

# THE MILWAUKEE DECLARATION

**In light of this distressing season in our city and nation's history, when deep racial tensions have been laid bare for all to see with horrifying intensity, we, as Christian leaders in the city of Milwaukee, have gathered to make the following declaration. We set forth this declaration in light of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ as recorded in Holy Scripture.**

We believe the central call of God upon His church is to proclaim and embody the Gospel of Jesus Christ, that *“good news of great joy which is for all people”* (Luke 2:10). This Gospel leads us to the crossroads of love for God and love for our neighbor as exhibited in both word and deed. This Gospel calls us to live at the intersection of discipleship and cultural transformation, so God might get greatest glory through His people on earth.<sup>1</sup>

While acknowledging that we do not all agree theologically, politically, or socially, we believe that the Kingdom of God cuts across all earthly dividing lines in order to forge a new community called the church. That earthly community is centered on Jesus Christ and held together in our varied expressions of faith around God's truth as outlined in such historic statements of belief, such as the Nicene Creed. We readily admit that we are all imperfect and that our respective institutions and organizations have imperfections. Still, we are committed to working together for the spiritual, physical, mental, emotional, social and ethical development of the people and communities of greater Milwaukee.<sup>2</sup>

We affirm that the dream of God is to bring people *“from every nation, tribe, people and language”* into His Kingdom through Jesus (Revelation 7:9). A fundamental assertion of the Gospel is that the dividing barriers that define humanity have been radically broken down through Jesus. This is particularly true of racial divisions, which have been powerfully destroyed through Jesus Christ at the Cross; as the Apostle Paul writes about Jesus, *“he himself is our peace”* (Ephesians 2:14).<sup>3</sup>

We believe that racism is a threat to our society and to the church today. Because of the Gospel, we call the church to live out the message of reconciliation with one another, across congregations, and within our city and nation. We declare that time is past due for the church to rise up as a voice against the threat racism brings. We declare that it is no longer okay for Sunday at 11 AM to be the most segregated hour in America and neither is it okay for us to be content with the status quo of established disparities.

We declare Milwaukee and Wisconsin's incarceration rates for African-American males must change for the better with policing, sentencing policies, and improved systems for return to society after incarceration; and

We declare Milwaukee's unemployment rate for African-American men and the position as the city with second highest poverty rate for African-Americans in the USA must be reversed by economic strategies and focused action in response to these disparities; and

We declare educational gaps between African-American and Caucasian students in our schools must be addressed; and

We declare Milwaukee's position amongst the 20 most violent cities in the USA must change in our communities.

While we acknowledge that our focus here is on the disparities between African-Americans and Caucasians, these issues also impact all other ethnicities in our city and nation.

Together, we make this declaration and sign it with a commitment to tear down racial walls and build bridges of peace, as we live out the message of reconciliation modeled by Jesus Christ.

We call for accountability, action and change by elected political officials, community stakeholders and local institutions within our communities on behalf of African-Americans, Hispanics and other non-white populations that have suffered unjustly through economic, political and societal oppression; and

We invite fellow Christian leaders to sign this declaration as well, to demonstrate focused attention coupled with swift action to reverse the trends of segregation and the plight of African-Americans within the city of Milwaukee. We hope and believe that when the people of God stand together for the good of our city, the city will be transformed, people will be drawn to Christ, and God will be even more greatly glorified.

---

JUNE 23, 2015

1. See Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; Mark 12:28-34.

2. See Romans 3:10, 23.

3. See Galatians 3:26-28; Ephesians 2:11-12; 4:3-6.