



Creekside's Acts 6 Moment

*Racial Reconciliation: A Theological Foundation
based on the EFCA Statement of Faith*



Team Purpose Statement

The Racial Reconciliation Task Force exists to aid Creekside's elders and congregation in pursuing the ministry of reconciliation given to us as ambassadors of Christ.

Team Vision Statement

We strive to be a church family where people of every tribe, nation, and tongue, are both shaping and transforming Creekside as they each are being shaped and transformed by Christ.



INTRODUCTION

*“The EFCA stands firmly on the gospel of Jesus Christ, affirming both its centrality in doctrine, and also its centrality in function, i.e., the outworking of the gospel... **Racial reconciliation** among believers in the church of Jesus Christ is one of the greatest manifestations of the gospel today, one of the greatest apologetic arguments for (or against) the work of Jesus Christ and His gospel.”*¹

The first dispute in the newly formed church was due to ethnic differences. The Hebrew widows were receiving the care they needed, while the Hellenistic (Greek speaking) widows were being neglected in the daily distribution (Acts 6:1). This created a church rupture along these two different ethnic groups. There was a need for both church care, and church unity. There was a need for *the gospel to be manifested* in this area (Eph. 2:13-16). In other words, there was a need for *ethnic* reconciliation, now commonly called *racial* reconciliation.²

From there, as the Church and the gospel continued to spread to different people groups, local churches grew more ethnically diverse and began to also experience the same, and yet common, conflict as the church in Acts 6 did (Gal. 2:11-14). Each local church needed to draw on the ministry of reconciliation given to them by God (2 Cor. 5:18). And as a local church today, Creekside is not immune to this reality.

Creekside is beautifully made up of people with different ethnicities and cultures. And, just like the early church, we are and have been susceptible to divisions and disputes over ethnic differences. Today, as Creekside continues to grow in diversity we also continue to seek to be unified in Christ (Gal. 3:28). Therefore, the need for Christian unity amidst ethnic diversity is not unique to Creekside, but will unfold in ways specific to our own context and location.

Creekside’s long history of being a hospitable church is an asset in this work. Biblical hospitality is not simply being welcoming to the outsider, but allowing the outsider to become a member of our family (Heb. 13:1-2). Therefore, in order to assist us as a church family, the following is meant to serve as a theological foundation we can build upon and draw from.

Soli Deo Gloria.

¹ This is an excerpt from a [statement](#) made by the EFCA in 2017. For more information: [EFCA All People Initiative](#)

² There is only one human race, with many ethnicities (ethnos). The way the term “race” is used today is a false social construct. However, the impacts of this construct are very real and felt today by many ethnic minorities.



1. **God.** We believe the one God, Creator of all things, eternally exists in a loving unity of three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit. This is not uniformity: three equal but *same* divine persons. Though each has limitless knowledge and sovereign power, the three divine and distinct persons exist in unity. This unity does not exist through power struggles, or by destroying distinctions, but through selfless and other-focused love. As the Creator of all things, God's unity in distinction, is glorified and displayed throughout creation, especially the pinnacle of his creation, humanity.

1.1.1. **Response:** The Church therefore should be in awe of the triune God and seek to reflect his unity in diversity as a community

2. **The Bible.** We believe the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, are both the words of the divine God, without error in the original writings, *and* a multicultural source spoken through various human authors in various cultures, languages, places and times. To read the Bible is to then both read the complete revelation of God's will for salvation, while also engaging in cross-cultural reading (i.e. Hebraic and Greek texts). The Bible will always remain as the final and ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be *judged*³, but it is not the *only*⁴ God given source of truth.

2.1.1 **Response:** The Church therefore needs hermeneutical⁵ humility as it learns and does biblical theology across cultural and ethnic lines.⁶

3. **The Human Condition.** We believe the triune God created the human race in their image and likeness. Humans therefore share both individual and corporate distinctions, while also having been created for, and in need of, unity in community. The image of God is no less reflected in individuals, while at the same time reflecting God more fully in it's communal diversity. As sinners, both by nature and choice, every human is alienated from God and one another, while still deriving their value from Him alone. Only through God's saving work in Jesus Christ can we be rescued, reconciled and renewed both to God and one another.

3.1.1. **Response:** The Church therefore seeks to wisely and humbly reflect a community that displays Christian unity amidst ethnic diversity.

4. **Jesus Christ.** We believe that Jesus Christ is God incarnate, fully God and fully man, one Person in two natures. Only in the person of Christ, and in Christ alone, is there reconciliation to God and to one another. Christ is the great Reconciler and there is no heavenly or earthly divide that Christ cannot reconcile. As Israel's promised Messiah we believe that Jesus' own genealogy and life is an example and display of racial reconciliation. By living, dying, rising and ascending bodily, we believe that Christ did not live an ethereal life, nor forego cultural or ethnic markers.

4.1.1. **Response:** The Church therefore must keep Christ, and Christ alone, as the foundation and cornerstone for all and any reconciliation

³ *sola scriptura*

⁴ *nuda scriptura*

⁵ The principles by which one interprets and determines the meaning of Scripture (i.e. the principles by which one exegetes Scripture)

⁶ According to Vanhoozer, "There is a single meaning in the text, but it is too rich that we may need the insights of a variety of individual and cultural perspectives fully to do it justice.... The single correct meaning may only come to light through multicultural interpretation." (Vanhoozer, 1999; 27)



5. **The Work of Christ.** We believe that the work of Christ is the good news of the Gospel, the true and only hope for both vertical reconciliation with God and horizontal reconciliation with one another. The work of Christ applies to both the individual believer and to a people, reconciling us to God and to one another. Salvation in Christ does not do away with cultural or ethnic differences, but instead both redeems and judges them in light of Christ. The work of Christ is applied in whole, not in part, to the ruptures of the Fall and reconciles both a people and all things to himself.

5.1.1. **Response:** The Church therefore receives the work of Christ and become ambassadors in the ministry of vertical and horizontal reconciliation

6. **The Holy Spirit.** We believe that the Holy Spirit regenerates sinners, and in Him they are baptized, united both to Christ and to one another in Christ. The unity believers' have in the Spirit transcends any ethnicity, political identity, or social preference. The Spirit breaks down racial barriers within the Church, without erasing ethnic differences, allowing the Church to be an adopted and multi-ethnic family of God. The Spirit indwells, illuminates, guides, equips and empowers individual believers for Christlike living and service and is displayed not exclusively, but certainly in the work of racial reconciliation.

6.1.1. **Response:** The Church therefore works and lives out the Spirit's unity, across ethnic lines by the power of the Spirit.

7. **The Church.** We believe that the true Church comprises all who have been justified by God's grace through faith alone in Christ alone. The catholic⁷ Church is comprised of multi-ethnic and multicultural peoples, tribes, and tongues that span both time and space. Though diverse in tongue, custom and culture, the catholic Church is united by the Holy Spirit as the body of Christ, of which Christ is the Head. If Christ is the head, no one culture, ethnicity, nation or tribe has the final word or directs the Church's customs, views, or theology. The true multi-ethnic Church is then manifested in local churches which then reflect in their unique and regional ways this ethnic diversity.

7.1.1. **Response:** The Church therefore dialogues and humbly learns across ethnic lines with Christ alone as the head, seeking greater unity in diversity.

8. **Christian Living.** We believe that God's sanctifying power and purpose, which is not separated from his justifying grace, has both vertical and horizontal implications. God's command to love Him supremely and others sacrificially, and to live out our faith with care for one another, compassion toward the poor and justice for the oppressed is not indifferent to racial inequalities/injustices. Christian unity amidst ethnic diversity is also not void of evil spiritual forces and therefore must center God's Word, the Spirit's power, and fervent prayer as we make disciples among all people.

8.1.1. **Response:** The Church therefore in its discipleship and mission includes reconciliation and justice.

⁷ "... the whole church, the people of God spread out over space, across cultures and through time." (Vanhoozer, 2015; pg. 114)



9. Christ's Return. We believe in the personal, bodily and glorious return of our Lord Jesus Christ. At the return of Christ, and at his return alone, will the work and journey of Christian unity across ethnic lines come to completion. Since the coming of Christ is the believer's blessed hope and demands constant expectancy, the believer does not place their hope for unity and reconciliation anywhere outside of Christ. Instead, the believer is motivated to godly living, sacrificial service and energetic mission, that is both local and global, without excluding the work of reconciliation.

9.1.1. Response: The Church therefore does not despair, but hopes that the work of racial reconciliation will be finally completed at the return of Christ.

10. Eternal Destiny. We believe that God commands everyone everywhere, no matter their ethnic background, to believe the gospel by turning to Him in repentance and receiving the Lord Jesus Christ. God will raise the dead bodily and judge the world. Culture and ethnicity at judgment will however not be done away with but perfected and sanctified in Christ. The believer will be assigned to blessedness and joy with the Lord in the new heaven and new earth, living in perfect unity with both God and the multi-ethnic diverse family of God to the praise of His glorious grace. Amen.

10.1.1 Response: The Church therefore longs and looks forward to this gospel reality as it continues to seek Christian unity across ethnic lines.

