



BE *the* BRIDGE

CRITICAL
RACE
THEORY

Full Statement

Be the Bridge and Critical Race Theory

Our vision at Be the Bridge (BTB) is that people and organizations are aware and responding to the racial brokenness and systemic injustice in our world.

Our vision is that people are no longer conditioned and disciplined by a racialized society, but grounded in truth. All are equipped to flourish. Our mission is to **inspire** people to have a distinctive and transformative response to racial division and be present and intentional toward racial reconciliation. We **equip** bridge-builders towards fostering and developing vision, skills, and heart for racial healing.

As we discuss the utilization of various theories to make sense of our current racial reality, it is helpful to remember the core values that Be the Bridge holds. We are a Christ-centered organization, but we respect people from all faith backgrounds and walks of life and believe each person has a role to play in racial reconciliation.

WE BELIEVE

At Be the Bridge, we believe that we are called to be ambassadors for Christ and for reconciliation. We acknowledge our interconnectedness as the body of Christ and desire to repair bonds that have been broken. We strive to make right the injustice and brokenness in ourselves, communities, and society.

We will actively give and receive grace. Our desire is to build a community of people who want to have a healthy dialogue about race. We ask for God's grace to experience transformation and life change and to learn and grow around issues of race.

We believe that sugar coating truth is harmful to the process of reconciliation, and that the truth will set us free. We believe all human beings are image-bearers of God and will conduct our conversations with respect. We focus on being active listeners and learners. We believe it is necessary and healthy to confess and repent from our brokenness and mistakes, including the brokenness around the ideas and history of race. This is important communally and individually. We believe it is important to move forward toward healing. We believe in the value of independent and communal learning. Engaging with others who are committed to learning about racial issues through a Biblical lens is edifying and healthy.

Because race is a social and political construct, we believe standing for justice begins with uplifting the voice of the marginalized. We urge advocacy for racial justice across the legal, economic, political and social dimensions. We believe that the fight for racial justice is not a movement but a clarion call for all who profess Christ. Our vision and guiding principles are founded on Scripture. We empower

people and culture toward racial healing, equity, and reconciliation. We exist to help build up the church and help the church become a leading and healing voice in racial reconciliation.

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We believe that bias must be acknowledged and this must include looking within ourselves and our organization. We teach that the examination of bias starts inwardly and works outwardly so that we can productively challenge and deconstruct it. This active and ongoing self-examination allows us to constantly recalibrate and make sure we are staying true to who we are in working towards our organizational goals built around seeking racial justice reflective of God’s Kingdom where all are seen and all are valued equally in His presence.

CRITICISM SURROUNDING CRITICAL RACE THEORY

Recently, Critical Race Theory (CRT) has emerged as a new criticism against the work of Be the Bridge and racial equity and is being used in an attempt to put a stumbling block in the organization’s work toward racial justice and healing. We reject that CRT is our guiding **framework**. Instead, Be the Bridge was built around a Biblical worldview as is clear in our mission, vision, and values. We regret that some people are using a critique of CRT to discredit our Biblical and gospel-oriented fight against the system of white supremacy. This is an unfortunately common practice. It is a dangerous way for people to create a red herring and distance themselves from doing the hard work of understanding how

racism is operating within social systems and their role in maintaining or dismantling the status quo.

The goal of this document is to both outline Be the Bridge’s Biblical framework as well as explain Critical Race Theory for those who are unfamiliar with its origins and tenets. We hope you leave with an understanding of where we see critical theories overlapping with Biblical truths, ways we can utilize the thinking behind various theories, and our overall hope for moving forward and returning our focus to the work at hand.

WHAT IS CRITICAL RACE THEORY AND HOW DID IT COME ABOUT?

Long before the existence of critical race theory, there was critical theory. In this instance, the word “critical” refers to the crucial importance of understanding the underlying context within society for any concept. Critical theory is a scholarly approach that analyzes social conditions within their historical, cultural, and ideological contexts. It emerged in the early part of the 20th century from what is now referred to as the Frankfurt School. Scholars of the Frankfurt School offered an examination and critique of society guided by the belief that society should work toward the ideals of equality and social betterment. Because one of the thinkers critical theory arose from was Karl Marx, it is often rejected outright by those in Christian circles as Marxist and therefore incompatible with a Biblical worldview.

At the same time in history, the church could have been leading the way toward Biblical concepts Jesus himself prayed for, “your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” Rather, we saw majority culture churches in America either complicit with or actively engaging in racial terror and anti-Blackness through the era of lynching. Rather than disciple their people away from racial

¹ Sensoy, Ozlem and Robin DiAngelo, *Is Everyone Really Equal*, Second Edition, 2017. Pg. 25

² Ibid.

hatred, their silence led to a deeper entrenchment of racism into our society and history." Truth, liberation, and the full humanity of Black image-bearers could have been proclaimed from the church, but it was not. And as Jesus said, when his disciples are silent, we should not be surprised when "the very stones cry out."

From critical theory, critical legal theory branched off as a way to analyze the law in a similar fashion. At the heart of critical legal theory (CLT) is the concept of the law being so intertwined with social issues that the two cannot be viewed separately. CLT sees the law and the way the legal system functions as a means of upholding power for some and subjugation for others.

We can see this in the American legal system where the law was written explicitly and implicitly to maintain white racial power. Who was allowed to vote, immigrate and become a citizen, own land, carry a weapon, marry, or attend school were codified into law under explicitly racial terms that then normalized a racial power hierarchy in the everyday lives of Americans. Segregation could not be solely discussed as a social issue as though people were simply choosing to live separately, but also a legal issue as that segregation was legally mandated. Wealth building could not be discussed as having only social causes as it also had deep-rooted legal ramifications as well. The examples are nearly endless in the US as both the written law and the judicial interpretation of those laws created or justified the racialized social climate. In this way, the question of should Christians accept critical legal theory is less about the specific beliefs of those theorists, but rather do we also see the truth of our country's history and are we then able to talk fruitfully about what it means to live in a country where race was not just a social structure, but a legislative phenomenon.

CLT scholars do not just seek to explain this relationship, but rather to show how the law can be an instrument of oppression or liberation, and how liberation is harder to achieve because those with wealth and power have historically used

the law to codify their power and maintain it. Seeing who has had power is easy when looking historically at who was allowed to write laws, benefit from legislation, enforce the rules, and utilize the law to stay in those positions of power. Through the lens of who has power and who can utilize the law for their own benefit and the detriment of others, CLT scholars seek to reimagine what it would take to achieve progress through altering laws in a way that then alters society.

Pushback to this thought process in Christian circles often comes from the response that it is only Jesus who can change hearts, and it is only through changed hearts that we see changed societies. While this is true, we can simultaneously see that laws can and do hurt people around us and as

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Christians living in a democratic republic, we have not just the ability, but the God-given mandate to pursue justice for those being hurt. We don't have to agree that the law is what will change the hearts of society to say we will not stand by silently while it hurts others, breaking from the tradition of the majority culture church in America. As Martin Luther King Jr. said, "It may be true that the law cannot make a man love me, but it can keep him from lynching me, and I think that's pretty important."

Critical race theory was born out of critical legal theory. The original scholars of critical race theory were nearly all people of color working in predominantly white law schools who saw neither the conservative nor liberal positions offered there as sufficient. They were dissatisfied with what they saw being taught, particularly that the exertion of racial power via the law was rare. This was the post-Civil Rights era and white America had decided to cling to what they viewed as MLK's vision for America - a colorblind America. While this idea is

clearly not in line with what King taught (see his Letter from Birmingham Jail for further explanation), it was utilized as a defense to say unless the law was specifically and intentionally racist, we had to be blind not just to people's race, but to the disproportionate racial impact of many laws and practices.

This boundary drawn by those in power around how they could talk about race and the law were far too narrow for their liking and didn't adequately address the lived reality of Americans of color. They were aware that what they experienced in law school mirrored larger concepts in society of what was deemed acceptable at the time - primarily the supposed colorblind vision of MLK as the way forward for ending racism. With this societal acceptance of colorblindness being the opposite of racism, legal battles for civil rights of the late 70's-80's were becoming nearly impossible to win. The legal definitions of discrimination were constantly changing and moving toward requiring clear and undeniable racist intent, which is nearly impossible to prove and isn't necessarily important if the impact is disproportionate harm to people of color.

With that backdrop, theorists sought to help make sense of what they saw was really happening: the persistence of racial inequality. They focused on showing how historically the law was central to and complicit in the upholding of white supremacy. While they had a variety of ways to do this, there emerged two common beliefs linking all critical race theorists: 1) White supremacy has subordinated people of color, and 2) The need to not only understand that history and modern reality, but work to change it.

They also had a shared understanding that whatever strategies and discourse happened surrounding race, they must take honest account of current racial realities and how they fit in the narrative arc of race in America. Solutions must be contextual to where people have influence and ability to make change. Also, for segregation and racist outcomes to prevail, there did not need to be specific, proven intent. Instead, the trajectory of white supremacy in society would prevail without intentional work to dismantle it.

WHY UTILIZE CONCEPTS FROM CRITICAL RACE THEORY (CRT)?

CRT is a large and complex field of study spanning several disciplines from law to social sciences with an overarching theme of collective liberation, not just for those oppressed, but freedom from participating in oppression as well. With this in mind, identifying some of the components of the work from academic CRT scholars can be helpful in understanding the critical nature of how and why racism is duplicated through generations and why white supremacy persists.

Some concepts (such as structural racism) have been known and discussed in the Black church for over a century, even if the language differed some from the ways modern CRT theorists talk about the same phenomena. While enslaved Black Americans may not have had a law school background with which to speak of social phenomena, they did speak boldly about the racism baked into the church in America and how it wasn't dependent upon each individual parishioner harboring racist intent for them to remain enslaved.

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Frederick Douglass often spoke in ways that would be considered in line with modern CRT theorists, calling America not to say the words “all” when talking about rights and privileges while using the law to hinder access to those rights and privileges for specific groups. In an 1890 address referred to as “The Race Problem,” he states, “The United States Government made the negro a citizen, will it protect him as a citizen? This is the problem. It made him a soldier, will it honor him as a patriot?”

This is the problem. It made him a voter, will it defend his right to vote? This is the problem. This, I say, is more a problem for the nation than for the negro, and this is the side of the question far more than the other which should be kept in view by the American people.”

Christian scholars involved in the fight against racism have found some of the terms emerging from CRT most helpful when seeking to understand broader societal realities. Those terms include “white privilege,” “white fragility,” and “colorblind racism,” to name a few. We accept that these terms and conceptualizations are useful where they come alongside the mission, vision, and values of BTB and are helpful in understanding and addressing issues in our institutions, communities, and nations in the 21st Century.

IS CRT COMPATIBLE WITH CHRISTIANITY?

We do not intend to argue for or against the processes and goals of CRT. Instead, we find the concepts and tools of CRT useful in working towards our Biblical process of racial justice as reflective of the Kingdom. This process includes Biblical concepts such as self-awareness, confession, lament, repentance, forgiveness, reconciliation, and healing for individuals and systems. This goal is inclusive of all racial and ethnic groups centered under the authority of Christ rather than centered under any one particular group identity. We are open to a critical examination of our values, but we also reject the weaponizing of a theory in order to rationalize oppression or give others an excuse from doing the hard work to dismantle racism, both within themselves and within the systems of our society, especially the Church. We believe that we do not have to embrace the whole of CRT to find usefulness in components of its tenets.

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Another reality to consider is the white church throughout American history, could have developed robust concepts and ways to think about race and racism. Instead, the white church overwhelmingly chose to go along with the thinking of the world around it and be disciplined by white supremacy rather than scripture. They chose to justify their way of thinking and uphold the oppression of others rather than reimagine a future where the church led the way in affirming the full humanity and dignity of all. Because of this, scholarship from outside the white church has been helpful to utilize, as it was in some of those places of scholarship where we see a universal, Biblical truth: the condemnation of racial hierarchy in humanity. Therefore, it is helpful to take this robust scholarship and hold it up to a Biblical lens allowing us to see what principles can be utilized to help the church restore its credible witness to a watching world. It is important to remember that these academic scholars are not inventing behaviors, but giving name to behaviors that are already in existence.

IS THE CRT FRAMEWORK OF OPPRESSOR AND OPPRESSED GROUPS FOUND IN SCRIPTURE?

It should be clear that group dynamics such as oppressed and oppressor and the importance of power are Biblical concepts and not just pieces of CRT. Hear the words of the Lord when the Bible says, “May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the children of the

³ The phrase “white church” is utilized to highlight the fact that historically white-led churches in America have intentionally pursued racial segregation by not allowing full membership and participation from those deemed not white.

⁴ Psalm 72:4 ESV

⁵ Luke 4:18-19 ESV

needy, and crush the oppressor! ” and “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

Be the Bridge is built on a Biblical framework that all people are valued by God. He sees and cares about the people on the margins and so should His Church. There are accusations against the use of CRT in that it does not provide a productive process for healing divisions; however, the solution offered by some CRT scholars is a liberation that isn’t based in the overthrow of one group by another, but liberation from the oppressor/oppressed dynamic entirely. While we sometimes find it helpful to utilize similar language as CRT, we see Jesus’s work on the cross as the driving force and way forward toward that liberation from man-made hierarchies created to oppress fellow image-bearers. We know that to be a Christian and in the position of either the oppressed or the oppressor is to be outside God’s intended design for humanity.

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The best version of that is the Gospel narrative reflective of the Kingdom of God where oppression does not exist. It is the example of living and loving

like Christ that drives us in Be the Bridge to racial unity. Following His example does not allow us to ignore oppression of groups within society or His Body, but calls for a breaking of the chains of oppression as we struggle together to better reflect the Kingdom vision of Revelation 7:9.

As we honestly examine our history in the United States from the Colonial Era to today, there is a clear failure to uphold a Kingdom value that all are created in the image of God. We recognize that a primary avenue in which people have been devalued is by categorizing humans based on the false construct of “race” and group racial identity. That racial groups were created in order to exploit and oppress is inarguable and that “white” was created as the group in which power was consolidated is also undeniable. This racial categorization has been central to the narrative of the United States and sadly, has also infected and been upheld by the church. Most importantly, the devaluing of people by group identity is a clear violation of the call to love our neighbor sacrificially through both our words and actions.

It is helpful to understand the power and importance of individual and collective identity. Just as Paul wrote, “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” Paul wrote this precisely because he understood that those sociological identifiers had a significant impact on the lives of those who occupied those positions in society. He was calling us beyond that, not to shed those lived realities by pretending they don’t exist, but to be “one in Christ Jesus” so the church would be a place of radical reorientation where the hierarchies of this world are broken down and not experienced within the body of Christ.

⁶ Philippians 2:3-5, ESV

WHAT IS STANDPOINT THEORY?

A common critique of critical race theory concerns what some CRT theorists refer to as standpoint theory. This is often falsely assumed to mean there are things you can only know if you belong to a specific racial group, and if you are not of that racial group you cannot speak of them. Rather a proper understanding is that none of us are working from an objective lens. We all have a subjective viewpoint through which we make sense of what we experience and witness. But, those who are looking at issues from an oppressed position have to see and understand not only their own viewpoint, but also the viewpoint of those in power in order to successfully navigate the world around them. Therefore, Standpoint Theory is a way of thinking that says those who are in minoritized (not to be confused with minority, minoritized means to not be in the dominant and normalized social group) social positions have a social location that gives them a fuller understanding of social phenomena. This isn't to say truth is subjective, but rather the way I understand that truth will be limited by my human capacity, and my understanding of it will be shaped by my social location.

Take dandelions as an example. The truth is that dandelions are a plant; that's an objective truth about them. The way someone experiences dandelions is shaped by many factors. The suburban homeowner trying to keep their lawn lush and green has a much different viewpoint of dandelions than a young child seeing their white puffs ready to be spread to the wind or encircled into a crown. But neither sees them through the same lens as the herbalist who makes dandelion tea for medicinal purposes, even while understanding most of the country views them as a nuisance, not a helper. No one is arguing about the reality of dandelions as plants, but rather, the lens through which you view them will change the way you talk about them and how you treat them.

To take our analogy into the realm of Critical Theory, we would then evaluate the definition given to "dandelion" through the lens of who has

the power to determine what is considered the normative definition of "dandelion." We could see that while each individual above saw the dandelion through a significantly different lens, the one given priority and seen as normative is that of the person with the most societal power - the suburban homeowner. The child's definition is written off as merely childish and the herbalist is viewed as an outsider and therefore not deemed worthy of equal participation in deciding the value and purpose of the dandelion. Also, the herbalist must understand the views of those in power in order to work with and around them; understanding why most people prefer to kill them off rather than harvest them and what that means for her livelihood. Meanwhile, the homeowner has value wrapped up in their definition being primary as it allows them to not know of or care for the herbalist's viewpoint while freely purchasing weed killer and applying it without consequence. Note, this is not about whose subjective understanding of dandelions is right or wrong, but rather whose perspective gets to be seen as normative and whose position allows them to understand a broader variety of viewpoints.

"Therefore, listening to people of color tell their story is an act of love modeled by Jesus and expected from his followers."

A common aspect of CRT theorists is an emphasis on storytelling to understand truth. Back to our analogy, we listen to these varying viewpoints not to challenge the truth that the dandelion is a plant, but because we understand its fullness in a greater way when we are able to see it through a wide variety of viewpoints. This is often criticized assuming it means that within CRT truth is subjective and open to the viewer's interpretation. Rather, the hope is truth is more fully understood when we accept that everyone comes to make sense of truth through their own subjective experience, and we can better understand the objective truth when we take those interpretations into account. It's also important to acknowledge that the non-dominant perspective

should be given heavier consideration due to the nature of understanding necessary and provided by minoritized status.

IS STANDPOINT THEORY ANTITHETICAL TO THE GOSPEL?

If we stop to consider how Jesus interacted with people, he often asked them questions. Remember, Jesus knew what was in the hearts and minds of people as God revealed it, but he still took the time to hear from the people. Likewise, Paul uses Jesus as the example of how the Church should move toward Biblical unity by seeking to understand others rather than dismiss or suppress them, "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others as more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to your own interests, but also the interests of others.

"Dismantling racism in our world includes dealing with not just personal racial animus, but also broader systems of racism built into our society."

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus." Therefore, listening to people of color tell their story is an act of love modeled by Jesus and expected from his followers. The value of individualism in white culture often causes the emerging viewpoints to be presented as objective, which often leads to a white viewpoint as being the default truth. By listening to people of color, we gain a more complete view of society. The Church can also gain a more perfect understanding of Scripture through a diverse body of believers. It takes no further looking than the opening lines of the Sermon on the Mount to see Jesus affirm those who have specific vantage points on earth. We see him say that those who are poor in spirit, meek, merciful, pure in heart, and persecuted are blessed. This is not to say we accept the conclusions of marginalized people no matter what they say or teach, but rather that we can value their perspective

because we understand the unique view of the world they have based on their social position.

We can also take a historical lens on this matter, as looking to the outcomes of whose voice is valued historically could have saved immense heartache, pain, and death. During antebellum American church history, white churches were proclaiming slavery as Biblical while using various passages to uphold racial hierarchy. While we can now look back at that and say, "Of course that's evil and wrong!", we also know that even in that era, those on the margins were saying that exact same thing. However, they were not heeded. The theology being presented by majority culture was seen as "just the gospel" and "objective truth." Now, had white church elders recognized that their theology was (perhaps even unintentionally) shaped by their social position and chose to emphasize the voices of those not in positions of power, the church could have been a liberating rather than oppressive force. We believe this illustration also holds true today in that listening to the voices on the margins will ultimately help the people of God usher in kingdom-supremacy rather than continue to uphold white supremacy.

SHOULDN'T WE MOVE AWAY FROM GENERALIZATIONS WHEN TALKING ABOUT RACIAL INJUSTICE?

A common fear expressed when talk about racial injustice is introduced is that rather than dismantling racial division, we are simply further ingraining it into society. Aren't utilizing broad generalizations like "white people" when talking about these issues moving us further from seeing people as individuals and away from King's dream of judging people by the content of their character instead of the color of their skin?

While it is true that we are indeed individuals who must be responsible for our own choices, we are also social beings living amongst others not just as individuals, but within social groups that shape our experience. For instance, your gender

is part of who you are, and while you are still an individual, you don't just experience your world as an individual, but as an individual of your gender. It likely determined what clothes your parents bought for you or that you buy for yourself to fit into social norms, what activities were offered for you to participate in, expectations about careers befitting you, and ways you were allowed to show emotion. We are socialized into gender roles and can therefore make broad statements that help us understand the experiences of different gendered individuals. This isn't a way to diminish their individuality, but rather to be able to easily discuss common themes and patterns.

The same can be said of our racial socialization. Your race shaped the way you were socialized into society. Because we live in a racialized society where your race matters to how you experience the world and how others perceive you, we can therefore talk in generalizations about that reality. We use the phrase "white people" not to diminish the individuality of white people, but as a way to talk about social conditions that are experienced at a broader and nearly universal level. There is a shared understanding that there are always exceptions to rules when it comes to people of any racial group, but focusing on those exceptions pulls us away from discussing broader truths.

Dismantling racism in our world includes dealing with not just personal racial animus, but also broader systems of racism built into our society. If we only ever focus on individuals, we are not in a place to dismantle racist laws and systems that can continue to harm even without the conscious intent of any individual. This is particularly true when talking about whiteness. Not only did white people in our history intentionally disregard their various ethnic identities, they solidified themselves into the title of "white" to enshrine themselves into positions of power and authority for the subjugation of others. Because of this long history of clinging to

whiteness as a group identity, we cannot disregard its ongoing impact. We must first dismantle the ways centuries of white people utilized every system available to them to put themselves in a place of privilege; where systems worked for the benefit of fellow white people and for the detriment of people of color.

"In the end, the important question we must answer is not whether Be the Bridge is engaging in the work the way others think we should, but rather are we being faithful to the God we serve?"

This focus on the social construct of "whiteness" is not for the purpose of shaming people who identify as white or to lead to self-flagellation. We recognize that being white is not a biological reality, but a sociological one. This focus on the construct of whiteness is to help us see and understand the devastating impact of the way whiteness has functioned and still functions, not just in the world, but in the church.

Why doesn't CRT or BTB recommend using those same generalizations to critique POC? For a few reasons: 1) Racial labels were placed on other groups by white people, not by POC, for the explicit purpose of insulting, belittling, and labeling them as less than fully human. 2) Whiteness also functioned to create conditions to have these labels look like truth. For instance, during the Jim Crow era people would say Black people were lazy and didn't want to work, while ignoring conditions that kept them from being employed, such as refusing to hire Black people for any jobs outside a select few. Then, white people said, "See! They're not employed! They don't want to work!" This is one example among many, but to broadly criticize groups of

⁷ Matthew 7:5 ESV

⁸ Ephesians 4:11-13, 15-16, NIV

color positions one to be part of a long legacy of blaming marginalized groups for conditions that have been created by those in positions of power, overwhelmingly white people in America, to keep them subjugated. This also assumes the subjective lens with which you view the culture of another group is an objective perspective that is needed, or not already present, in the conversation amongst the members of that group. We encourage white people to instead look to ways that whiteness is upholding conditions that lead to other groups not being able to flourish as a more helpful way forward toward bridge building and reconciliation. As Jesus taught, "first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye."

CONCLUSION

We know this document in no way sums up the totality of Critical Race Theory, the issues some have with it, or the ways we may be utilizing it or other theories to help Christians see a path forward toward healing. The goal was not to be exhaustive, but rather to give a brief overview where we could explain how and why we utilize some parts of a theory that wasn't directly born out of the church and to help others feel more prepared if criticism is leveraged toward them or the organization for doing so.

In the end, the important question we must answer is not whether Be the Bridge is engaging in the work the way others think we should, but rather are we being faithful to the God we serve? We know racial reconciliation is an area where we have been called and where our Founder, Latasha Morrison, has been led.

We will continue to do this work prayerfully, faithfully, and joyfully. We immerse ourselves in not just the work of racial justice, but in scripture as our guiding foundation. We appreciate those who have supported our work and cheered us on while saying, "Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven." We are encouraged to continue to strive to be a light in this world that so desperately needs hope and restoration. We also heed these words, "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you," and we will continue to do so regardless of the criticism or slander that may be sent our way.

We have confidence the work of Be the Bridge, built on Biblical principles and utilizing whatever resources we see God being able to use for good, is in line with God's word and call for us and are especially encouraged as we see the bounty of good fruit it has produced. "In every way, every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will know them by their fruits." We see fruit in meaningful cross-cultural relationships being formed, in churches becoming a credible witness for the Gospel through racial reconciliation, in individuals returning to the faith they once walked away from or were alienated from because of their race, in people who never wanted anything to do with Christianity coming to Be the Bridge and for the first time be curious about Jesus because of the work they see being done by a Christian organization, and in healing of long-open wounds borne by people of color as they are reconciling with their white siblings.

We stand ready to give an account before God for the way we carried out His witness here on earth. We will continue to build on that solid rock, so whatever winds or rain come our way, we will stand firm. Our utilization of critical race theory at times and in ways where it is not contradictory to the gospel should not be used as a way to criticize important work being done by the organization. There is a long history of using the same arguments to shut down Christian abolitionists, those fighting for justice during Reconstruction, and during the Civil Rights Movement. Because of that, we don't often respond to those who seek to tear down this good work, or deny this good fruit. We prefer to set our focus on the long road ahead of serving God's call in our lives as we continue the fight for racial justice. We are thankful for many organizations and people pursuing racial justice and reconciliation in whatever ways God has called them to do so. We pray they are faithful to that call and also devote their time to serving Jesus over disparaging the way other faithful saints serve Him, "So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God...speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.