

A Brief Theology of Diversity and Racial Equity

“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we are all baptized into one body -Jews or Greeks, slaves or free- and we were made to drink of one Spirit.” I Cor. 12. 12-13

This passage is helpful in creating a theology of diversity and racial equity. Far from negating the multiple cultural backgrounds of the first-century Christians, the reference to Jews or Greeks, slaves or free demonstrates that there is unity (all one spirit) amid the diversity (unique backgrounds and identities). Those with Jewish affinities and those with Greek affinities, both slave and free, comprise of the body of Christ (faith community).

Throughout the biblical text, people of faith are called to love their neighbor as themselves. While love of neighbor remains a command and teaching of Jesus, white skin privilege in America holds love of neighbor hostage to whiteness as a symbol of power. As a result of the symbolism of what whiteness represents, racial discrimination and xenophobia remain a threat to people of color. We have witnessed the resurgence of increasingly violent acts against people of color and representatives of the U.S. government turning a blind eye to acts of white supremacy and nationalism.

As a Christian church and as followers of Jesus, we have a theological mandate to disrupt and dismantle racism. We affirm God’s creating all people in God’s image and likeness. We affirm that God desires all people to be treated with dignity and respect.

Confession

As Christians, we confess that ancestors of the Congregational Church and European colonialism created, sanctioned, and supported racism. We confess our part in perpetuating how race has been constructed and sanctioned as a model for American society. We confess the role Christians played in supporting the division of humanity by skin color categories as a means for instituting global European colonialism. We confess that racism is a sin and denies the humanity of all people.

Action

Because racism is contrary to biblical teaching and denies basic justice and human dignity, we are called to work for racial equity. We are called to eradicate constructed race categories within the Christian Church and society. We are called to restore God’s human family and the equality of humankind. We are called to examine white privilege, white supremacy and white fragility with the intention to change our behavior. We are called to make our place of worship welcoming and safe for all people. As Christians, we are called to make our behaviors compatible with the teachings of Jesus and truly love our neighbor.

—Rev. Dr. Paula Northwood, Acting Senior Minister, January 2019