

On NHC Leadership and Racial Reconciliation

Over the last year or more, the elders of North Hills Church engaged in an honest conversation about the history of our leadership related to the issue of race. Individual elders reflected on their own heart and their leadership in guiding our church to a biblical culture of racial inclusiveness.

The following is a compilation of those reflections and confessions. Taken as a whole, we affirm that no elder ever intentionally excluded or mistreated any person attending our church. We have always believed and taught that without exception, every human being is made in the image of God and, therefore, is invested with honor and dignity. However, we are also aware we have not always consistently lived out this belief and modeled what it looks like to love our minority neighbor as we love ourselves (Matthew 7:12). We have not always listened, loved, and lamented with our minority brothers and sisters in a way that reflects the “truth, justice, and righteousness” of the Lord (Jeremiah 4:2).

We understand that this document doesn’t address all, or even most, of the issues that surround discussions of race in America. This is NOT an attempt to be comprehensive or to tackle every issue. This confession is a reflection of the ways we sense the Holy Spirit changing us to live and lead more like Jesus Christ. We want to share how God is working in our hearts so you can pray for us and follow us into a deeper experience of Christ-likeness.

Statement 1

We understand that the experience of our brothers and sisters of color both historically and present day is distinctly different from ours. Simply put, being black is a vastly different experience than being white. While the solutions to this issue are complex and vast, we believe this simple but profound admission is a needed starting point.

Statement 2

In the summer of 2018, the elders chose to address the topic of racism during our summer series. The elders stated that this series was only a beginning. Further, we committed that this discussion would continue and we would follow up with additional opportunities to learn and grow in this area. The elders concluded we did not keep our word (James 5:12). For a while, our follow up on this series was virtually non-existent. We confess and we ask your forgiveness. We want you to know that we have begun the change process. Change has included the creation of an elder sub-committee tasked with keeping this issue in the forefront both for the elders and the congregation as a whole.

Statement 3

While our theological position on race has been clear, the elders confess that our responses to cultural situations, primarily those concerning race, have often been marked by silence or delay. In this way, we haven’t excelled at loving our neighbors as ourselves (Luke 10:25-37). To that end, we have established an elder committee that will help us speak in timely, relevant and specific ways regarding issues pertaining to race in culture.

Statement 4

Over the years, we have intentionally connected to some area churches that are predominantly non-white, and we have seen some fruit from those relationships, however, we want to expand and maximize those relationships to bear more fruit. To do this we believe we must be friends

and students, not just teachers, and learn from our brothers and sisters of color in other churches so we can bear each other's burdens and the burdens in our city (Jeremiah 29:7). We confess that we don't always know how to do this; however, we believe that building and strengthening strategic relationships with leaders, and other churches, will put us in a position to listen compassionately and speak encouragingly when disaster strikes in our community.

Statement 5

Our desire is to have a more ethnically diverse body reflecting the great multitude found in Revelation 7. We confess we do not know how to overcome all the obstacles to make this happen. However, elders have engaged in prayer for this within NHC and with members of our community. Also, we have initiated a specific time of prayer in our elder meetings, asking God for wisdom and change.

Statement 6

We recognize and admit to the subtle and often overlooked desire to be with people that are like ourselves: politically, economically, racially, culturally and religiously. As we reflect on this reality, we understand that a driver of this particular like-mindedness is often not the gospel and can be our own comfort, and possibly partiality (James 2:8-9). While we are thankful for the diversity we have in many of these areas, we desire more. Our commitment is that we will seek to move ourselves, and North Hills Church, toward those who are unlike us.

In conclusion, as we move forward within these confessions, we recommit ourselves to the message of Jesus Christ. In all our efforts, we must focus on moving people toward the gospel. Our message of racial reconciliation must be married to the message of reconciliation of all people with God through the person and work of Jesus Christ.

As the elders of NHC, we share these with you for your consideration, prayer and accountability.

The Elders of North Hills Church