



Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church

Berlin, Mai 2015

"Grace and peace in the name of Jesus Christ!"

We, the bishops of The United Methodist Church, are meeting in Berlin, Germany, 70 years after the end of World War II. As we gather, we renew our commitment to lead, as together we seek to become the beloved community of Christ.

We are a church that proclaims the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world. On every continent, people called United Methodist are boldly living the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Yet, the people of our world are hurting, as injustice, violence and racism abound. Our witness to the dignity of all human life and the reign of God is needed now more than ever.

Our hearts break and our spirits cry out, as we see reports of migrant people being attacked and burned in the streets of South Africa, note the flight of Jews from Europe, watch the plight of Mediterranean refugees and see racially charged protests and riots in cities across the United States that remind us that systems are broken and racism continues. The evidence is overwhelming that race still matters, that racism is woven into institutional life and is problematic to communal health. This reality impacts every area of life – in the church and in the world.

Racism is prejudice plus intent to do harm or discriminate based on a belief that one is superior or has freedom to use power over another based on race. Xenophobia is an unreasonable fear or hatred of foreigners or strangers or of that which is foreign or strange. Racism and xenophobia, like other sins, keep us from being whole persons ca-

pable of living up to our full potential. They deny the profound theological truth that we are made in the image of God with the handprint of love and equality divinely implanted in every soul.

As bishops of the Church, we cast a vision for a world community where human worth and dignity defeat acts of xenophobia and racism. We acknowledge that silence in the face of systemic racism and community fears serves only to make matters worse.

We commit to lead, model and engage in honest dialogue and respectful conversation and invite people of faith everywhere to join us. Let us repent of our own racial bias and abuse of privilege. May we love God more deeply and, through that love, build relationships that honor the desire of people everywhere to be seen, valued, heard and safe. As we proclaim and live the Gospel of Jesus Christ, may we lead the way in seeking justice for all, investing in and trusting God's transforming power to create a world without hatred and racism.

As United Methodists, we affirm that all lives are sacred and that a world free of racism and xenophobia is not only conceivable, but worthy of our pursuit. We renew our commitment to work for a Church that is anti-racist and pro-humanity, believing that beloved community cannot be achieved by ignoring cultural, racial and ethnic differences, but by celebrating diversity and valuing all people.

"This commandment we have from him: Those who claim to love God ought to love their brother and sister also." 1 John 4:21 (CEB)