

In Matthew 7: The Bible says,  
Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

As we reflect on all that's going on in our country today and begin to acknowledge and address the issues of racial inequity and injustice, Jesus' sermon on the Mount lays the groundwork for a practical approach for citizens of the Kingdom. Jesus instructs us before we judge anyone else, to take a sober look at ourselves. The Spirit compels us, therefore, to take this time to examine ourselves, and to offer a transparent critique of where we stand as a community. Christ's church is the light of the world, the salt of the earth. It is called to lead the way in areas of morality. Unfortunately, when we honestly examine ourselves, it is clear that we have fallen short of Christ's example. Rather than being a light in

these areas, calling the world higher, we have allowed worldly thinking to shape our culture and cloud our vision, creating systemic inequity.

Jesus died to destroy the wall of hostility and to bridge the divides among us, but we have not done enough to follow in his steps. Yes, we all agree that racism is wrong. But the church must move beyond pointing fingers at the world and the comfort of distant platitudes and join Jesus in the cruciform work of reconciliation and anti-racism. The truth is, we've sinned; we've failed, and it's past time that we repented, radically and wholeheartedly.

\*We have been complicit because we have not consistently raised our voices and dealt with this issue as sin.

\*\*We, in some cases, have been overt and blatant offenders by making decisions that have conformed to worldly wisdom and violated our sacred vow before Christ to be a church of all nations, where every soul is treated with equity at the foot of the cross.

\*\*\*We have been indifferent, silent, apathetic, and lacking in compassion because we have pridefully

silenced the voices of those who have expressed these concerns, leaving many feeling unheard, unseen, and unloved.

\*\*\*\*We have been deceived because, in an effort to avoid secular politics in the church, we have at times, strayed away from mercy and covered our eyes and ears to the cries and tears of the brokenhearted.

In our brokenness, we beg God to forgive us and lead us by his Spirit and his grace to repentance. Christ's church should be better and will be better. Bigotry, prejudice, colorism, racism, favoritism in any form, is sin. It is our vow to radically address this sin from this day forward so that we might be the light and salt to this lost world. Diversity is not the same as unity, and representation is not synonymous with acceptance. Everyone deserves for the church to be a safe haven where they are embraced for their true, authentic selves. We are meant to be a community of love, not conformity, a house of prayer for all nations, where everyone is seen, heard, and welcomed. That is the vision of our Lord, and we are resolved that it is our vision as well. Please, join us in our repentance.

In our congregation, we will seek to work closely with representative groups to determine and develop a practical plan of action in response to our shortcomings and to be in alignment with the word and Spirit of God. It has become readily apparent to us that aspects of our church's culture are broken, particularly in regards to systemic bias, and we are unified in our resolve to root out the practices and thinking not in keeping with Jesus culture. As leaders, we understand that though everything may not have happened under our watch, we take full responsibility as shepherds for healing our family and moving the church forward. This plan will include but not be limited to:

1. purposefully conducting diversity, equity, and inclusion training for all our staff, our leadership, and our congregation.
2. carefully reviewing hiring practices so that they are in alignment with God's kingdom ideals;
3. constantly evaluating whether we are creating a culture where all individuals feel welcome and the church is making every effort to be all things to all people.
4. listening with intentionality so that, moving forward, we can address and tackle any other area that requires attention.

We are committed as a church and as a church leadership to following Jesus, and convicted by his sovereign example. He did not simply acknowledge the presence of evil; he confronted it and gave us the means to dismantle it through the cross, and to live changed lives. The church is a prophetic alternative community and is designed to be the solution. His example motivates us to reflect, revise, reform but most importantly, repent. Join us as we walk with Jesus together as a united congregation of repentant sinners, cleansed, humbled, and zealous before the Lord our God. May God bless our repentance both individually and as a community.

The Church Leadership  
The Greater Baltimore Church