

June 26, 2020

Grace Family,

Imperative to my role as a pastor is to proclaim the transformational message of the Gospel. Inherent within this calling is the inevitability that it will likely “comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.” Over these past several weeks, in the wake of the vivid reminders of the racial injustice in our world, I confess and repent of my choice to be slow to speak. Quite frankly, my silence has been the result of my own fear of not knowing exactly what to say. However, excuses do not comfort, taking action does.

Toward that end, I may now “afflict the comfortable.” Friends, the Gospel calls us—commands us—to VALUE all people and anything short of that is disobedience to the will of God. It stands against any person, policy, or practice that would dim the glory of God reflected in the life of human beings from every tribe, tongue, and nation. The Good News calls us to be agents of the reconciling power of Jesus Christ in our culture and the world. Each of us must seek to comfort those who have been afflicted, but also, we must allow ourselves to be afflicted if we have become too comfortable.

We all must be reminded of the truth that we are fearfully and wonderfully made in the image of God (Psalm 139:14) but also that each of us must humble ourselves before the Lord and ask Him to search us, cleanse, and send us to be light in the darkness (Psalm 139:23-24). Additionally, we must ask ourselves, am I living what the Lord has required of me: “to act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly” (Micah 6:8)? Thankfully, we have been given the power of the Holy Spirit to equip us to be His witnesses (Acts 1:8), which includes participating in the renewal of relationships, hope, and justice in our neighborhoods, church, city and world. We have been saved and sent. If not us, then who?

Therefore, it is my commitment along with the Session and the staff of Grace to continue to prayerfully discern the next right steps for all of us in the Grace family. We desire to be in a posture of listening and learning because we know that Scripture tells us we are ONE body, called to ONE hope in Jesus Christ. How will we boldly engage racial injustice? How will we courageously dialogue with one another to foster understanding and deepen relationships? How will we make Jesus Visible to all people, embracing all colors and races, in order that together we live, move, and have our being in the sovereignty of a loving God (Acts 17:28)?

We are providing the following resources that will aid in the initial steps of educating and equipping us in our pursuit of racial equity. I encourage you to take time to read and listen and

discern what God is calling you to do at this critical time in our nation's history. Never underestimate His transformational power in your life.

Resources:

- Statement made by Dana Allin, ECO Synod Executive
<https://eco-pres.org/the-church-and-racial-reconciliation/>
- Letter from the ECO Theology team
https://www.theology-eco.org/eco-theology-blog/2020/6/6/dr-mark-patterson-responding-to-racism?fbclid=IwAR38eBCqDHFgBoUaI_AWSMkzPZMz3y_sKoMCXZjeCBsIxrO_CKVlbM3vu5k
- Recording of the ECO webinar that Dana hosted with the director of Arrabon
<https://eco-pres.org/event/the-church-and-racial-reconciliation-webinar/?fbclid=IwAR2MIMT-gwt0ZsagVOTaOTwh-O-QFPtgaj>
- *The Color of Compromise: The Truth About the American Church's Complicity in Racism* (Jemar Tisby)
https://www.amazon.com/dp/0310113601/ref=cm_sw_em_r_mt_dp_U_Btl9EbAJEGHWT

I love this Grace family and I trust God is working on us, in us, and through us all (Phil. 1: 3-6).

Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Tom', with a long, sweeping horizontal line above it that extends to the right.

“And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:9-10).