

Pastoral Letter on Racism in the United States
Christian Churches Together in the U.S.A.
October, 2019
Montgomery, Alabama

Christian Churches Together in the U.S.A. (CCT) gathers Christians from a wide range of traditions to strengthen our witness to the world. This year's participants met for our annual convocation in Montgomery, Alabama. Given Montgomery's place in history as a former slave trade hub and first capitol of the Confederacy of the United States, it was an important and timely location for our commemoration and lament of the Four Hundredth Anniversary of the forced migration and enslavement of African peoples from Angola to Fort Monroe and Jamestown, VA in 1619. As Christian pilgrims, having experienced the Legacy Museum of the Equal Justice Initiative and its Peace and Justice Garden, we contemplated the treacherous journey, inhumane treatment, and enslavement of African peoples. This included a spiritual pilgrimage retracing the steps of the historical moments of this journey. We also considered the injustices faced by people of African descent and other enslaved peoples globally and nationally today, promoted by racist laws, racial terrorism, societal practices, and other policies that further racial inequities, bolster white privilege, and enable white supremacy. These reckonings with our past and considerations of our present motivated us to action.

CCT participants lament, confess, and renounce the multiple ways communities of faith participated in and contributed to slavery and all forms of racism. We appreciate many noble efforts to address the sin and evil of racism, and yet we recognize that these efforts, while raising consciousness, failed to embolden the convictions and stir the courage to eliminate all racist policies, practices, and processes that exist in our civic and religious communities. We affirm that no community can genuinely call itself Christian if it participates in or promotes any form of racism. As our Scriptures declare, a Christian community should be "where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all" (Colossians 3:11). To be clear: Racism is a denial of the very nature of the Church.

Motivated by faith in Christ, the participants commit to personal, communal, and systemic transformation to end to all forms of racial oppression. In particular, we name and will consider appropriate advocacy against the racist policies, practices, and processes that exist in healthcare, education, criminal justice, housing, voter suppression and employment. The participants encourage the communions/organizations in CCT to examine its policies as well as those of the organizations with which we associate. Should those policies contribute to any form of racism, participants implore the communions/organizations to take tangible steps toward immediate change. Racism will not be effectively addressed until our churches reckon with their histories and authentically address the realities of white privilege and the tendencies toward attitudes of white superiority. Our words and work will be for all people to enjoy life completely free of the shackles of racism.

Montgomery's place in history is not only marked by its injurious association with the slave trade. It is also a place where Christian leaders who became civil rights heroes, such as

Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, Jr., modeled spiritual resistance and bold hope by taking impactful stands against the indignities of institutionalized and legalized forms of racism and bigotry. We thank God for these and other faithful ancestors and pray that God would raise up more in this time and the future. As persons from diverse understandings of our faith in Christ who have come together as one voice to denounce racism in any form, we commit ourselves to being at the forefront of this leadership. This irrevocable obligation stems from our common conviction that “God has reconciled us to himself through Christ and given us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:19). Reconciliation involves offering an apology and requires substantive engagement to restore and repair that which has been lost. The participants of the October 2019 convocation join all people of good will in exploring and enacting pathways to genuine healing and wholeness.