

June 4, 2020

A Recommitment to Recognize and Combat Racism, Discrimination, and Unearned Privilege:

A Statement from the President and General Secretary of
The Canadian Council of Churches

Finally, brothers and sisters, farewell. Put things in order, listen to my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.

2 Corinthians 13:11 (*The Revised Common Lectionary* reading for Trinity Sunday)

There can be no peace without justice. God's peace cannot be separated from God's righteousness, justice and steadfast love. Peacemaking and the establishment of conditions for just relationships are indispensable to our common faith. Working for peace is about establishing justice among persons and societies and in all areas of our public life... Creating a Just Peace involves freeing human beings from fear and want, overcoming enmity, discrimination and oppression. It requires establishing conditions for just relationships that respect the experience of the most vulnerable and value the integrity of creation.

Excerpts from *Principles of Peace*, The Canadian Council of Churches, May 2018.

The events of the past weeks reveal broken relationships. Join us in condemning racism in all its forms and expressions in our communities and in our churches. Join us in committing to name racism and to make personal, institutional, and societal change so that no one experiences fear, hatred, oppression, violence, or marginalization because of the colour of their skin.

The events of the past weeks also bring great hope as so many people mobilize to call for a better world. Let us add our voices and bodies to that cry for peace. Let us add our churches to that cry for peace.

May we embody Paul's call to the church in Corinth to "live in peace."

In Canadian society there is racism. Within our churches, Indigenous, Black, and other People of Colour experience racism. Join us in heeding and acting on their calls for personal and institutional change. Let us hear these voices:

In the church I feel rooted and connected. I do not feel my differentness as much as I feel my oneness with you all, my brothers and sisters in Christ. In Christ we are one. ... I can think I am not different all I want.

But the truth is, I am.

And the difference is not good.

The difference is articulated in un-deconstructed privilege, in privilege that is NOT being dismantled within our church ... privilege which the political world of our continent seeks to leverage for gain.

And, as part of this body of Christ, I no longer have the freedom to fake a blindness to this privilege, just because I, a brown ordained pastor, feel so at home in our [church]. You are my family. You are my friends. Friends tell each other their stories and trust in love to sustain us even when the things we share are hard to tell and hard to hear.

Because, in Christ, we all are one.

—**Rev. Janaki Bandara**, Pastor, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

Listen to our story until you are reduced to a puddle of tears. And stay there until God resurrects you. When you stand up you will find you are standing hand in hand with us.

—**Adrian Jacobs**, Keeper of the Circle, Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre

May we recommit “to recognize and combat racism, discrimination, and unearned privilege wherever they may be found in churches in Canada and the wider society” (*Expression of Reconciliation*, The Canadian Council of Churches, March 2014).

NOTE: The [Forum for Intercultural Leadership and Learning \(FILL\)](https://www.interculturalleadership.ca/wp-content/uploads/Resources-Anti-Black-Racism-Canada.pdf) has curated a list of resources for undoing anti-Black racism in Canada: <https://www.interculturalleadership.ca/wp-content/uploads/Resources-Anti-Black-Racism-Canada.pdf>

In Christ’s abundant love,



The Rev. Stephen Kendall,
President, The Canadian Council of Churches



Pastor Peter Noteboom,
General Secretary, The Canadian Council of Churches