Public Statement - The Sin of Racism

We confess before God and community that racism exists in our member churches and communities. On June 18, 2015, as the LWF Council was meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, a young White man walked into a church in Charleston, South Carolina in the United States and shot and killed nine African American people. This most recent incident is a stark, raw manifestation of the sin of racism, and that denial and avoidance of the persistence of racism are deadly.

As a communion of churches, whenever we are confronted by sin and destruction, we draw first on God, but also on the wisdom and experience of one another. At the 1984 LWF Assembly in Budapest, in response and condemnation to the sin of racism manifested in apartheid, the assembly said, “All people are created in God’s image.”

It is tempting to locate evil outside of the beloved community but in this case, this young man and alleged perpetrator is a member of one of our member churches. We know this is not the first time that the sins of racism and violence have been in our immediate community, particularly in the case of apartheid. Yet even so, no one is beyond the bounds of Christ’s reconciling and redeeming love.

As was proclaimed by the 1984 LWF Assembly:

“In Christ, the creation broken by sin is restored to fullness as people are reconciled to God and to one another. Through God’s gift of the Holy Spirit, the people of God’s church are empowered to live as one people celebrating the fullness of God’s creation. In Christ all divisions among people are broken down. The church is God’s instrument for reconciliation in the world also as it witnesses through its life to the new creation in Christ.”

In the mercy of Almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for the reconciliation of all creation and the entire human community, and for his sake, God forgives us all our sins. In the gift of baptism, we are claimed by Christ. There is nothing that can separate us from the love of Christ. “For [Christ] is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility,” Ephesians 2: 14.
We can and must confess that racism is a structural sin that exists in our churches and communities, and commit ourselves to difficult conversations about the sin of racism and advocacy to overcome it.

We can and must confess and address our individual actions that perpetuate racism, both things done and left undone, in church, society and relationships.

We pray for the intercession of the Holy Spirit to give us the courage and conviction to engage in difficult processes for public, communal acknowledgement, listening, witness, and forgiveness, reflective of the Truth and Reconciliation processes in South Africa and more recently, Canada. We abide in the promise of Christ’s death, resurrection and redemptive power— for this is the hope, the hope that does not disappoint.

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2 Ibid.