

A Vision for Racial Healing

“What does the Lord require of us,
but to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God?”

Micah 6:8

Racism is a sin that prevents humankind from experiencing the fulness of God’s kingdom on earth. Rooted in God’s love for the whole world, we are called as Christians to demonstrate courage and conviction to end the sin of racism.

OUR CONFESSION: We confess that we have not done enough to actively end racism in our community and the world. We acknowledge our biases, known and unknown, and the racial disparities that exist. Because the church has not yet become the full, inclusive reflection of God’s kingdom, we deeply repent and seek God’s forgiveness. Through a change of mind, we pray that God will bring to us a change of heart that leads us to a change of behavior.

OUR COMMITMENTS: The community of faith at St. John’s Lutheran Church commits itself to:

- promote equality among all people,
- oppose racism in all its forms,
- address and dismantle systemic racism,
- work for the healing and health of our community,
- examine our own practices so they better align with Jesus’ vision for the world, and
- build relationships of trust and solidarity with people in and beyond our congregation so that we may grow together into the people God desires us to be.

This work will be difficult and challenging, as we know that significant change never comes without sacrifice. We will not allow this Vision to be a momentary call for action but, instead, an ongoing journey rooted in love.

OUR PRINCIPLES: The following principles will enable us to live into these commitments and serve as measuring sticks as we step into the future together:

WE WILL BE GROUNDED IN THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE

“No, they wouldn’t listen to a word I said....” Jeremiah 29:19

Just as we didn’t listen to God in Jeremiah, we have a hard time listening to each other. We are challenged by the difference between hearing, listening, and active listening. We can hear without listening and listen without comprehending, which ultimately leads to confusion and the erosion of trust in one another. In spite of the challenge, we believe that our language matters, and that a change in language can lead to a change in culture. Therefore, in all that we do, the people of St. John’s will strive to speak the language of love within our increasingly diverse community. As we grow together, we will encourage and practice the art of active listening. We will reject hate speech of any kind, adhering to the biblical principle of building up, rather than tearing down (Ephesians 4:29).

WE WILL WALK ALONGSIDE OUR NEIGHBORS, DELIBERATELY AND LOVINGLY

“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.

By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:34-35

We envision a congregation of disciples committed to Jesus’ commandment to “love one another” – love that is grounded in relationship and finds expression in our actions on behalf of one another. We are committed to increasing the number of opportunities for members of our congregation and community to learn from, listen to, and be led by

communities of color. We will support and take action alongside these communities to promote economic prosperity, educational equality, access to healthcare, fair treatment in the justice system, and the right to vote free from racial, social, or cultural biases. These actions will require the courage to challenge -- through loving, non-violent means -- the racial biases that dehumanize and oppress, even when it is uncomfortable to do so. In that light, we re-commit ourselves to vibrant, creative partnerships with like-minded organizations and schools, especially those that serve minority and marginalized students.

WE RECOGNIZE OUR NEED TO GROW

“Give instruction to the wise, and they will become wiser still,
teach the righteous and they will gain in learning.” Proverbs 9:9

As disciples, we are called to a pattern of life-long learning and honest self-assessment. We recognize that there is a need to grow in our understanding of racial healing and equity. Therefore, we are committed to developing robust and multi-faceted opportunities for members within and outside our congregation to expand their understanding of race and racial justice. We commit ourselves to providing space and resources for growing together.

WE VALUE AUTHENTIC AND DIVERSE RELATIONSHIPS

"I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, ... that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought." 1 Corinthians 1:10

Sustainable culture change begins with a change in relationships. Change in relationships requires proximity and intentionality. With that in mind, we are committed to fostering authentic and meaningful relationships in our community that cross racial, religious, and socioeconomic divides. We will support and amplify the work of community institutions, agencies, schools, and businesses that intentionally create space for diversity and make room for conversation that is bound by mutual respect and reasoned deliberation.

Our Hope

Our Vision for Racial Healing is to be highly deliberate in building and fostering a beloved community. This commitment to community is summarized by one of the simplest verses in the Bible, "love your neighbor" (Mark 23:31). As a beloved community, we will walk alongside our neighbors in Christ to strive for peace, justice, and equality for all, especially those harmed by racism. We pray that our commitments, rooted in love, will assist in the dismantling of discrimination and racism while promoting unity within our communities and beyond.



St. John's Lutheran Church | Salisbury, North Carolina