

A Disputation for the Unity and Witness of the Church

A Call to Reformation

PREAMBLE

October 31, 1517, is traditionally considered the day that German priest and scholar, Martin Luther, posted his 95 Theses for consideration at All Saints' Church (more commonly, Castle Church), in Wittenberg, Germany. Legend suggests that he did so by nailing them to the church door, although this cannot be proven. In so doing, Luther aimed to bring about reformation in the church by addressing widespread abuses in his day. Furthermore, his emphasis on justification by faith was never intended to abandon consideration of faithful witness, but just the opposite.

As Luther writes in ***The Freedom of a Christian***, union with Christ by faith involves caring for our neighbor in love. Care for our neighbors, then, that is those very different than us as defined by Christ in Luke 10:25-37, and thus to fulfill the whole law beyond mere love for God (Matthew 22:40; Galatians 5:14) requires proximity (Ephesians 4:1-13f.).¹ For Christians, fundamentally, this means walking, working, and worshipping God together as one in and through local churches beyond the distinctions of this world that so often and otherwise divide: and in so doing, providing a credible witness of God's love for all people, on earth as it is in heaven.

This biblical expectation, this specific mystery of Christ (Ephesians 3:4), was first revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets (Ephesians 3:2-6ff.) with the intent that "...through the (local) church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms," (Ephesians 3:10). As the Apostle Paul challenges the collective church at Ephesus (Ephesians 4:1-6ff.) today, as well, believers are to walk worthy of this calling: namely, to be one in the church for the sake of the Gospel.

500 years later...

A CALL TO REFORMATION
Mosaix Global Network

Whereas Exists:

- Misunderstanding and misapplication of the homogeneous unit principle
- Self-centered human nature
- Personal preferences rooted in privilege
- The collective pain of marginalized people groups
- The enmeshment of politics, capitalism, and Christianity
- Stubborn pride, theological arrogance, and incomplete exegesis
- Spiritual forces of wickedness in heavenly places

The below statements are intended to challenge erroneous yet entrenched thinking, approach, and practices in the American Church, both past and present, that...

- have led to the systemic segregation of local congregations by race, class, and culture
- perpetuate injustice in the church and society at large
- validate the preferential treatment of some over others
- undermine collective witness
- call into question the sincerity of words in the absence of works
- cannot and should not any longer be perpetuated
- hinder otherwise sincere efforts to advance a credible message of God's love for all people, the very Gospel, itself, in an increasingly diverse, cynical, and painfully polarized local, national, and global community.

We, the undersigned, submit the following for consideration and discussion.²⁻³ In so doing we boldly call for reformation, challenging local congregations in the 21st century to embrace 1st century understanding and practices whereby men and women of diverse ethnic and economic backgrounds are now, as they were then, encouraged, equipped, and established to walk, work, and worship God together as one in healthy (systemically) multi-ethnic local churches...

- on earth as it is in heaven (Revelation 7:9)
- for the sake of the Gospel (Romans 1:16)
- as was envisioned by Jesus Christ on the night before He died (John 17:20-23)
- described by the New Testament writer, Luke, of the local church at Antioch (Acts 11:19-26; 13:1), and
- prescribed by the Apostle Paul throughout his life and writings, particularly in the books of Ephesians and Romans

It is our sincere hope that pastors, church planters, ministry leaders lay and vocational, alike, seminarians, together with entire church and denominational staff teams, seminarians and more, will take time to read, reflect, and respond in action to these statements, as the Holy Spirit leads, and join us in bringing modern reformation to the church wherever it is needed.

In the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Amen

95 THESES CONCERNING UNITY & DIVERSITY IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

1. God commands us to remain in His love. What, then, is the specific command? To love each other not as the world loves us: divided, segregated and fearful. Rather, as He has loved us by laying down our lives for one another. I'm not sure how anyone can possibly lay down their life for another when we can't even agree to come together for something as beautiful and natural as worship (let alone to pray and break bread). So-called love for one another that serves to reinforce an image of our preferences only becomes an idol of our own likeness.

Robyn Afrik • Afrik Advantage • Holland, MI

2. We are not people of scarcity but people of abundance, sent to give faithfully of ourselves to one another. In response to diversity may we extend the table, lean into intersectional leadership, and follow our biracial, border-crossing, marginalized savior, Jesus.

Jennifer Guerra Aldana • Coordinator of Multicultural Initiatives, Fuller Youth Institute; Pastora, La Fuente Ministries • Pasadena, CA

3. The grace of God demands that we embrace gracism and reject racism so that the glory of God and His love may be witnessed by a broken world.

David Anderson • Founding and Senior Pastor, Bridgeway Community Church • Columbia, MD

4. In the church, unity in diversity is the credible witness to the claim that God in heaven sent Jesus to reconcile and heal a broken world.

David M. Bailey • Executive Director of Arrabon • Richmond, VA

5. Jesus purchased with His blood a church of every tribe, tongue, nation and people. He is determined to have the bride for which He paid. That blood price includes both salvation and diverse unity realized in local assemblies.

Chris Beard • Lead Pastor, Peoples Church, Cincinnati, OH

6. We must be willing to be transformed by the experience of people of varying background and persuasion just as much as we might want them to be transformed by ours.

Santes Beatty • Director of Multi-ethnic Ministries, The Wesleyan Church • Greensboro, NC.

7. Empowered by, with, and through the Gospel, the identity of the 21st century church can no longer be narrated by an eighteenth century man-made lie that established us as distinct and divisible races of people unable to fully partake in the blessing of unity. Inherent in the good news that we profess is the power to overcome.

Lucretia Berry • Founder, Brownicity: The Art & Beauty of Living & Loving Beyond Race • Charlotte, NC

8. Racism is still the primary sin of the American church. Will our churches be the last institution in American to integrate? We have spent so much (necessary) time and energy on right doctrine, now we need to focus on our practice. The only way the American church can have true reformation and revival is by repentance in our hearts and reconciliation in our actions.

Page Brooks • Lead Pastor, Canal Street Church – a Mosaic Community • New Orleans, LA

9. As followers of Jesus, we are called to love, serve, and influence the people around us: even if they look differently, believe differently, vote differently, or make different moral choices. We cannot expect people without faith to live as if they share our values or beliefs. As believers, we have the Spirit of God; and we still struggle to live out what we say we believe. A loving community is both inclusive and willing to have the hard conversations. We should always offer the truth in the context of grace.

Eric Bryant • South Campus Pastor, Gateway Church • Austin, TX

10. The church's beauty is most visible when it functions like an artist's pallet, comprising a variety of hues that then allows the master painter, God, to create the most exquisite picture of the Gospel. The multi-ethnic church is the gallery where God places on full display the infinite value and dignity that his boundless artistic imagination has infused into each and every person.

Jimi Calhoun • Musician; Pastor, Bridging Austin • Austin Texas

11. If the local church is intended to provide an approximate picture of what a future together looks like in the kingdom of heaven, then our ethnic and economic divisions only, sadly, provide others – those outside the faith – with an inaccurate, incomplete, and unattractive picture of God and eternity. Unity without diversity is just uniformity.

Ray Chang • Pastor, Ambassadors Church • Brea, CA

12. Neighborhood schools are multi-ethnic because the government forced these changes. Apparently neither the government nor the Holy Spirit can convince the local church to transition from homogeneous to multi-ethnic. In a world filled with angst, fears and questions the voice of the multi-ethnic church is the Biblical expression of God's heart of compassion, understanding, and honor, that our polarized country so desperately needs.

Joshua and Noemi Chavez, Seventh Street Church • Long Beach, CA

13. In the last few decades, many of us have been reminded that the great challenge of "faith alone" in Paul's day was about the social-theological challenge of keeping the Gospel free of unnecessary ethnic and socio-cultural baggage. Two thousand years later, we continue to struggle to keep it free. God give us strength to continue to reform.

Yucan Chiu • Director, Pastor, Ethnos Church; Director, The Ethnos Network • New Brunswick, NJ

14. If the words of Jesus are true – that every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand – then it is unthinkable for the local church to gather according to their cultural idols and preferences, dividing ourselves by our ethnicities or spiritual gifts. With the power of the Holy Spirit and the Good News we can and must be better than our cultural distinctions. We must be united in the thoughts, words, and deeds of Christ throughout all tribes, tongues, and ethnicities.

Benjamin Cloud • Pastor of AMADEO Church • Queen Creek, AZ

15. The truest and most noble eradication of injustice can only come through a reconciliation of love. The truest and most noble love is the Gospel, expressed only through the human experience...fully human.

Rev. Dr. Lena Crouso • Dean, Office of Intercultural Learning and Engagement; Associate Professor of Intercultural Studies, Indiana Wesleyan University • Marion, IN

16. God is forming a family for Himself from all people. Since the Gospel is inherently transcultural, as is the kingdom of God, the church on earth must be unmistakably transcultural, as well.

Pastor Lèonce B. Crump Jr. • Founding and Senior Pastor. Renovation Church • Atlanta, GA

17. School systems, sports associations, and recreational parks, have found a way to gather children and families together regardless of race. Yet churches continue to find ways to keep children and families segregated based on the pigmentation of people's skin. It is a matter of integrity to the Gospel of Jesus Christ that churches across America reflect on Sunday mornings the diversity that exists within the school systems from Monday through Friday.

Rev. Dr. Rodrigo Cruz, founding and lead pastor, The Nett Church • Lilburn, GA

18. As part of our spiritual formation, we need relationships with our brethren from the racial and ethnic spectrum found in the Body of Christ. They give us perspectives and experiences of the love of God and life that we would otherwise miss because of homogeneity.

Derek Chinn • Dean, School of Biblical and Theological Studies & Multnomah Biblical Seminary, Multnomah University • Portland, OR

19. I heard a comedian say that he wanted to talk about a dark skinned, middle eastern man who was a refugee; namely, Jesus Christ. Pretty ironic when one thinks about the constituency of the church, who belongs to it, and in fact, to Whom it belongs.

Dr. Rodney L. Cooper • Kenneth and Jean Hansen Professor of Discipleship and Leadership Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary • Charlotte, NC

20. Racial diversity is not something to be tolerated in the church; it is something to be celebrated in the church. Why? Because the gospel of grace is a worldwide announcement celebrating 'no more separation!'

Ben Dailey • Lead Pastor, Calvary Church • Dallas/Ft. Worth, Texas

21. In 21st century America, the church continues to mock the gospel message of oneness in Christ by ignoring the absolute and unquestionable power of the cross that destroys the wall of hostility between those of various ethnicities, gender, social and political persuasions. This has always been wrong. Continued excusing, if not the outright ignoring of this behavior altogether continues at our great peril.

Robert M. Daniels • Executive Pastor, Westbrook Christian Church • Bolingbrook, IL

22. To truly see the hand of God at work, beyond what is otherwise humanly possible to accomplish, we must be willing to leave comfort zones behind and build bridges of faith, hope, and love to and with our biblical neighbors; that is, to and with those least like us as Jesus demonstrated in the story of the Good Samaritan. To the degree we are willing to walk worthy of the calling to which we've been called, we will see God transform lives at both ends of the bridges we build together with others so devoted to the cause.

Dale Dawson • Founder, Bridge2Rwanda • Little Rock, AR and Kigali, Rwanda

23. Without sacrifice, diversity remains a nice, romantic ideal. In the spirit of reformation, we must move from efforts and ideals to sacrifice and service for diversity to become reality in the church.

Wilfredo "Choco" De Jesús • Senior Pastor, New Life Covenant Church • Chicago, IL

24. Systemic inequities and racialization within the American church have unintentionally undermined the very Gospel we love and for which we live. An increasingly diverse and cynical society is no longer finding credible the message of God's love for all people as proclaimed from segregated pulpits and pews. Jesus both commands and expects believers – individually and collectively – to love God and our neighbors; biblically speaking, those very different than us. Indeed, the Apostle Paul's entire life and ministry was devoted to advancing a gospel of Gentile inclusion in opposition to an otherwise all Jewish understanding of the Gospel, local church, and coming kingdom of God. For nearly twenty years, then, I have been asking myself and seeking to address one simple question: If the kingdom of heaven is not segregated, why on earth is the local church?

Mark DeYmaz • Founding Pastor and Directional Leader, Mosaic Church; Co-founder and President, Mosaix Global Network • Little Rock, AR

25. The multi-ethnic church is not a problem to be solved but a tension to be embraced.

Ron Dotzler • Co-founder and CEO, ABIDE Omaha; Executive Pastor, Bridge Church • Omaha, NE

26. The God who sanctifies the church is far more freakishly "other" to us than are our neighbors. If we cannot abide in the discomfort of difference with them; if we cannot relinquish any measure of preference and control for the love of people that we can see, then how can we claim to desire an encounter with the Holy One whom we have not seen? The discomfort of diversity—the fear, selfishness, and pride we must surrender—is part of God's sanctification curriculum.

Rev. Dr. Elizabeth Childs Drury • Professor and Pastor • The Wesleyan Church

27. When I see my half-Hispanic and half-Korean children playing with their African, Asian, European, and other interracial friends, I see no walls between them. Instead, I see kids genuinely having fun without any pretense. Since when did grown-ups forget to have fun and share life with their neighbors of different nations, cultures, languages, and colors? As the people of God, we have a divine obligation and privilege to protect their innocence, preserve the unity in humanity as originally intended, provide healing and hope for our hurting world. If salvation is not an exclusive offer, then no man should divide what is divinely meant to be united.

Saehee Duran, Co-lead Pastor of Life360 Intercultural Campus • Springfield, MO

28. To help heal the wounds of persistent divisions in America, the church must reflect our multi-ethnic America by making room for multi-ethnic faces in its mirror; otherwise, the church will be sentenced to a daily reminder of its failure to embrace the whole of humanity.

Joyce Elliot (D) • Arkansas State Senator, District 31 • Little Rock, AR

29. The multi-ethnic church hears, feels, and experiences the lives of all its members; and the members together seek care and justice for all. Such pursuit, then, is good, right, biblical, and just, for all those seeking to pastor local churches in the 21st century.

Dr. Michael O. Emerson • Author, Provost, and Professor of Sociology & Urban Studies, North Park University, Chicago, IL

30. We have to move from the mind of Moses to the heart of Abraham: from creating churches to reach our own people to standing in the gap for all people.

Naeem Fazal • Founding and Lead Pastor, Mosaic • Charlotte NC

31. We will never become the church Jesus envisioned or for which He prayed on the night of the Last Supper, or for which He ultimately died the following day, unless our devotion and commitment to Christ supersedes our personal preferences or politics in whatever temporary earthly kingdom we find ourselves.

Chip Freed • Lead Pastor, Garfield Memorial Church • Cleveland, OH

32. As a sign, instrument, and foretaste of the age to come, the church should be the most integrated, diverse, just, and loving community on the face of the earth. Therefore, racial diversity isn't an optional extra, but a biblical expectation that should be at the heart of the mission of God's people.

Dr. Michael Frost • Vice Principal of Morling College, and founding Director of the Tinsley Institute • Sydney, Australia

33. Unity in the body of Christ—Jesus prayed for it and paid for it. We get to enjoy it!

Robert Gelinas • Lead Pastor, Colorado Community Church • Aurora, CO

34. Love God. Love the Different. The same.

Dave Gibbons, XEALOTS • Irvine, CA

35. Multi-ethnic reconciliation is the tool that Jesus is using to save His bride, the church, from the sin of pride, self-righteousness, and generations of self-serving power agendas. Through multi-ethnic ministries, Jesus forces us to wrestle with the legacies of systemic sin and the myriad ways it has impacted individuals, the church and the world. Today, Jesus is leading His church to new levels of mutual submission and service, and seeking to right the wrongs of history, through the deep and lasting fruit of the Gospel that comes empowerment by the Holy Spirit.

Rich and Dori Gorman • Founding and Co-lead Pastors, New Story Church • Chicago, IL

36. Intrinsic to the Gospel is the call of Christ for believers to go into all the world. This includes a going to our neighbors—those similar to us, and those different. Merely tolerating difference, however, falls short. We must celebrate our differences. How? By being with and gathering around; by joining together; by seeing each person's unique traits and gifts as evidence of a magnificent and glorious God.

Tricia Goyer • Author • Little Rock, AR

37. The Apostle Paul's vision of the local church violently clashes with America's homogeneous model of church planting, growth, and development. The idea of a homogeneous local church would be unthinkable to Paul. In the Old Testament, as well, God promised to Abraham a multi-ethnic family. Local and healthy multi-ethnic churches, then, are signs of God's fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant, made possible through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Derwin Gray • Founding and Lead Pastor, Transformation Church • Charlotte, NC

38. The Gospel Church is a church of all nations, tongues, tribes, peoples. Such a church is the light and hope of the world.

Rev. Stephanie Moore Hand • Pastor, Western North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church • Charlotte, NC

39. The best way to learn to love one another across racial lines is to do life together and get to know one another's back stories. This begins the process of identifying and eliminating our implicit biases. Multi-ethnic churches are a critical way to do racial reconciliation.

Kevin Haah • Founding Pastor, New City Church • Los Angeles, CA

40. Unity without God yields division (Babel). Diversity with God yields unity (Pentecost).

Elie Hasbani • Founding and Lead Pastor, Ethnos Church • Milwaukee, WI

41. When describing the true nature of evil Jesus described the devil as one who lies, is a liar, and is the father of lies. The social construct of race is built on a lie: namely, that the value of a human being can be derived from where they fall on the social hierarchy of race. As such, it must be wholeheartedly rejected, exposed, and confronted by every person who bears witness to Christ. The church today must awaken, call out these lies, and usher society into the light of God's truth and grace.

Rev. Dr. Daniel Hill • River City Community Church • Chicago, IL

42. Nationalism, partisan politics, racial injustices, gender politics, socio-political-economic status, tribal allegiances, and other such things, too often form Christian identity. We need a new Christian imagination. We need fresh Christian postures that help us truly be the people of God: one, united, diverse people. In an era where Christian identities seem so enmeshed with race, politics, nationalism, and material goods, we need to imagine and pursue a completely different reality, one that bears authentic witness to the love, equality, unity, and embrace of Jesus Christ.

Dr. Graham Hill • Provost, Morling College • Sydney, Australia

43. I long for the day when the church will fully embrace the reality that we are not known to God based on our ethnicity, but rather by name, just as He knows us by name. Because we are His sons and daughters, together in Him we have become brothers and sisters. It is only by embracing this relational unity that we will come to know peace with God and with each other.
Terry Hoggard • International Church Planter and Networker • Brussels, Belgium

44. Too often, throughout our history of traveling the Jericho Road, the American church has played the role of the priest and the Levite. Sadly, in some cases, we've even been a party to the thieves. We have spent too much time debating who is our neighbor rather than obeying Christ's probing call to love our neighbor, that is, all who bear His image. May the church soon love and be loved by all of its neighbors.

Jason Janz • Co-founder and Elder, Providence Bible Church • Denver, CO

45. Redeeming the soul of America from the sin of racism requires the church to face its own historic complicity in that sin. For the church, this is where change must begin.

Dr. John A. Kirk, Director of the Anderson Institute on Race and Ethnicity, University of Arkansas at Little Rock • Little Rock, AR

46. The culturally diverse church reflects God who created us all, whose colors portrays the perfect rainbow. Every shade, color, and tone, compliment the other and is only complete when we sit alongside each other, with one mind and purpose, in perfect harmony.

Captain Nesan Kistan • Orange County Coordinator; Corps Officer at Tustin Ranch • The Salvation Army

47. If we want to eradicate racism and segregation in the church, we need to see the face of Jesus Christ in the eyes of others who are not like us. When we reject others on the basis of their ethnicity, race, or color, we are not welcoming Jesus in our midst. In a multi-ethnic church, we have the opportunity to entertain 'strangers' every week knowing that they are sent by God to be loved and cared for by us. We are called to build bridges of reconciliation, integration, and inclusiveness, not walls of racism, segregation and hostility.

Mathew Kuruvila • Founding and Senior Pastor, Parkside Church • Sydney, Australia

48. To be made in the image of God does not lead to color blindness but color brightness; to see them all with renewed beauty and splendor.

Ryan Kwon • Founding and Lead Pastor, Resonate Church • Fremont, CA

49. Multi-ethnic, multi-class, and multi-generational, is the present-future reality of our cities and our world. The church will continue to decline and become irrelevant if it doesn't embrace and ultimately embody this present-future reality.

Tommy "Urban D." Kylonnen • Lead Pastor, Crossover Church • Tampa, FL

50. 500 years after Martin Luther shouted *sola scriptura* and *sola fide* to the church, where is the church standing? It is still busy justifying the maintenance of status quo and turning a blind eye to injustice affecting people of color right in front of it. The multi-ethnic church breaks the insulation that the homogeneous church inspired, by providing a welcoming space for diverse people to rub shoulders from day to day and to listen to one another's stories. Now, my Black brother's story has become my own, as has my Hispanic sister's story become my own, as well. Building healthy multi-ethnic churches provides us a way to take part in what God is doing today to renew His church.

Rev. Dr. In-Yong Lee • Pastor, Cokesbury United Methodist Church • Charlotte, NC

51. True and lasting reconciliation is conceived with the humble recognition and repentance of both personal and collective sin; is birthed with authentic surrender to Jesus; is sustained by the power of God's Spirit working through people who are now able to truly love God and love others.

Mike Leonzo • Founding and Lead Pastor, Living Water Community Church, Harrison, PA

52. Since Jesus prayed that we would be one so that the world will know His love and believe, creating a diverse community of faith is one thing we don't need to pray to God for, or to ask if such a vision is in line with His heart. The answer is always "Yes," and you will always be pleasing Him in such pursuits.

Nikki Lerner • Worship Pastor, Bridgeway Community Church; Multicultural Worship Leaders Network • Columbia, MD

53. No Christ follower would deny the end of the story, one in which every nation, tribe, people, and tongue, are gathered as one to worship the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. When we attempt to live this out on earth, it is the simplest, clearest, and loudest witness to the fact that Christ is, indeed, able to do exceedingly beyond what we might otherwise imagine in our own flesh or humanity.

Harry Li • Senior Pastor, Mosaic Church • Little Rock, AR

54. As children of God and followers of Jesus, we must discern between two types of Christianity: toxic Christianity and redeeming Christianity. Toxic Christianity enables the sinfulness of our human nature that lends itself to separation, isolation, and elitism. When Christianity is toxic, it undermines the very Christ we claim to know. Redeeming Christianity, however, exposes our sinful nature and replaces it with a godly one characterized by healing, freedom, and justice that help give birth to reconciliation. Therefore, our actions as a collective church should always be rooted in redemptive Christianity that flows from the reconciliatory heart of Christ.

Eric Lige • Ethnos Network Global Worship Director/Producer; Urbana18 Worship Director, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship USA • San Diego, California

55. Jesus Christ did not give His life to save and unite us as one in the eternal Church only for the local church to segregate and divide us into many based on the color of skin or cultural heritage. We can no longer justify or settle for anything less than unity and diversity in the local church.

Dr. Alejandro (Alex) Mandes • Executive Director, All People Ministry, Evangelical Free Church of America; Founder and Executive Director, Immigrant Hope • San Antonio, TX

56. The pursuit of racial unity and diversity in the multi-ethnic church is a blood issue. The blood of Christ purchased women and men from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation; our reconciliation with God and with one another. The slain Lamb thus deserves the reward of His suffering: the diverse familia of God sitting at God's table. And by the way, no one group owns the table as God built it with the wood from a blood-stained cross. His blood is powerful enough to heal and put to death for us historical hostilities. No follower of Jesus gets a pass on the work of reconciliation.

Inés Velásquez-McBryde • MDiv Candidate, Fuller Theological Seminary • Pasadena, CA

57. There is a danger that churches (misapplying) the HU (homogeneous unit principle) will become exclusive, arrogant, and racist. That danger must be resolutely combatted.

Donald McGavran (deceased) • Founding Dean and Professor of Mission, Church Growth, and South Asian Studies, School of World Mission at Fuller Theological Seminary • Pasadena, CA

58. We can't expect to diversify our churches if we don't first diversify our dinner tables. It's beyond time we follow Jesus and become extremely intentional in pursuit of houses of worship that represent the diversity of the schoolhouse.

Matt McGue • Founding and Lead Pastor, One Church • Jackson, MS

59. As Christians, our credibility to address the issue of reconciliation has been called into question; therefore, we must directly respond to our distinct relationship to injustice by repairing the structures that mediate our relationships and harm our racial lives to become racially transformed communities.

Rev. Dr. Brenda Salter McNeil • Teaching Pastor, Quest Church; Professor of Reconciliation Studies, Seattle Pacific University • Seattle, WA

60. The multi-ethnic church is God's most powerful and equipped tool to reach our multi-ethnic world. But as long as believers and ministry leaders remain more informed by fears and biases than by faith and beliefs, the local church will fail to reflect the wonderful diversity of the kingdom of God and thus be handicapped in its ability to live out the gospel of love, a gospel designed to make us one in Christ and in the church and, in so doing, erase the very fears and biases that once and to this day keep us apart.

Miles McPherson • Founding and Senior Pastor, The Rock Church • San Diego, CA

61. The first of Martin Luther's Ninety-Five Theses reads, "When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, 'Repent,' He willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance." Such repentance is needed now more than ever before if the American church is to move beyond its racialized past and present to embody here on earth the coming equitable kingdom of heaven.
Dr. Paul Louis Metzger • Professor of Theology and Theology of Culture, Director of The Institute for Cultural Engagement: New Wine, New Wineskins, Multnomah University and Seminary • Portland, OR

62. The multi-ethnic church is no mere fad or soon to pass "what's next." The why is this: it's a biblical mandate, a New Testament expectation. Since the Gospel is for everyone, the local church must be so, as well.

Mont Mitchell • Founding and Senior Pastor, Westbrook Christian Church • Bolingbrook, IL

63. The magnitude of Jesus's substitutionary sacrifice for all of humankind carries with it ramifications as significant today as they were at the time of His death. When Jesus died, His arms were outstretched and nailed to a cross. His arms remain outstretched for all of us, today. When He commanded us to reach the nations, the word Jesus used was "ethnos." When we seek to reach every ethnicity and people group in our world, and receive each one with outstretched arms, we live out the Gospel in a world that is crying out, and desperately in need of Him.

Shawn Mitchell • Founding and Senior Pastor, New Venture Christian Fellowship • Oceanside, CA

64. We are His creation. Each ethnicity reflects an aspect of God uniquely; so then, no one tribe of people can adequately know God or display His image in all its fullness. It takes every tongue and tribe to represent all of God.

Tasha Morrison • Founder and President, Be the Bridge • Atlanta, GA

65. My greatest concern for the American church is that we will be left behind if we don't learn to connect and confront racial and ethnic concerns. Doing this takes courage; but I believe we have it in us. Jesus lays out the perfect model in loving and stepping out in faith to embrace everyone. We can and should follow His lead.

Maina Mwara • Freelance Journalist and Minister • Kennesaw, GA

66. The strength of a multi-ethnic church is not found simply in people of different backgrounds gathered in the same room. It is found in the self-sacrificial love and unity that comes from equity across racial, gender, and national divisions.

Oneya Okuwobi • Sociologist, The Ohio State University • Little Rock, AR

67. Few things are more powerful in this world than visible, joyful, oneness within the church, whereby believers will themselves to cross ethnic, cultural, economic, and political divides for the sake of the Gospel. Jesus prayed that we would be one; to fulfil his vision, as an answer to His prayer, this must be our aim. Indeed, unity of the Body—eternal, universal, and local—is not a luxury; it's expected in Scripture and necessary, as well. The New Testament is clear on the value and priority of oneness within the church. Why aren't we?

Andrew and Kevin Palau • Luis Palau Association • Portland, OR

68. Culturally identified churches must be rerouted to become kingdom-identified churches where all nations are represented.

Rudy Paniagua • SoCal Network AG, Director Hispanic Life Ministries • Irvine, CA

69. Christianity is by far the most ethnically diverse religion in the world. Yet in America today, the local church remains rarely multi-ethnic. Segregation within the walls of the church will continue to divide, separate, and isolate us from both American culture and each other unless it is soon and once-for-all addressed.

Juan Peña • Co-founder and Elder, Providence Bible Church • Denver, CO.

70. Our gospel has holes in it. Our gospel accommodates bigotry. We do homogeneous church plants; we make sure that they're racially divided. Oh man, what are you talking about? Today, more than at any other time in my life, pastors and ministry leaders are recognizing the need to dismantle systemic segregation in the local church; leverage economic opportunities to advance the common good; help fund mission; and revitalize communities. And they've got it right: the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the pursuit of justice are not mutually exclusive but fundamentally interconnected.

Dr. John M. Perkins • Founder and President Emeritus, JMP Foundation • Jackson, MS

71. The church as a multi-cultural expression of the Gospel is not a new thing, it's a New Testament thing. We need the church today to repent and return to a New Testament expression in order to demonstrate the power of reconciliation.

Vance Pitman • Founding and Senior Pastor, Hope Church • Las Vegas, NV

72. Idolatry that stems from a wrongful prioritization of allegiance to country and flag, cultural heritage, political persuasion, party affiliation, earthly citizenship, or worldly identity, has sadly taken deep root in the American church. Multi-ethnic congregations of Christ-centered faith, however, provide the impetus and environment in which believers can repent of this idolatry, embrace kingdom citizenship, practice Christian virtue (such as hospitality to the stranger and love for the least), and model the very unity for which Jesus prayed and died—unity He expects us to pursue in the local church, and that fuels credible evangelistic witness.

Kyle Ray • Senior Pastor, Kentwood Community Church • Grand Rapids, MI

73. Failure to integrate the American church has left Jesus, once again, out in the cold. How can we authentically preach sermons on racial reconciliation from unapologetically segregated churches? Make no mistake: there can be no racial reconciliation without a diverse family of God living in unity, community, and genuine equality. Jesus, alone, and to the degree His Spirit is embodied and proclaimed through healthy multi-ethnic churches, provides the only hope and answer to the problem of race in America.

Bob Roberts • Founding and Senior Pastor, Northwood Church • Keller, Texas

74. We minister with the Gospel's hope of reconciliation of all ethnic peoples to God and to each other. This requires a robust commitment to being a united and universal church that advances God's kingdom through the discipleship and leadership of all his daughters and sons.

Natasha Sistrunk Robinson • Founder and President, Leadership LINKS, Inc. • High Point, NC

75. A missional and strategic commitment to inclusion and accommodation (rather than segregation and assimilation) is not only consistent with the movement of the Spirit of Christ in the early apostolic church, but also with the eschatological vision of the kingdom of God.

Daniel A. Rodriguez, Professor of Religion and Hispanic Studies, Pepperdine University • Malibu, CA

76. We are called to fulfill the Great Commission; and we cannot do so unless we follow the first and second greatest commandments. This requires that we break free from ethnocentrism, do justice, love mercy, walk humbly and faithfully with our God. Let us lead the way towards a reconciled world.

Dr. Alvin Sanders, Interim President/CEO, World Impact • Los Angeles, CA

77. Christianity without regard for the "other," or community with the "other," is simply not Christianity. Our savior, Jesus, Himself, a brown-skinned, Middle Eastern man, has created a beautiful mosaic of cultures and colors that, together, represent the fullness of the image of God. Collectively, we are the joy of His heart. Jesus thus intends to bring all these cultures and colors together as one—one Lord, one faith, one baptism—to bring credibility to our witness and wholeness to our lives. The time to move in this direction is not tomorrow; and just waiting until heaven is certainly not an option. The time to come together is now.

Scott Sauls • Senior Pastor, Christ Presbyterian Church • Nashville, TN

78. Paul suffered persecution not for the proclamation of the Gospel but for the proclamation of the mystery of the gospel: that in Christ Jesus, the dividing wall of racial hostility have been destroyed. Therefore, the church must declare the mystery of Paul's gospel and be willing to endure whatever opposition it encounters in seeking that this gospel mystery be lived out in the churches of our land.

Dr. Jonathan Seda • Senior Pastor, Grace Presbyterian Church • Dover, DE

79. In a multi-ethnic, multicultural, yet deeply divided mission field, the church ought to be a force of reconciliation, transformation, and justice serving as an outpost representing the kingdom of God. There is no racial, ethnic, or class segregation in the kingdom of God; therefore, it shouldn't exist in the church.

Efrem Smith • Co-lead Pastor, Bayside Church Midtown • Sacramento, CA

80. The two things Jesus did to establish His new covenant was to wash dirty feet and pray for unity. If the church's relational spaces are not overflowing with diversity and it isn't active in serving the disenfranchised of the community, then it's right to wonder if the church even understands what Jesus came to do in the first place.

Joel Solomon • Associate Pastor, New Life Church; Adjunct Professor, Regent University • Virginia Beach, VA

81. If you cannot imagine yourself in a multi-ethnic church, how in the world can you imagine yourself in the multi-ethnic kingdom of heaven? Pursuit of the vision is not easy, but it's a vision worth pursuing; and more than that, worth the preparation for heaven, now.

Ed Stetzer • Billy Graham Distinguished Chair, Wheaton College • Wheaton, IL

82. As followers of Jesus Christ, our gospel mandate is to prophetically oppose systems of oppression, not perpetuate them. This opposition begins with and looks like racial diversity, repentance, reconciliation, truth telling, and grace giving.

Albert Tate • Founding and Lead Pastor, Fellowship Monrovia • Monrovia, CA

83. In the book of Luke, the only Gentile-authored gospel, Jesus calls us to become incarnate with those that cannot pay us back. Therefore, we must choose the cross for ourselves and our families if we are to experience the power of a Spirit-filled multi-ethnic and multi-class church.

John Teter • Founding Pastor, Fountain of Life Covenant Church • Long Beach, CA

84. Racial and ethnic disunity in the church is not the result of a lack of knowledge but a lack of courage. The church must fear God, not people, and act boldly to practice the unity for which Christ prayed and has already achieved on the cross.

Jemar Tisby • President, Reformed African American Network • Helena, AR

85. Throughout Europe we see God's Spirit moving people to listen to His voice, and thus new intercultural churches coming into being. We see all multi-colored aspects of society fully functioning in these new church plants. This is drawing increasing interest in this subject. The multi-colored church is the church of the future.

Theo Visser • Founding Pastor of International Christian Fellowship Church; Director, Intercultural Church Planting • Rotterdam, Netherlands

86. True unity in the church is the most undeniable witness to the power of the Gospel. Consequently, we who lead the church must make it our supreme priority to repent, intercede, confront, serve, and befriend, until the ethnic oneness of Christ's church convincingly declares the radical salvation found only in Jesus.

Rev. Dr. Larry Walkemeyer • Pastor, Light & Life Church; Superintendent, Free Methodist Church Southern California • Long Beach, CA

87. We must not only recognize and lament the American church's racist legacy but work intentionally together to undo its harmful effects. No longer can we be a body divided by fear and complacency but instead we must be willing to lean into sacrificial love that builds bridges toward racial justice. It is not noble to stay on the sidelines; nor is it noble to remain silent.

Michelle Warren • Advocacy & Strategic Engagement Director, CCDA • Denver, CO

88. The multi-ethnic church revolution is at hand in the kingdom. It's the hope for the world.

Brian Warth • Founding Pastor, Chapel of Change Christian Fellowship • Long Beach, CA

89. The American church has for too long chosen color-blindness over color-boldness. A pluralistic society rejects our indifference, and rightly so. If we, as Christians, cannot embrace one another in peace, hope, and love, why should we expect anyone else to be moved by our message or, more importantly, to embrace our Savior?

Rich Wilkerson • Founder of Peacemakers; Senior Pastor, Trinity Church • Miami, FL

90. In the multi-ethnic church we are one but not the same; we are better together; we are capable of changing the world with the same Gospel that is changing us.

Chris Williamson • Founding Pastor, Strong Tower Bible Church • Nashville, TN

91. The sin of racism is not one exclusively targeting different races, but the very God who made all the races in His own image. Racism goes against His perfect plan for all the nations to gather at His throne and offer up praises simultaneously toward the Lamb, the One who provided the same salvation to all people groups.

Rodney Woo • Senior Pastor, International Baptist Church • Singapore

92. For far too long we've been captive to a gospel of judgment, which is no gospel at all. It is time for our story to be captivated once again by the love that is God's nature: the grace Jesus displayed in the face of a judgmental religious climate, and the personal guidance of an intimate Holy Spirit who seeks to bring all of us—regardless of ethnicity, color, or language—back into relationship with God and into unity with believers. This is God's news. It needs to be our reformation.

Ken Wytsma • Founding Pastor, Antioch Church; President, Kilns College • Bend, OR

93. Our faith operates in parallel Christian realities; and that prevents us from having the type of unified multiracial Christian community we will need in a new post-Christian society. Having these distinct race-based Christian subcultures has not and will not serve us well.

Dr. George Yancey • Professor of Sociology, University of North Texas • Denton, TX

94. Diversity and religious pluralism are aggravating an overstretched American ecclesiology and missiology. All groups feel the pain. Therefore, we must will ourselves to come together in the church today and do what is right. Only then can we lay a better foundation for tomorrow.

Daniel Yang • The Send Institute • Wheaton, IL

95. God is in the work of putting those on the margins into the center of His story. It is the job of the local church to join Him in this work.

Jenny Yang • Vice President of Advocacy and Policy, World Relief • Baltimore, MD

¹ For consistency, Bible passages and theology governing the whole of thought are generally cited as part of the Preamble and not otherwise cited in any of the specific statements.

² Beyond those listed above, an additional twenty other men and women were contacted to contribute. Most did not respond in time for publication; a few declined the invitation to do so.

³ Many signatories hold additional credentials including doctorate degrees, ordination papers, and positions of influence, that are otherwise not cited. Likewise, many signatories are published authors whose works are readily available via Amazon. Readers are encouraged to Google names for more specific reference and information related to signatories.