

CCO Statement on Racial & Ethnic Diversity

Introduction

From its inception in 1971, the CCO has sought to join Jesus in his Jubilee vision for the renewal of all creation, starting with the college campus and the local church. As our 4th Core Value states faithfulness to this mission necessarily includes “embracing God’s multiethnic kingdom.” However, even as we recently celebrated 50 years of God’s faithfulness to the CCO and the transformation of the lives of countless college students, we confess that we have not always lived into the fullness of this vision.

Our organization was founded within a White American church context influenced by its cultural surroundings. Our mission of transforming college students to transform the world flowed from a biblical and godly desire. Yet it was established within systems and structures built according to wider, often unbiblical, societal norms. We were—and are—not immune to the cultural idols of power, race, and hierarchy.

As we look forward to the next 50 years of CCO ministry, Jesus is calling us to a new season of obedience to His Word. He is calling us to ongoing, communal repentance. He is calling us to renovate systems and structures that prevent us from fully embracing His multiethnic kingdom. He is calling us to pursue His Jubilee vision. To these ends, we take this moment to clarify what we believe God’s good Word declares about the power of Christ to create a people who exemplify diversity, equity, and belonging.

Creation

In the beginning, the Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, existing in diverse unity—created the world and declared it good. God spoke the world into existence, each word bringing greater complexity and diversity to the created order. This creative work reached its crescendo in the creation of human beings, who bear God’s image in their diverse unity as male and female, and who reflect God’s heart in their relationship of intimate mutuality. God shared His dignity and power with his image-bearers, empowering them to join him in his creative work in the world. He commanded them to be “fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (Gen 1:28) and gave them “skilled mastery” over the rest of creation to unfold its goodness and

potential. They were to inhabit new places, develop new cultures and languages, and in so doing, bear witness to the kaleidoscopic glory of their Creator.

However, this power and authority given to humanity was not to be wielded for selfish gain. It was given to reflect the nature of God's own creative lordship—a shared exercise of loving power that creates abundance and diversity, order and flourishing. We are invited to participate with God, in obedience to His designs and desires, so that the community of shalom that began with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit might fill all the earth.

Fall

But for all the goodness and potential written into the story of Creation, both the Bible and our experience tell us something has gone horribly wrong. Deceived by Satan and blinded to the glory they had been given, Adam and Eve rejected their place as creatures and sought to take God's place, building and creating according to their own designs instead of their loving Creator's. The results—for them, for us, and for all creation—have been catastrophic.

Instead of the loving, diverse unity for which humanity was made, we experience division, blame, hatred, and violence. Sin does not erase the goodness of God's creation, but twists it. So as the Bible's story moves forward, humans are fruitful and multiplying—but we see them fail to “fill the earth,” seeking power in uniformity by building the Tower of Babel (until God takes matters into his own hands to achieve the diversity he intended; cf. Gen 11). Humanity still rules over the earth—but in selfish ways that consume and destroy instead of cultivate and nurture. We are still culture-makers—but because we have rejected the good design of our Creator, our blueprints are skewed.

As a result, Sin not only turns our hearts away from love of God and neighbor, it distorts the architecture of the world we build. Every culture and community built to support our common life simultaneously reflects the glory of God and bears witness to the idolatry of humankind. Seeking to “play God,” we treat fellow image-bearers as objects to be mastered instead of co-rulers in Christ. We have misdirected the skilled mastery we were meant to exercise and have followed the blueprint from Babel. By Idolizing one culture or ethnicity over others, we create broken structures and ideologies - these hurt and dehumanize all peoples. We must examine the architecture and current state of the house where we reside - we need not be afraid of what broken things we may discover.

While the goodness of our Creator remains stamped over every square inch of our world, cultures, and organizations, so also is every square inch vandalized by racism, partiality, violence, and pride. The groans of pain from our brothers and sisters—from the earth itself (cf. Rom 8)—attest to the sad truth of our fall from glory and cry out, “O God, make speed to save us! O Lord, make haste to help us!” We need a Redeemer who can both forgive the guilt and break the power that Sin has over us—who can give us new hearts and empower us to renovate the broken cultural house we inhabit.

Redemption

Thanks be to God for bringing us exactly this kind of redemption in the person and work of Jesus the Messiah, who triumphed over sin, death, and the devil through his life, death, and resurrection and “created in himself one new humanity” (Eph 2:15). Jesus lived the life we were meant to live: bringing good news to the poor, freedom to prisoners of sin and injustice, sight to the blind, setting the oppressed free, and proclaiming anew the year of Jubilee (cf. Luke 4:18-19). He died in our place, becoming our sin and bearing our judgment. He rose again through the power of the Holy Spirit, trampling over sin and death, that we might become his righteousness and live new lives as citizens of his kingdom (2 Cor 5:21; Col 1:13-14).

Our Maker Incarnate brought us forgiveness and liberation from Sin, setting our hearts right that our hands might be set once again to the work of bringing shalom. Thus, in Christ, our calling to be culture-makers is renewed as our hearts are turned back toward God and neighbor. Instead of agents of destruction, we can become agents of renovation and repair.

This salvation is deeply personal, but it is also corporate and communal, as we are united with Christ’s multiethnic Body across time and space by his Holy Spirit. At Pentecost, the church was birthed through the undoing of Babel, giving the world a new blueprint by which to live. By God’s Spirit, the Gospel is to be proclaimed in every language and to every culture. This is why every college student (and every Christian) needs the church, not simply because it is an effective context for discipleship, but because Christ died and rose again to create a new family here on earth.

Our churches and ministries on campus are called to embody the diverse unity for which humanity was created. This is a living testament that God’s power is stronger than human racism, hatred, injustice, and pride—and to settle for anything less is to fall short of the glory of God and tell our world a lie about who our Creator is.

Our longing for cultural and ethnic differences within our organizational and ecclesial bodies is not a fad; it is a missional and doxological necessity.

When we fall short of this redemptive calling—and until Christ returns, we often will—we neither despair nor deny. Rather, we tell the truth by confessing our sins against God and our neighbors, both individually and corporately. We do this in the confident hope that even the worst things we have done can be forgiven and redeemed. In response, we will listen to and forgive one another with cruciform humility as Christ has forgiven us. This is both necessary and expected not only for our personal pilgrimages of faith, but also in the life of our organization and our churches. We need to be renewed day by day so that we might follow Jesus our Redeemer faithfully together, proclaiming and embodying the good news of redemption to every student on every campus.

Restoration

Now, we only catch glimpses of the fullness of God's salvation in our midst. The journey of reconciliation and repair is challenging, costly, and painful. But thankfully, we know how the story God is writing will end.

In Revelation 7:9-10, we catch a glimpse of where we are headed—a redeemed community of image-bearers of every tribe, nation, and tongue brought together not by cultural and ethnic homogeneity, but by the one God to whom they bring their manifold praise. Later, in Revelation 21, we learn that the unique splendor of all the nations will be welcomed into the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:24). Scripture is clear that God's ultimate plan is not to remove ethnic and cultural differences, but rather to remove sinful attitudes and hierarchies that divide us (Gal. 3:28).

In the end, which is also a new beginning, God will fully and finally heal our injustice and wipe away every tear from our eyes (Rev 21:4). God will finally have the diverse community of shalom that he always intended. Our holy God will forever dwell with His holy people in the new heavens and the new earth (Rev 21).

This amazing vision is not only our future hope, but also our present calling. It is the blueprint we are to live by, both individually and as an organization, working to bring God's kingdom into our particular places of influence as it is in heaven (Matt 6:10). We seek to obey the Triune God in worshiping as a diverse community and seeking the flourishing of all God's creation. To follow Jesus means working towards the vision of a diverse, reconciled humanity that we see in Revelation 7.

As we live in the tension of the now and the not-yet, we lament and we groan with the rest of creation, because all is not yet as it should be—internally and externally, individually and socially, privately and cosmically. But we do not grieve as those without hope (1 Thess 4:13), for we know how the story ends. We keep moving forward, knowing that in the Lord our labor is not in vain (1 Cor 15:58). Come quickly, Lord Jesus!

Conclusion

As the CCO continues to mature in Christ, we commit to building and rebuilding the organization according to the biblical vision of God's multiethnic kingdom. Faithfulness to our mission depends on it. We confess and repent for the ways we have been unfaithful to this vision in the past, resulting in inequity and harm to brothers and sisters of color.

Together we press on in pursuit of diversity, equity, and belonging, knowing that a response to this sacred call is neither easy nor comfortable. Our idols do not topple readily, yet we serve a crucified Savior who invites us to take up our cross daily and follow him (Luke 9:23). This work requires vulnerability and sacrifice, so we go forth in the power of the Holy Spirit, who guides us into truth (John 16:13) and equips us with everything good for doing his will (Hebrews 13:21).

Therefore, in pursuit of faithful ministry to students, we resolve to enter the diverse and complex contexts of higher education and the local church. We will proceed with attentiveness to where God is already at work and partner with the Spirit's movement in each person and place. We will foster a culture of curiosity and humility, seeking to listen well to one another and create environments where people can freely bring the fullness and particularity of who God has created them to be.

Knowing we are called to a continual process of sanctification, we will also willingly examine and refine our organizational systems and processes—repenting where necessary—so they more fully reflect God's kingdom. We will remember our shared theological values and honor the dignity of the people God has entrusted to our care. Recognizing that people and relationships are at the heart of CCO ministry, we will recruit and train staff and partners who eagerly embrace our understanding of the reality of God's multiethnic kingdom.

We will work as, together, we pray—Lord, have mercy on us and help us as we follow you in our mission of transforming college students to transform the world.