

A Statement of New Hope Church's Commitment Against Racism

Preface

During the early and late spring of 2020, many in the United States of America were horrified by the deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor and the circumstances surrounding these deaths. New Hope Church, a congregation of the Reformed Church in America, was called to both speak and act to combat racism in our community, our state, our nation and our world. While the history of the Reformed Church in America regarding racism is laden with regrettable statements and actions, in the 20th century our denomination stood against racial injustice most notably by speaking against and severing relationships with the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa which had given theological justification to apartheid. In the 21st century, the Reformed Church in America adopted the Confession of Belhar, a gift from the Uniting Reformed Church of Southern Africa, as its fourth doctrinal standard—the first standard to be adopted since those written in the 16th and 17th centuries.

New Hope began with a Zoom conversation in early June of 2020, facilitated by Elders Kevin and Beverly Robinson. From that conversation, a group of 16 – 18 have met on four successive occasions. It is from those meetings that this statement has emerged.

Statement

The congregation of New Hope Reformed Church states, with conviction and intention, that this congregation stands against all forms of racism. Our Lord Jesus Christ has compelled us to answer his call to love each other unconditionally.

“The first Africans arrived in Virginia because of the transatlantic slave trade. Across three and a half centuries—from 1501 to 1867—more than 12.5 million Africans were captured, sold, and transported to the Americas. . . The Africans who came to Virginia in 1619 had been taken from Angola in West Central Africa.” (<https://historicjamestowne.org/history/the-first-africans>)

Many historians declared it as “America’s Original Sin”. Despite its abolition in 1865, slavery has inundated our society many times over with ideologies, systems, structures, and institutions that have advantaged some and simultaneously disadvantaged others. These systems are commonly called systemic racism, which work to the detriment of descendants of slaves, indigenous peoples, and people of color in general.

The result is that systemic racism has held back the God-given gifts and passions in people of these communities. Instead, this condition has created great inequity in matters of education, health, and justice. Such injustices have given rise to fear and insecurity caused by perpetrated acts of hatred and violence that exist to this day. We stand up for and work toward the dignity, rights, and freedom of all in the following expressions of commitment.

- We express solidarity with descendants of slaves, indigenous peoples, and all people of color.
- We commit to prayer for our work, guidance from our Lord Jesus Christ, and healing for all nations.
- We commit to a pathway of education, gaining an awareness of biases, privilege, and an understanding of history and each other.

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- We commit to a policy of solidarity to the disenfranchised that we will take action today, to right 'wrongs' that still exist, and raise our collective voices to bring the change that has been absent for four centuries. In God's name, we will each stand firm in our love for one another as God has commanded us. We cannot thrive or be our best until we are all embraced in community with one another and are standing shoulder to shoulder in our mission to bring about equality of opportunity for all.

"Open your mouth for those who cannot speak, and for the rights of those who are left without help. Open your mouth. Be right and fair in what you decide. Stand up for the rights of those who are suffering and in need."

Proverbs 31:8-9 New Life Version (NLV)

"You obey the whole Law when you do this one thing, "Love your neighbor as you love yourself."
Galatians 5:14 New Life Version (NLV)