

# Westminster Presbyterian Church

Facing Racism Study 2020

The Confession of 1967 Notes



## Reconciliation Defined *(from Christianity.com)*

“Generally, at least in the Scripture, it deals with the relationship between God and humanity. Reconciliation is the Greek word *katallagē*, meaning ‘an exchange; reconciliation, restoration to favor.’

Reconciliation assumes a broken relationship. Something has happened that has caused two parties to become estranged. ... Forgiveness may be one-sided. But reconciliation requires **both** parties to be willing to participate in restoring the relationship.”

## The Confession of 1967 *(excerpts—emphasis added)*

**Introduction** “Modestly titled, the Confession of 1967 is built around a single passage of Scripture: ‘In Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself...’ (2 Cor. 5:19, NRSV). The first section, ‘God’s Work of Reconciliation,’ is divided into three parts: the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit. The second section, ‘The Ministry of Reconciliation,’ has two parts: the mission and the equipment of the church. The last section, ‘The Fulfilment of Reconciliation,’ affirms the church’s hope in God’s ultimate triumph.”

**9.13** “Wise and virtuous [people] throughout the ages have sought the highest good in devotion to freedom, justice, peace, truth, and beauty. Yet all human virtue, when seen in the light of God’s love in Jesus Christ, is found to be infested by self-interest and hostility. All [people], good and bad alike, are in the wrong before God and helpless without his forgiveness. Thus all [people] fall under God’s judgment. **No one is more subject to that judgment than the [people] who assume [they] are guiltless before God or morally superior to others.**”

**9.22** “The new life [in Christ] takes shape in a community in which [people] know that God loves and accepts them in spite of what they are. They therefore accept themselves and **love others**, knowing that no [person] has any ground on which to stand, except in God’s grace.”

**9.36** “The church gathers to praise God, to hear his word for mankind, to baptize and to join in the Lord’s Supper, to pray for and present the world to him in worship, to enjoy fellowship, to receive instruction, strength, and comfort, to order and organize its own corporate life, **to be tested**, renewed, and reformed, and **to speak and act in the world’s affairs as may be appropriate to the needs of the time.**”

**9.43** “In each time and place, there are particular problems and crises through which God calls the church to act. The church, guided by the Spirit, **humbled by its own complicity** and instructed by all attainable knowledge, seeks to discern the will of God and learn how to obey in these concrete situations. The following are particularly urgent at the present time.

**9.44** a. God has created the peoples of the earth to be one universal family. In his reconciling love, he overcomes the barrier between brothers and **breaks down every form of discrimination based on racial or ethnic difference, real or imaginary**. The church is called to bring all [people] to receive and uphold one another as persons **in all relationships of life**: in employment, housing, education, leisure, marriage, family, church, and the exercise of political rights. Therefore, the **church labors for the abolition of all racial discrimination and ministers to those injured by it**. Congregations, individuals, or groups of Christians who exclude, dominate, or patronize their fellowmen, however subtly, resist the Spirit of God and bring contempt on the faith which they profess.

**9.45-47**

- b. ...peace, justice, and freedom among nations...
- c. ...poverty...
- d. ...sexual relationships...”

**9.53** “God’s redeeming work in Jesus Christ embraces **the whole of [human] life**: social and cultural, economic and political, scientific and technological, individual and corporate. It includes [humankind’s] natural environment as exploited and despoiled by sin. It is the will of God that his purpose for human life shall be fulfilled under the rule of Christ and all evil be banished from his creation.”

9.54 [Note: Beloved Community/New Creation] “Biblical **visions** and images of the rule of Christ, such as a heavenly city, a father’s house, **a new heaven and earth**, a marriage feast, and an unending day culminate in the image of the kingdom. The kingdom represents the triumph of God over all that resists his will and disrupts his creation. **Already God’s reign is present** as a ferment in the world, stirring hope in [humankind] and preparing the world to receive its ultimate judgement and redemption.”

**Discussion Questions**

1. What part(s) of this confession surprise you?
2. What part(s) resonate with you? make you uncomfortable?
3. What part(s) feel like a personal call to action for you? for our churches?
4. Where were you around the time which this confession was drafted and ratified? Share briefly your life experience in encountering racism during those days of unrest and progress in civil rights for people of all races?