



## Why are we engaging in this work?

### **Because of the KINGDOM**

In scripture we are given a kingdom vision. It's a vision where people from every nation, tribe, people, and language are joined together praising God ([Rev. 7:9-10](#)). And when Jesus tells us to pray for his kingdom and his will to be done here on earth like it is in heaven ([Mt. 6:9-10](#)), he's giving us that vision for the here and now. And as long as the picture here at Marsh Creek or in the world does not line up with the picture there, we've got work to do as Kingdom Citizens!

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### **Because of our DENOMINATION**

The [Brethren in Christ](#), has made growth in this area of racial reconciliation, understanding, and healing a focus in recent years.

We will celebrate our 250<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2028 as a denomination. In connection with this date, we have established five priorities for the denomination (called [Project 250](#)). The priorities are listed below and the last three all align with this work of racial healing and justice:

- Reaffirming Our Identity as a Community of Christ-Followers
- Making Lifelong Disciples
- *Multiplying Missional Congregations, Movements, and Leaders*
- *Increasing Global Awareness and Impact*
- *Growing to Reflect the Demographic Realities of Our Communities*

[Read more about the five priorities.](#)

**BIC Statement on Racism and Racial Injustice:** *“Racism and racial injustice should not only be addressed after tragic events, such as those our country has recently experienced, instead, we are called to be about our Father’s business all of the time.” (From the BIC Statement [“A Response to Racism and Racial Injustice, June 12, 2020”](#))*

We recognize that many organizations and churches put out statements during this time of racial reckoning in our country. What is significant about this part of the BIC statement is that racial justice work is considered by our denomination to be “our Father’s business” and we should be about that business all of the time. We could not agree more.

Dr. David Weaver-Zercher, Professor of American Religious History at Messiah University published two scholarly articles in 2021 and 2022 examining the history of the Brethren in Christ and their response to the Civil Rights Movement from [1950-1965](#), and from [1967-1975](#). His work shed much needed light on our past and how “doing nothing” is an option that we have already tried and it has been found wanting.

10 Core Values: The Brethren in Christ has articulated Ten Core Values that describe what it means to be BIC. We believe that *at least* the values indicated below in italics cohere well with this work:

- Experiencing God’s Love and Grace
  - We value the free gift of salvation in Christ Jesus and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.
- *Believing the Bible*
  - *We value the Bible as God’s authoritative Word, study it together, and build our lives on its truth.*
- Worshipping God
  - We value heartfelt worship that is God-honoring, Spirit-directed, and life-changing.
- *Following Jesus*
  - *We value wholehearted obedience to Christ Jesus through the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit.*
- Belonging to the Community of Faith
  - We value integrity in relationships and mutual accountability in an atmosphere of grace, love, and acceptance.
- *Witnessing to the World*
  - *We value an active and loving witness for Christ to all people.*
- *Serving Compassionately*
  - *We value serving others at their point of need, following the example of our Lord Jesus.*
- *Pursuing Peace*
  - *We value all human life and promote forgiveness, understanding, reconciliation, and non-violent resolution of conflict.*
- Living Simply
  - We value uncluttered lives, which free us to love boldly, give generously, and serve joyfully.
- *Relying on God*
  - *We confess our dependence on God for everything, and seek to deepen our intimacy with Him by living prayerfully.*

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### **Because of our CHURCH**

-Our Purpose Statement: Bringing healing and hope to our communities by connecting people to God, His Church, and His mission.

The coherence of this work with our purpose statement is self-evident.

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### **Because of SCRIPTURE**

[John 13:34-35](#): 34 “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

This passage is specifically referring to the love we share with fellow Kingdom Citizens, fellow followers of Jesus. But are not those of other cultures and skin colors in this Kingdom with us? And yet we

remain so segregated – not by law, but by choice. The work of racial reconciliation is a witness, an active love of those who we claim are brothers and sisters but we are separated from. If we actively love them and work for the things that matter to them, our witness of love will be massive.

Proverbs 31:8-9: 8 Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. 9 Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.

As this passage is contained in our Wisdom Literature, this work is right to do for a life of wisdom - we both gain wisdom in the work AND we are shown to be wise in doing this work. And as Jesus followers, even if WE are not impacted by certain injustices, we are to speak up for those who are. (also see next verse)

Hebrews 10:32-34 Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you endured in a great conflict full of suffering. Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; *at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated.* You suffered along with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions. (emphasis added)

As a predominantly white church we get to stand side-by-side with our brothers and sisters who are so treated.

Leviticus 19:33-34 33 “When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. 34 The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God.

Not every person of color is a foreigner, but some are. This speaks to just one aspect of racial reconciliation, the immigrant. This calls on God’s people who by their nature were foreigners in Egypt and immigrants when they left, to remember this aspect of their identity and never forget or overlook those in the same or similar circumstances.

James 2:1-13

This speaks to favoritism and discrimination - it is forbidden.

Ephesians 2:14-15 14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, 15 by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace,

This is specifically speaking about the two groups of Jews and Gentiles, but the work of removing dividing walls of hostility and reconciling people and people groups was a work accomplished by Jesus on the cross. It is our work now as we follow our Savior. Reconciliation is the work of the gospel.

2 Corinthians 5:18-19 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

Reconciliation here is referring to the salvific work of Jesus, being made right with him. But in bringing people to Jesus, one of the most powerful tools we have is the reconciliation of other relationships here on earth. Any reconciliation, any repairing of relationships and systems to wholeness and alignment with Christ is an inbreaking of the Kingdom, a glimpse into it when we see reconciliation happening here. It is a part of bringing God's kingdom here like it is in heaven. Again, we see that reconciliation is gospel work.

Ephesians 2:8-10: 8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

We are saved in order to do good works. This work certainly qualifies as a good work. And not only is it a “good work”, it is actually “doing” something, it is substantive, not merely acknowledging a theological truth.

Matthew 15:1-9: Then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked, “Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don’t wash their hands before they eat!” Jesus replied, “And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? For God said, ‘Honor your father and mother’ and ‘Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death.’ But you say that if anyone declares that what might have been used to help their father or mother is ‘devoted to God,’ they are not to ‘honor their father or mother’ with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition. You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you: “ ‘These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules.’ ”

This passage specifically addresses arguments people may have regarding financial investment in racial healing and justice work: Particularly the argument that says “*If people are willing to give to this kind of work, they should be willing to give that same money to the church for other purposes – the purpose of spreading the gospel!*” (*setting up the false dichotomy that racial justice work is antithetical to the gospel*): Here, Jesus responds to the religious leaders who say that gifts can’t be both for honoring God and honoring or blessing others and says that our money (or other things that might be used to bless people) is allowed to go to other people to honor them and help them. Giving it to honor others IS honoring to God. In fact, stopping that could be going against God. Yes, there is discernment involved here and we must look at every case individually, but giving financially to the church for more “explicitly” “gospelly” type things doesn’t make a financial contribution more good or holy than giving that money directly to help others.

#### **FURTHER THOUGHTS:**

*The Jewish people of Jesus' time were people who were oppressed, dealing with the discrimination and belittling of the Romans, trying to make theological sense of their plight and situation. This is who Jesus spoke into. (Esau McCaulley, Reading While Black - pg. 79)*

If we want help to understand our own scriptures, it would make sense to increase our exposure and submit to the experiences of those whose current experiences (people of color today) mirror that of the Jews back then. This will only help us in understanding scripture and applying correctly.

The Bible is a black and brown collection of documents! It originated in a Middle Eastern, brown, collectivist, oppressed, minority mindset. If we want to understand our own scriptures better, we should know our black and brown brothers and sisters more.

*When we reduce mission to evangelism, conversion becomes the ulterior motive (or concealed or hidden motive) of our acts of blessing. However, when we define God's mission as the redemption and renewal of all creation through Jesus, the acts of renewal we participate in have value in and of themselves. Such acts are part of God's kingdom work, and they "disciple" others in how the world will one day be when Jesus reigns as king. The rebirth of the people we serve becomes an ultimate motive without being an ulterior motive. (Positively Irritating, Jon Ritner, pg. 42)*