

ANCHOR STATEMENT

The CCO (Coalition for Christian Outreach) is a campus ministry. We love college students and want them to experience the transformation that comes from knowing Jesus and the vision that the Lordship of Jesus offers to all the things we encounter in the world. We know that in order to do this work of transforming college students to transform the world, we need to offer hospitable spaces where all kinds of students can encounter God and God's vision for all of life.

This document is the first of many that define the CCO's commitment to diversity, equity, and belonging for all staff, students on our campuses, partnership churches, and affiliate partners. This Anchor Statement presents an overview of the biblical worldview that roots and establishes the CCO's understanding and lived commitments to diversity, equity, and belonging. Additional documents explore specific topics pertaining to diversity, equity, and belonging in more detail.

Creation

In Genesis 1, there is nothing but God—the Father speaks, the Holy Spirit hovers, and the Son crafts (Colossians 1:16). The three persons of the triune God exist together in diverse unity and equal power (Genesis 1; John 1) and speak every kind of tree and animal into being, ranging from aquatic animals equipped to live in water to plants that convert sunlight to energy via photosynthesis. God made this diversity of things and called each one good. In the biblical creation account, diversity and interdependence are built into the fabric of the world, giving us a vision of and for a diverse world that displays wholeness, peace, and flourishing—what the Bible calls *shalom*.

God's making and filling the creation takes a surprising turn when God speaks a diverse humanity into being that reflects God's image by being both male and female (Genesis 1:27). Humans are not spoken into being as an instant swarm or herd, but rather as two humans who have been given the royal authority to reign together over creation to continue to open and unfold what God had started.

Being made in God's image means that we are created "to cultivate, expand, and fill the earth" (Genesis 1:28; 2:5-7). Filling the earth means not only making more humans, but using our capacities as humans to open up all of the good things of creation so that the earth is filled with more languages, more cultures, more ethnicities, more tools, more art, more stories, more food, and more neighborhoods. From the beginning, this work is collaborative between male and

female, which is what makes it possible to open up the various ways humans think, perceive, and respond to the rich potential built into God's world.¹ This is an invitation from God to expand the diverse creation so that the world will know and glorify God.

Fall

Genesis 3 introduces sin and disruption to the picture of a flourishing creation described in Genesis 1 and 2. Sin has infiltrated all of God's creation, including humanity. It takes all that was created good, designed to be good, and designed with purpose and makes it less than it was meant to be.

Where there was once *shalom*, there is now shame and guilt. Humanity's disobedience brought not just personal repercussions, but the whole of creation felt—and continues to feel—the consequences of their disobedience. The potential of creation to develop and be filled with all manner of things in Genesis 1 and 2 gives way to suffering and pain throughout the entire cosmos, touching everything from the environment and culture to human relations and structures.

The creation story highlights the intent of God and God's plan. Sin mars the beauty of God's plan for all of creation. Sin breaks the peace, the wholeness, the *shalom* that God created. As a result, we live in a reality where the beauty of diversity and difference has been distorted, perverted, and broken.

Fallen humanity has created systems and structures of power, injustice, and dehumanization that distort the *imago Dei* and all of creation. As a result of the fall, humans seek to have control over one another and have created systems and power structures that work to dominate one another rather than uphold, affirm, and open up the beauty of difference.²

¹ The cultural mandate is revealed through humans choosing to discover new languages and cultures or the inventions of objects and tools. Humans cultivated the earth by creating a canoe to traverse on water and a car to drive on land. God's creational intent includes humans having higher levels of melanin to be protected from the sun or larger lungs to live in high altitude climates.

² The manifestation of these sinful systems and power structures can be seen in the "isms" of life: racism, classism, sexism, etc. These distortions of social systems and power structures emerge when we surrender our capacity to serve God within these systems and structures and choose to serve the idols of our day. These idols and ideologies arise when we exchange the call to love God and love neighbor for serving an idol which manifests injustice, inequity, and suffering rather than wholeness and flourishing. Sin prompts humans to distort social systems and power structures, which often affects those with the least capacity to change things.

The fall reminds us that humanity, this world, and the structures and systems of this world are in need of restoration and redemption.

Redemption

In the biblical narrative, God's movement of redemption begins the moment Adam and Eve are exiled from the garden and God promises to make things right through their descendants. This demonstrates that God will not let sin and evil destroy what God has made and called good.

God does not abandon the creatures made in God's image even after sin enters the story. God reframes their task of filling, multiplying, and ruling by offering instructions for how God's people should live. God instructs people to care for the land and the foreigner, to foster an intimate relationship with God, and to pursue peacemaking and ethnic diversity.³ Even as the people of God fumble and fail to keep God's commands over and over, God is faithful to them and calls them to be who they were created to be—creatures meant to rule, fill, and multiply all of the diverse potential built into creation.

Ultimately, this story of God redeeming the world (John 3:16) comes to a crescendo in the person and work of Jesus. Jesus comes as God made flesh, putting on full display the life that God intended all humans to live.

In the person of Christ, outsiders are welcomed into the fold. Jesus offers radical inclusion of Gentile believers (Mark 5), women (Luke 10), children (Luke 18), people who are disabled (John 9), and those who are social pariahs (Matthew 9). Jesus continues God's redemptive arc by declaring the Year of the Lord's Favor, the Year of Jubilee (Luke 4). Jesus displays radical hospitality and inclusion into the kingdom.

³ God dwells with God's people in the temple and institutes a mediatory sacrificial system for them to be made holy and pure (Exodus 29). God's love for the poor and marginalized is displayed through gleaning laws (Leviticus 23:22.) God's affirmation of women as full image bearers and leaders is revealed through Deborah (Judges 4) and the confirmation of Zelophehad's daughter's inheritance (Numbers 27,36.) God's love for the outsider is revealed in the instructions to be a place of refuge for the foreigner and sojourner (Exodus 22-23.) God's multiethnic kingdom is foreshadowed through God's affirmation of Moses' choice of a non-ethnically Jewish Cushite wife (Numbers 12). God institutes true economic flourishing and rest for the land in Leviticus 25. God's heart for true justice is shown by reorienting Israel's heart to true fasting that propels them to seek justice and wholeness for those who are suffering under oppressive systems (Isaiah 58). God intended the Israelites to be people shaped after God's own heart, good stewards of the land, and good neighbors. God is faithful to them when they stray from or fail to follow the law.

Jesus models intimacy with God that sustains God's work in the world (Mark 1, Luke 4). The fullness of God is revealed in Christ, through Jesus' words and deeds. The redemptive love of God in Christ impacts individual people's lives and disrupts the oppressive religious and governmental systems of the time.

God's redemptive love is on full display at the crucifixion, when Jesus willingly sacrifices his life for the sake of the world and then rises from the dead, defeating sin on an individual and cosmic scale. The redemption that Jesus initiates with his death, resurrection, and ascension is continued by the work of the Holy Spirit who demonstrates the power of redemption at Pentecost by allowing people to hear and to be heard in their "mother tongues."

The power of God given to God's people after the ascension of Jesus is a power of connection and belonging that weaves all manner of peoples—with their cultures, ethnicities, languages, and abilities—into the story of God making all things new. This gives us a glimpse of the potential for diverse creation that we first see in Genesis 1.

Restoration

This vision at the end of the biblical story revisits and completes the picture we see of creation at the beginning in Genesis 1. The Bible promises that God will restore God's people, but that God will also restore creation by "making all things new" (Revelation 22:5). In the beginning, creation was full of diversity and potential waiting to be opened up. In Revelation, we see a picture of all of creation's diverse potential now being fulfilled by the work of Jesus Christ (Colossians 1). This picture of restoration includes people of every tribe, tongue, and nation, as well as gifts from all of the nations, as part of this glimpse of cosmic *shalom*.

This vision of restoration that is still to come is evidenced even today when a broken human relationship is mended in a family, school, or business. It happens as we choose to repent, reconcile, and work together towards a place of unity with all things.⁴

This restoration touches every piece of God's world, including our hearts. Restoration can and will touch every part of life and culture—including all of our

⁴ It's between a parent and child. It's the construction company working responsibly with local communities to plant new trees after deforestation to reforest the area. It's the work of zoologists who care for endangered animals to ensure they don't become extinct and see their population restored to their natural habitat.

human relationships, languages, governments and societal systems. We can join in this work because in Jesus Christ, we are a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17)—the old is gone, the new has come.

Restoration in our lives is progressive—we are becoming more like Jesus every day. The full capacity of God's perfect complete restoration is, and will be, before us. In the fullness of Christ, this restoration will touch every piece of God's world, including every piece of us—our physical, mental, emotional and spiritual lives. The promised restoration gives us a vision for what is yet to come and what we're working towards: ushering in God's kingdom here on earth.

The restoration described in Revelation will correct broken societal systems and power structures, and it will heal the distorted *imago Dei*. There will be justice for all who were wronged and for all that was broken (Revelation 20-21).

Therefore, followers of Jesus hope and strive, empowered by a prophetic imagination. Our pursuit is one to advance restoration in our relationships with humans, systems, work, and with the creation, until the day of Christ Jesus. It is this restoration that we long to see lived out by people from every tribe, language, gender, ability, and ethnicity, so that they can take their rightful place as people created to rule, fill, and multiply, reflecting back fully the glory of the Creator God, who has not left that creation to sin, but who keeps their promises to us and to all of creation.