

Parkway Bible Church Racial Diversity Position Paper 2021

Racial diversity is created by God (Acts 17:26). As Christians, we are called to reflect unity in the diversity that comprises the body of Christ and eternally exists within the Triune God. The diversity of his people displays the manifold wisdom of God in saving people from all tribes and nations and languages (Eph. 3:10; Rev. 5:9). It is expressed through every human as God's image-bearer (Genesis 1:27) and is articulated in human heritages, cultures, and histories (Acts 17:26). Through the posterity of Adam and Eve, God has brought about diverse ethnicities and people groups with their different customs and languages (Rev. 5:9-10). Scripture presents the display of racial diversity as a characteristic of the Kingdom of God and a reflection of its true nature.

God's created diversity on earth is a foretaste of the eschatological vision where we see "a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb..." (Rev. 7:9). In the words of Dante, these "diverse voices make sweet music" as they sing the song of Moses and the Lamb (Rev. 15:3).

Given the divine intention for creation, we see human racial diversity as a feature of life worth savoring, a feature approved and embraced by God. The unity of the Kingdom, attested by Christian fellowship, gladly acknowledges the variety of personal backgrounds, histories, and contexts out of which love, thanksgiving, and worship are rendered to God. In the great harmony of creation's praise to God through Christ and the Holy Spirit, each inhabitant of the new heavens and new earth will participate with a distinctive voice.

We acknowledge, however, that this divine unity and order of God's creation is deeply disrupted by sin (Ps. 51:5; Rom. 8:19-22). Human sin has caused men and women, families, tribes, races, and nations to be in conflict with one another, with differences among people often serving as a pretext for personal and communal injustice (Gal. 2:14-16; James 2:4). We must recognize racism and racializing as sin. We must resist every temptation to exalt one human or class of humans over another (Luke 18:11; Phil. 2:3-4).

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Acknowledging the expansive vision of the community of God's people, we must affirm the image of God in others and support the full expression of each other's likenesses to God in the splendor of our racial diversity. By virtue of being made in

God's image, every person is clothed with dignity, endowed with purpose, and worthy of respect. The Bible calls us to love our neighbors as ourselves, love our enemies, greet strangers, help those in need, and treat others as we would like to be treated. This means no group of people, even those who disagree with our beliefs, should ever experience our hatred, belittling, hostility, exclusion, or apathy (Ps. 82:3; Matt. 5:43-48; Luke 10:25-37; John 13:34-35; Eph. 4:1-6).

The Gospel of Jesus Christ transcends ethnic, cultural, socio-economic, and national divisions (Acts 10:9-16). God uses our distinct differences within the body of Christ for promoting the common good (Acts 11:19-30; 17:24-28). Our obligations to each other, as members of the body of Christ, are well described by Martin Luther King Jr. in his Letter from a Birmingham Jail: "We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be." As the body of Christ, we do not flourish until all flourish. It is as "we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

Because of sin, we are under no illusion about becoming a perfect community here on earth. But we are committed to an ongoing process that pursues a biblical vision of community and honors the image of God present in each person, always mindful that his image is not more present in one than in any other (Gen. 9:6). In this community, Christ is the head of the body (Col. 1:18), having made peace between God and his estranged creation by his sacrificial death on the cross (2 Cor. 5:16-21). As members of his body, we are diverse but interdependent. We look to the Holy Spirit to graciously provide the ability and courage for ongoing reconciled relationships as we strive to honor the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 6:14-16).

*Adapted with permission from Christian School.
Fairfax, VA Fairfax, VA*