



## **Bent Tree's Statement on Racial Equality**

Bent Tree affirms racial equality and justice for all people in all areas of our society. This conviction is foundational to Scripture and to the character of God. The Bible begins with the proclamation that all humanity —men and women— are created uniquely in God's image (Genesis 1:27). This image we all possess is a testament to mankind's intrinsic equality and worth. Sadly, humanity's rejection of God and choice to follow our own ways created division and death in our relationship with God and one another (Romans 3:9-12). As a result, the Bible is the story of a Father restoring his children of all ethnicities back to himself and each another (Isaiah 49:6). The pinnacle of God's story of restoration is found in God's Son, Jesus, who through the cross, tore down the barriers of hostility, prejudice, and sin to create unity in the midst of our beautiful diversity (Ephesians 2:14-18). Christ has already given believers oneness through his life, death, and resurrection (Galatians 3:26-28). God's story of redemption reaches its culmination in a vision of a great multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language surrounding God's throne; fully unified and diverse as priests and rulers worshipping their Creator and Savior together (Revelation 5:9-10; 7:9-10).

While this is the reality and hope to which we are called as believers, we grieve that it has not been fully realized in our culture, society, and, in many cases, the Church. This has been especially true of the history of black people in America. In fact, we recognize from history that the Church has participated in this division or remained indifferent to it. On behalf of the Church, we repent of the sin of racism (2 Kings 22:8-20).

Bent Tree is committed to valuing people above politics, love above division, and God's truth above our opinions. That commitment requires us to "carry each other's burdens" and "fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2) as the Holy Spirit guides us into the truth (John 16:13). A disciple of Jesus indwelt by the Holy Spirit takes on a humble posture (Philippians 2:1-4), listening closely to brothers and sisters of color (James 1:19, 20), learning from their experiences of racial injustice, and mourning with them in their grief (Romans 12:15). A disciple of Jesus indwelt by the Holy Spirit loves not only in words, but in truth and action (1 John 3:18), working for justice and equality and maintaining unity in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3). To this end, the teaching and ministry of Bent Tree continues to dedicate itself as a witness to the gospel, reconciliation, and forgiveness in Jesus that is the ultimate answer to this problem and is, in part, where the gospel should take us in our practice.