

**Charter on Racial Reconciliation**  
**Diocese of Fredericton**  
**Adopted 2024 December 7**

We affirm that racism (defined here as the hatred or mistreatment of others based on racial or ethnic identity) constitutes an act of rebellion against God's ultimate purpose for humanity. God's will for humanity, as revealed in Sacred Scripture, is this: That all people, in their beautiful, God-given ethnic and cultural multiplicity would be united in praise before the throne of Christ for all eternity (Rev. 7:10).

Although the perfect mending of all ethnic division will not take place until Christ's inauguration of the Kingdom, the church has been called to serve as a foretaste of this coming unity – showing this fallen world what true racial harmony looks like. Indeed, the church is called to be global body of believers made up of people from every nation, tribe, people and language, united in love by our allegiance to the crucified Messiah.

Given this calling, it comes as no surprise that many historical movements against racial injustice—from the abolition of the slave trade throughout the British Empire, to the defeat of apartheid in South Africa— found their impetus in the teachings of Christ. It is equally unsurprising that many of the leaders of such movements (William Wilberforce, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.) were all disciples of the Lord Jesus.

While there are shining examples of Christians who have, in the name of Christ, sought to bring about true justice and racial reconciliation, it is clear the opposite is also true. Indeed, at various points in her two-thousand-year history, the church has allowed herself to become complicit with racial injustice and ethnic division. In the modern era<sup>1</sup>, Christians participated in the oppression of colonized people— exploiting their labour and stealing their lands. They owned slaves and provided what they believed were sound, Biblical justifications for doing so. Closer to home, the Anglican Church in Canada played a leading role in the foundation and operation of residential schools— institutions which separated aboriginal families and tore children from their land, language, and culture. Christians engaged in such oppression— not because they were following the commandments of their Lord— but because they were rebelling against him, forsaking the very moral principles that lay at the heart of their faith.

Having acknowledged this complicated past, we wish to affirm that racial reconciliation is indeed possible and that the church is still called by her Lord to play a leading role in its actualization. However, true reconciliation cannot be achieved through any human philosophy or social policy, no matter how well articulated or devised, but *only through the work of the crucified Messiah*. He is the one who suffered and died in solidarity with the victims of racial oppression. He is also the one who suffered and died for the atonement of the perpetrators. It is he and only he who makes true repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation possible.

Nevertheless, Christ's victory over all sin — including the sin of race hatred— does not mean that the disciple of Jesus is permitted to stand passive and unresisting in the face of unrighteousness. In the

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<sup>1</sup> 1500 AD to 1945 AD

power of the Holy Spirit, we are to combat the evil of racism as it exists in the broader culture, in our local churches and in our hearts.

Therefore, we as a Diocese, commit to:

### **1. Learning from Our Past**

In the Old Testament, the Psalmist enjoins the people of Israel to recall their nation's past — retelling the history of their people to the next generation. This retelling was not to be a glossed over version of Israel's history, recounting only the good. Rather, it was to involve an honest examination of the nation's past failings. The hope was that, through such a truthful retelling, the next generation would “not be like their ancestors, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose hearts was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God” (Ps. 78:7-8).

If it was wise for the people of Israel to recall their past in such a manner, so too would it be wise for us — the people of the church — to do the same. For this reason, we commit to cultivating a better understanding of our history as Christians and, more specifically, Anglicans, growing in our understanding of (1) how we have, at various points in history, allowed the sin of racism to take root in the church and (2) how prophetic voices among us have preached against evils such as slavery, thereby calling God's people to repentance.

### **2. Talking about Racism in our Present Context**

Using the teachings of Jesus as our starting point and framework, we commit to having honest conversations about race in our church communities. In these conversations, the following questions could be explored: Are there visible minorities in our parishes? If the answer is no, why might that be the case? If there are visible minorities in our church communities, have they experienced racism either inside or outside of a church context? What can we do to protect them from further hatred or discrimination? How can we fight on their behalf? What can we do to facilitate their full participation in the leadership, mission and ministry of the church? As followers of Jesus, how might our approach to rectifying racial injustice differ from the broader cultures'?

### **3. Looking to the Future in Hope**

Recent demographic data indicates that the population of New Brunswick is slowly on the rise thanks, in part, to the arrival of newcomers from many different parts of the world. Indeed, our own churches seem to reflect this trend, with many priests reporting the sudden presence of parishioners who just arrived in this country within recent years. (Many of these new worshippers come from countries where the church is growing and thriving- *despite persecution!*) Given the fact that this trend is likely to continue, we commit to devising strategies to better integrate our newcomer brothers and sisters into the leadership, ministry and social life of our parishes.

Ultimately, we commit to looking, in hope, towards the Kingdom of God — the eternal era of righteousness and peace that our Lord will inaugurate upon his return. In this kingdom, ethnic differences will not be erased but, rather hallowed, rejoiced over and celebrated by a redeemed humanity. Nevertheless, these ethnic differences will fail to divide for they will be transcended by the love of the crucified, risen and victorious Messiah — the One who stretched out his arms upon the cross to draw all humanity into his eternal embrace.