

A Resolution Acknowledging Methodism’s Racially Exclusionary Past and Committing to an Equitable and Inclusive Future

WHEREAS Methodism’s founder, John Wesley, was a vocal opponent of slavery and wanted Methodism to officially adopt that stance in its life and ministry;

WHEREAS at its founding Christmas Conference in 1784, The Methodist Society established the following rules regarding slavery for itself:

1. Every Society member holding slaves was required to set them free, according to a time schedule based on their ages.
2. Every assistant serving the Society was ordered to keep a journal recording names and ages of all slaves held within his circuit, and the date of every act of manumission and the official records of such actions.
3. Every person within the Society failing to comply with these requirements was to “have liberty to quietly withdraw” from the Society; and should he fail to do so, he was to be “excluded” from it.
4. No one either thus withdrawing or excluded was to be allowed to share with Methodists in the observance of the Lord’s Supper until he obeyed the manumission order.
5. No slave holder was to be allowed into the Society until he had complied with the rules concerning slavery;

WHEREAS these rules were suspended by Bishop Thomas Coke under pressure from Southern, slaveholding Methodist pastors a few short months later, eventually in favor of Methodist pastors abiding by the policies of the states where they served;

WHEREAS early Methodist leaders compromised from the beginning of its history the Church’s moral authority under economic and political pressure from its slave-holding members;

WHEREAS the community of Emory Grove was established in 1864 as former slaves began purchasing 123 acres where the least usable land of 4 local farmers converged;

WHEREAS the town that emerged was named Emory Grove, after Bishop John Emory, a famous, Maryland-born Methodist Bishop who, while he was especially concerned about Christian education, was himself a slaveholder and an anti-abolitionist;

WHEREAS, a Mission was started at Emory Grove with Camp Meetings in what is now Johnson Park by the Methodist Episcopal Church (North), leading to the founding of the congregation and construction of the original Emory Grove MEC in 1874;

WHEREAS the people of Emory Grove MEC endured the various effects of racism, segregation and racial bias within the Methodist Episcopal Church and in its relationship with the Town of Washington Grove for nearly a century, growing in spite of it by clinging to the power of the God of liberation and deliverance in the midst of its community and church;

WHEREAS the first Camp Meeting was held in Washington Grove in 1873 by wealthy, White Methodist congregations in Washington, DC (e.g., Foundry MES), leading to the founding of the Washington Grove Camp Meeting Association in 1874 which lasted, essentially in a segregated state, for more than 50 years;

WHEREAS out of the Camp Meeting experience the Washington Grove Methodist Episcopal Church (South) was established in 1910, and continues to serve the town, the region and the world in Christian mission and ministry;

WHEREAS, the people of both the Town of Washington Grove and the Washington Grove UMC have also suffered greatly and to varying extents from the racism they inherited from the Methodist Church in at least the following ways:

1. Their toxic experience of racist socialization, primarily including their sense of the normality of racialized Whiteness
2. The negative impact of racism on white values
3. False sense of superiority towards others
4. A defensive and skewed sense of isolation
5. The development of a defensive inability or unwillingness to discuss racism and how to grow from it
6. Fear that has developed from guilt that has not been attended to for generations;

WHEREAS because of Methodism's morally reprehensible compromise over slavery, the segregation that has historically characterized its ministry in both Washington Grove and Emory Grove, and the systemic racism that has been an integral part of its existence has set the churches and communities that formed in Washington Grove and Emory Grove on a racist, segregated and racially-biased course in their shared history for more than 150 years;

WHEREAS the Revised Social Principles of the United Methodist Church state the following about racism, ethnocentrism and tribalism:

“We condemn racism, ethnocentrism, tribalism, and any ideology or social practice based on false and misleading beliefs or ideologies that one group of human beings is superior to all other groups of human beings. Additionally, we utterly reject laws, policies and social practices that marginalize, discriminate and/or encourage the use of violence against individuals, communities or other social groups based on perceived racial, ethnic or tribal differences.

We call on congregations and on pastors, bishops, and other church authorities to educate themselves about the root causes and manifestations of racism, ethnocentrism, and tribalism within communities of faith and to develop strategies for overcoming these kinds of social divisions. We likewise urge governments, businesses, and civil society organizations to renounce statements, policies, and actions aimed at promoting exclusion, discrimination and violence.”;

WHEREAS, while in the process of “moving on to perfection” its members continue to have varying degrees of success upholding its covenants, The Baptismal Covenant of the United Methodist Church commits its members to:

1. Renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness;
2. Reject the evil powers of this world;
3. Repent of personal sin;
4. Accept the freedom and power God gives to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves;
5. Confess Jesus Christ as Savior, putting entire trust in his grace;
6. Promise to serve Jesus as Lord, **in union with the Church which Christ has opened to people of all ages, nations, and races;**

WHEREAS, in the Spring of 2023 The Town of Washington Grove, led by the work of its Racial And Social Equity Committee (RASEC), ratified and published “A Resolution Acknowledging Washington Grove's Racially Exclusionary Past and Committing to an Equitable and Inclusive Future”;

WHEREAS, in an effort to repair the wrongs of the past, particularly those experienced during the failed Urban Renewal efforts of the 1970s, Emory Grove UMC is leading in the rebuilding of its community, welcoming all its residents to a place built on anti-racism and authentic community, rather than racism based on the perceived power of some;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE MEMBERS AND LEADERS OF EMORY GROVE AND WASHINGTON GROVE UNITED METHODIST CHURCHES DO JOINTLY AND WITH ONE VOICE:

- Acknowledge, apologize for, repudiate, and reject Methodism’s morally reprehensible compromise over slavery, the segregation that has historically characterized its ministry in both Washington Grove and Emory Grove;
- Acknowledge, apologize for, and repudiate the systemic racism that has been an integral part of the church’s existence, recognizing that it has set them and the communities that formed in Washington Grove and Emory Grove on a racist and segregated course in their shared history for more than 150 years;
- Deeply regret the pain, hurt, and suffering that this unChrist-like behavior has caused;
- Commit to lead the people in the towns where God has planted us into a future that welcomes and affirms people of all ages, nations, and races, recognizing the rights of all individuals to live with dignity, free from discrimination of all kinds;
- With the spiritual authority we claim as Christ’s body, lead in the deconstruction of systemic racism, bias, discrimination, and inequities, which have impacted the quality of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for those who have, do and will reside as neighbors in our respective communities together.

To these ends, be it resolved that we will:

1. Commit to further engage in individual and collective work leading our towns into a future of anti-racist living in every aspect of communal life;
2. As God’s church, act as a role model, taking action whenever appropriate to address our own and others’ racist behaviors, always being vigilant for manifestations of White supremacy among us, in church or community, whenever we see them;
3. Work together towards the re-establishment of authentic relationships with our neighbors from other communities, and prayerfully consider how our ministries will impact them; and
4. Seek to jointly work towards the revitalization of both the Emory Grove community, and the connection of that community to surrounding communities, including Washington Grove.

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