with love toward all.

Each of us has a responsibility before God to align our thinking, loving and living with Him no matter what our group, culture or nation is believing and doing. Every individual follower of Jesus is empowered and expected by God to live differently than the sinful behavior within their culture, group, people or nation (Genesis 6:9-22; 18:16-33).

Our behavior is to be governed by the timeless truth of God's word and not by the social norms of the culture in which we live (2 Tim 3:16, 2 Peter 1:20, John 14:6, Psalm 119:160). Moreover, the identity of every follower of Christ is in their belonging to Jesus and being a child of the King. Our identities are not found in our race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality or in our performance (Gal 2:20; 3:26-29).

We believe that our ultimate hope of racial reconciliation is found in the source of all peace, reconciliation and fellowship, that is, Jesus Christ (John 3:16-18; John 1:12; Eph 2:14-15; 1 John 4:7-11).