

An Introductory Statement from the Elders and Pastoral Staff

The Christian Scriptures tell us that Christ Jesus is our Great Shepherd who shed his blood for the Church, and that one of the critical tasks of his appointed shepherds in each local Church should stand ready to guard his flock from anyone who would come against it, especially from within. In Acts 20, we read:

17 Now from Miletus, he [Paul] sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the Church...(v 28) [He said to them] Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock that the Holy Spirit has appointed you to as overseers, to shepherd the Church of God, which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure, savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. And men will rise up from your own number with deviant doctrines to lure the disciples into following them. Therefore, be on the alert, remembering that night and day for three years I did not stop warning each one of you with tears. ~ Acts 20:17, 28-31

The Church must remember that the threat to God's people does not come from outside the universal Church, but from inside the universal Church. Faithful shepherds must diligently work to follow the Spirit's lead to guide God's local Church toward the unity of the Spirit by calling all of us to the ministry of reconciliation. As we read in Acts, this includes the charge to guard the flock from the influences from within that would cause the Church to stray or drift from faithfulness and the mission of God. This will include correcting unhealthy and harmful theology and teaching, and renewing the congregation's understanding of what it means to be the Church, even if it means speaking into incorrect generations of beliefs. This also includes calling out and warning the Church against destructive theology, false doctrine, heresy, or idolatry from the inside, and rebuking those seeking to cause division in the Church. They are to guide our fellowship—our common life together—by working hard to create within the Church a Christ-like disposition where mutual submission is our posture toward one another, of all genders, all races, all ethnicities, and all economic status, and extending God's inclusive hospitality in self-emptying love, which remains a priority.

It is why over the years we have seen God raise from within this congregation leaders and pastors among us who reflect God's creative purposes. As a Church founded in an era of civil rights, women's rights, and disability rights, our Church has pushed against the social grain of exclusion as a Church committed to the restoration of Christian unity. It is our heritage dating back to our founding in 1964. Over WCC's 61 years, we have seen this continue *and* grow. Today our leadership becomes more and more reflective of God's vision, where we continue to tear down the walls that divide and promote hostility between us, as Paul stated in Ephesians 2:11-22.

Yet, today we once again find ourselves in a moment of division. We live in a national moment where there are confessing Christians who, in the name of Jesus, are seeking to rebuild these walls of division and hostility between neighbors, attempting to separate us by hierarchies based upon native birth, gender, race, ethnicity, or economics.

Today, as your appointed Shepherds and elders, alongside your vocational pastors, we stand before you with a confession and declaration, not of demands, but of warnings and exhortations. It is a document that has been prayerfully and diligently measured and weighed by the Scriptures over the course of five months, with eleven different authors from our congregation. It was presented to members of our congregation during the Sunday night “Gospel and Society” bible study on Christian Nationalism for their reflection and consideration. Today we present it to you. It is, for us, as your appointed servants and Shepherds to serve as a theological *and* pastoral confession and declaration of warning and exhortation concerning the rise of the deviant doctrine and heresy of Christian nationalism.

Today we present to you what we have called, *A Confession and Declaration Concerning the Heresy of Christian Nationalism*. It consists of six theological commitments accompanied by six pastoral implications. It has been signed with unanimous agreement by all the Shepherds and staff.

Attached to the six theological commitments and pastoral implications are two appendices. Appendix One is entitled, On the United States as a Christian Nation. It offers historical evidence that demonstrates directly from the words of our nation’s founding leaders attesting to their commitment to religious freedom and concerns with establishing a so-called Christian nation. Additionally, we outline the origins of various national documents, declarations, and statements commonly used to associate the United States as an inherently Christian nation and justify what we believe is a gross misrepresentation.

Appendix Two is entitled, “On Race and Whiteness” It offers a very brief account about how we believe that “race” as a concept and ideology is a product of various social, political, theological, and historical forms of superiority based upon ethnic identity and racialized identities, and in our nation’s history, the belief that people of European origin are superior to all others.

Our hope is that every member of this Church will deal seriously with the claims of this document. We hope that it will help equip you to continue to stand firm in the faith and be on guard from false teaching and heretical expressions of our historical faith, and have a better understanding of how to address it.