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A Place of Hope. A People of Promise.

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Encourage

Inspiration for IPHC Leaders

**WE PRAYERFULLY VALUE
JUSTICE**

ARTICLES BY DOUG BEACHAM, ANGELA BYRD, CHRIS FRIEND,
KHURAM BASHIR AND J. LEE GRADY

The Impact of God's **JUSTICE** on the Nations

We cannot understand God's overall plan to redeem the world without considering His justice.



BY DOUG
BEACHAM

DOUG BEACHAM is the presiding bishop of the IPHC. He has served in various roles in the church including Georgia Conference Superintendent, executive director of Church Education Ministries, and executive director of World Missions Ministries. You can follow Bishop Beacham on [Facebook](#) or Twitter [@DougBeacham](#).

Justice and injustice are more than individual acts. Justice and injustice are manifested in the mores and laws of people groups, communities and nations. Whether it applies to people groups, cities or nations, God's concern for justice is expressed throughout the Bible. God's justice addresses the totality of people groups, cultures, languages, and how they organize themselves. Divine justice occurs in relation to the fallen condition of all humanity.

Adam's sin affected the larger groupings of people. Our personal fallen nature is not cured by the larger group. If there is a general tenor of righteousness in the larger group, it may place limits on my sinful actions through righteous laws. But the standards of the larger group can easily shift to unrighteousness that allow and promote behaviors that are ultimately destructive.

Quickly the biblical accounts move to larger groups and their sin. Genesis 6:5 says, "The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth." The personal disobedience in Genesis 3 spread as rebellion on the earth. In response God brought about the judgment of the flood (Genesis 6:8 through 9:29).

Yet, even that cleansing was not enough to remove sin. Soon after, humanity's sinful inclinations reached a new height at Babel (Genesis 10:11-11:9).

All nations have commonly accepted standards, often reflected in legal codes and socially accepted behaviors. Some are even based on religious principles. But the Bible reveals there is only one way to God, not many ways.

The Bible declares that we are prone to idolatry. We are made to worship the one true God, but sin leads us to replace the invisible God with images from the created world. This is the point of the Apostle Paul in Romans 1:18-32. Thus the whole world stands under the wrath of God.

The Psalmist asked, “Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, ‘Let us break Their bonds in pieces and cast away Their cords from us’” (Psalm 2:1-3).

Psalm 9 declares, “The nations have sunk down in the pit which they made,” “The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God,” and “Let the nations be judged in Your sight. Put them in fear, O Lord, that the nations may know themselves to be but men” (vv. 15, 17, 19, 20).

The prophet Isaiah announced, “The nations are as a drop in a bucket, and are counted as the small dust on the scales. All nations before Him are as nothing, and they are counted by Him less than nothing and worthless” (40:15, 17).

God’s plan of redemption included the making of a holy nation that would live by faith. That plan began with Abraham in Genesis 12 and continued with the formation of a nation whose faith led to a new way of living in the world. The Torah given to Moses was the revelation of divine law whose ways were life and blessings (Psalm 19:7-14). This holy nation, Israel, was called to be a light to the nations (Isaiah 51:4; 60:3).

While divine judgment came, and still comes, upon many nations, there are three Old Testament frameworks that guide our thinking regarding God’s divine justice and nations: Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:16-19:29), the Israelite conquest of Canaan (Leviticus 18, Deuteronomy) and Judah (Ezekiel 16).

First, Sodom and Gomorrah’s sins came before the Lord and were “very grave” (Genesis 18:20). Besides the homosexuality, which was clearly accepted by the society, Ezekiel 16:49 indicated that “pride, fullness of food, abundance of idleness,” along with failure to “strengthen the hand of the poor and needy” were part of the sin. These sins reflected the corrupt nature of a society which

had abandoned righteousness whether by legal means or by changing societal norms.

What is hopeful in this passage is that the Lord “is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). This is seen when Abraham interceded for Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:10-33). Appealing to God’s righteous character, Abraham “negotiated” with God to spare the cities if only ten righteous people

could be found.

Abraham’s merciful actions stand in sharp contrast to those who would seek to condemn and destroy in God’s name. Righteous indignation at sin should cause us to repent and pray for mercy, rather than taking a posture of angry destruction.

Second, Genesis 15:6 shows that God gives nations time to either “fill up” their iniquity, or to repent as did Nineveh (Jonah 3:5-10). This “filling up” is related to the nations in the land of Canaan that Israel displaced in the Joshua conquests.

Leviticus 18 details the abominations and perversions of these nations (18:3, 24, 25, 27). These included human sacrifice and a range of sexual perversions. What

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is interesting is that “the land” is defiled and “vomits” out its inhabitants as part of the manifestation of divine justice.

Third, Israel was constantly warned to live according to divine revelation and not by the dictates of surrounding nations and their gods. But Israel consistently fell into idolatry and lost her blessing from God. This runs throughout the Torah, the historical books, and the prophets. Thus Ezekiel 16 compares Judah to Sodom and Gomorrah, and Judah’s sin is deemed even greater because she had the revelation of divine righteousness.

God has clearly revealed His standards of righteousness for all nations. Our task as followers of Jesus is to share God’s life-giving Word, and stand in the gap for the nations. The Great Commission sends us into all the “nations” (Matthew 28:19). Our witness is not only for the sake of personal salvation, but also for the sake of justice, righteousness, reconciliation and healing among the nations. □

A photograph showing a hand pouring liquid from a metal ladle into a metal bowl held by another person. The background is a light-colored brick wall.

PRAYER AND ACTION:

The Dual Witness of the Church

Jesus didn't just say powerful words. He acted. To bring about justice we must act.



BY ANGELA
BYRD

ANGELA BYRD is a member of the IPHC and a public school teacher. She is currently pursuing her Ph.D. in Language and Literacy and researches intersections between public education and Christian service. She loves the Lord with all her heart and is daily encouraged by the community of family and friends He has gifted her with. She is passionate about God's heartbeat for "reconciling all things to Himself" (2 Corinthians 5:18-20, Colossians 1:20) and how faith unites with service to make visible justice and peace.

It's hard to imagine the gospels if the only recorded events were Jesus' prayers. As powerful as that record would be, it wouldn't be the same without any record of the needs He met. Jesus didn't just say powerful words. He acted.

The same is true of the Old Testament prophets. What if Isaiah wrote chapter 58 about the fast that God desires yet left out important details he was inspired by the Holy Spirit to include—details that involve “undoing heavy burdens, letting the oppressed go free, and sharing our bread with the hungry”?

These scenarios would not square with Scripture because they do not square with the heart of God. The heart of God is always moved to act on behalf of those who need Him. God does not just offer words. He acts. And so must we.

We, as the IPHC family, have an incredible opportunity to make a lasting impact through new and continued acts of public service as we witness of our Lord. We are engaged in overseas missions, disaster relief, People to People and many other ministries. The work of justice is not new to us.

My local church has a homeless outreach, organizes weekly visits to a nursing home and sends teenagers to help rebuild communities. Another congregation in a neighboring town organizes volunteers one week each

summer to conduct a community-wide Vacation Bible School.

Until the Lord's return, however, there will always be a need to do more. This year we are encouraged to continue putting our hands and feet where our faith is as we emphasize our core value of justice. Our world continues to need our prayers and witness, and it needs our actions, too. Let's consider these truths as we seek to value God's justice:

1. JUSTICE AND CHRISTIAN SERVICE ARE CONNECTED.

God hears the cry of the oppressed, and when He hears those cries, He responds. He involves Himself in our world. But He also calls us to engage our culture.

The Holy Spirit sends us out as ambassadors of a coming kingdom where injustice will no longer be present. And He provides us ample opportunities to address social injustices in biblically sound ways.

Theologian Mika Edmundson centers God's justice in the work of Jesus, precisely where all Christian living and service should be. She says: "Justice must be rooted in the life, death, resurrection, and return of Christ. ... Justice is always on the agenda of grace. ... The Lord mercifully intervenes to establish, protect and restore the covenant rights of His people to insure that they are not disinherited, and the Lord, in turn, calls his people to love and represent him by treating others that way."

2. THE GREAT COMMISSION AND CHRISTIAN SERVICE ARE CONNECTED.

Salvation is God's number one priority. The Great Commission communicates this clearly to the Church. The message of Christ's forgiveness is never to become secondary to Christian acts of public service, for it not only sets that service apart but also insures that individuals are in right spiritual standing with God.

This does not mean, however, that physically breaking bonds of oppression is unimportant to our Savior. This is one of the primary reasons the story of the Exodus and the story of the Good Samaritan exist. This is why James is quick to remind us that God advocates fair and just treatment of the poor, widows, and orphans (James 1:27, 2:1-13) as surely as Luke makes it clear that Peter's rooftop vision was not only a call to revival but also a call to racial reconciliation (Acts 10).

"The Holy Spirit sends us out as ambassadors of a coming kingdom where injustice will no longer be present."

Psalm 139 and its rich description of the sanctity of life in the womb provides us affirmation that God's heart is for the unborn just as surely as scriptures in other passages about the poor and marginalized affirm that God is pro-life for the whole of our lives, especially in His detailed instructions about treatment of foreigners and refugees.

It is important to use our voices where we are able to promote God's justice. Though this work will never be equally as important or more important than the Great Commission, it is still an important expression of our witness.

3. THE WORK OF JUSTICE BEGINS WITH PRAYER.

We must seek God's guidance as we continue the justice ministries we are already involved in. Prayer is an action of utmost importance. These prayers will lead us to a posture of lament ahead of any calls to action to counteract injustice.

Though 2019 officially emphasizes our core value of justice, it is partially in result of the laments and calls to action recorded in the Solemn Assembly held in Fayetteville, North Carolina, in 1996. For those unfamiliar with this gathering, it is well worth reading and listening to our denominational leaders humbly express a holy lament similar in spirit to Daniel's prayer found in Daniel 9:1-19. It is also worth revisiting as we consider from where we have come and to where we should go next.

The Bible calls us to "do justly" (Micah 6:8). Divine revelation is necessary to know how to proceed as God would command. God can show us what to do as well as when and how to do it—not because we are blind to the needs around us but because the Holy Spirit can direct us to the needs that are His priority for us to address.

4. WE MUST BUILD PARTNERSHIPS TO BRING JUSTICE.

Partnering with para-church organizations is vital. Many of these groups are open to sharing resources or partnering with our local churches. For two years I served with an after-school tutoring program that was faith-based and originated in a local Methodist congregation.

More than a backpack ministry that sends food home with hungry students and provides tutoring services, this ministry also offers free GED classes to adult learners in the community, receives grant funding for a summer camp and connects students to local businesses to increase their vision of where their lives after high school can lead them in positive ways—all while sharing the gospel of Jesus.

It is vital that we approach the work as a partnership between groups. All of us are bringing valuable resources to the table. All of us can learn from each other. Justice work is an act of love. Through gospel witness and practical service we are making plain God's love.

As we dedicate this entire year to a study of justice, let us commit ourselves to act. Let us not grow weary in well doing, as Galatians 6:9 says, so that we can "consider how to stir up one another to love and good works" (Hebrews 10:24). We have been called not only to pray and preach



In This Changing World, Do We Still Need Denominations?

How can the IPHC avoid becoming a fossil as we face the future?



BY CHRIS
FRIEND

CHRIS FRIEND is the national leader of the IPHC in Australia and the senior pastor of Collective Hope, a cluster of congregations in Perth. He has a Master of Arts in Theology and is an adjunct lecturer at Harvest Bible College. He and his wife, Natalee, have two children. Chris is passionate about Jesus, the Bible, leadership, people, architecture, kayaking and fast cars (not necessarily in that order.)

Way back in 2006 when I joined the IPHC, there was a lot of discussion about the “post-denominational era.” It seemed that all the major churches that were growing, particularly the mega-churches, were non-denominational. And so it seemed apparent to many people that membership in a denomination could get in the way of the church growth.

In fact, many people asked me, “How can you be a denominational leader in a post denominational era?” That was a good question then, and as you know a lot has happened in the last decade on this topic.

Many Christians today consider denominations to be spiritual dinosaurs. It’s trendy to be independent. Some have even abandoned all church structures to form loose house church movements. Meanwhile many of our mainline denominations are dying because of age and theological drift.

How do we as an older movement stay in step with the Holy Spirit? How do we avoid becoming an “old wineskin” as a new generation emerges? I’ve been paying attention to the trends. Here are a few tips that will help us navigate the currents of change:

New church networks and alliances will continue to rise. People today no longer live within the limits of denominational boundaries. They are looking outside their groups to find what they need.

From Dynamic Church Planting International (DCPI) to the Association of

Related Churches (ARC), from worship seminars to prophetic seminars, we are seeing the rise of cross-denominational pollination. The internet certainly works in a similar way, connecting pastors from across different streams of the body of Christ.

This only serves to highlight the need for denominations to know what they can and can't do and to outsource where needed. As certain ministries become more specialized, we will continue to find ourselves looking to "experts" in a particular field, including those that are outside of the IPHC.

New denominations will emerge.

No doubt you've heard that Hillsong has left the Australian Assemblies of God. (The AG in Australia is known as Australian Christian Churches.) Hillsong has now formed its own denomination. They are already in more than 30 nations, so this really isn't surprising. However, this is yet another denomination to add to the other 19,000 Pentecostal/charismatic groups that are already in existence!

While Hillsong's exit from the AG was a surprise to many, it is a sign of things to come. More and more churches that already function as "mini-denominations" will come out of their parent groups to form their own.

I'm not entirely convinced this trend is a good thing, particularly if they are centered around a primary gifting or personality. Nonetheless, rather than being the era of "post-denominationalism," we have now entered the era of "mini-denominationalism." Boutique and niche denominations and networks will be the order of the day.

What does this mean for IPHC? It's good news for those who belong to conferences that are missional, growing and developing the next generation of leaders. For some of us, this may mean a change in how we view the role of our conference.

At the end of the day, we need conferences that are fueling growth. Our conferences have the capacity to function as "mini-denominations" within the safe umbrella of the IPHC.

We still need denominational assistance and accountability.

It was sad to watch what happened recently with the Chicago-based Willow Creek Association over the last few months. The group appointed a committee of people who did not

work for WCA to lead it through this tumultuous period that followed founder Bill Hybels' exit in 2018.

Greg Jao, senior assistant to the president of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, asked a poignant question on Twitter: "Do denominations and institutions offer more experience with accountability and good process than independent churches?"

This doesn't mean Willow Creek has joined or formed a denomination, but it does show that large non-denominational churches are turning to the expertise that comes with denominational leadership in an hour of need. I predict this will cause the rise of independent groups turning to boutique or niche denominational memberships during seasons of quick growth or great distress.

All of this only confirms the vital place of the IPHC for those of us who belong to it. It also shows we must keep our movement healthy! How can we do that? In this great season of change I believe we must do the following:

1. We must be relational.

As far as denominations go, the IPHC is too large to be called boutique or niche. But we are not too large to be relational!

In the internet era, we need to work closer and closer with one another as the world becomes smaller and smaller. We need intercessors in North Carolina to be connecting with intercessors in Thailand; we need youth ministry leaders in Europe to be working alongside youth ministry leaders in Africa; and so forth.

Now is not the time for us to sit comfortably within old structures or mindsets. We must encourage our people to connect with the wider body of Christ as the Holy Spirit leads them! We must maximize the leverage that we can get from our current size!

2. We must be flexible.

For the IPHC to retain membership, and gain new membership, we must

think in new terms. There is opportunity for us to create partnerships with smaller boutique and niche groups. We must glean from the wisdom of other leaders and, in turn, give what we can to the larger body of Christ.

All of this requires a flexibility that has been in our spiritual DNA since

the beginning. Our founder, G. B. Cashwell, the great "Apostle of the South," didn't let denominational barriers stop him from bringing the Azusa Street miracle across the continental divide! He knew that his network of churches were part of the larger kingdom of Christ.

We can't stick within old mindsets of isolationism. We must be free enough to adapt new ideas and strategies within each conference, nation and across the continents so we can reach the next generation.

3. We must be secure.

One of the great joys I found when I joined the IPHC was security. I don't feel I must compete with the church or denomination

down the road. I am content to work in my assigned territory, doing what God has called me to do. This kind of security brings so much freedom!

The more we embrace a flexible, relational model, the more likely we will encounter what I call "messiness"! Denominational lines will be blurred and probably crossed. However, if we remain secure in who God has called us to be as leaders, we won't allow any mess to shake us. We will trust Him all the way!

Whatever part of the IPHC you belong to or whatever role you play, I want to say thank you for what you do to make the IPHC what it is. Let's be encouraged by the changes we see, both within the body of Christ and in the world at large.

God is not surprised by change. But he can equip us to face it. That's why I genuinely believe, for the IPHC, that the best is yet to come! □

"Now is not the time for us to sit comfortably within old structures or mindsets. We must encourage our people to connect with the wider body of Christ."



Open Your Church Doors to **IMMIGRANTS**

Please don't view immigrants as burdens. They are assets to your ministry!



BY KHURAM
BASHIR

KHURAM BASHIR grew up in Pakistan, where he received a Bachelor of Theology degree. He then came to the United States for more theological training. He attended All Nations Bible College and Seminary in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, and has been licensed to minister in the IPHC's South Carolina Conference. Khuram has an online gospel broadcast in his native Urdu language that you can watch [here](#). He and his wife, Sumera, have two young children.

If the gospel of Jesus Christ is a global message, and He sent us into all the world, then why should we build walls to keep immigrants out of our churches? I love the words of John 3:16. Salvation is offered to “the world” and “whosoever.” The gospel of Jesus Christ is for everybody, with no regards of color, race or religious background. That is good news for me because I am an immigrant from Pakistan.

I'm so grateful that I born in a Christian family. My grandfather made a historic decision to accept Jesus Christ. This changed the course of our lives. Now, our final destination is heaven and we belong to God.

Even though I was born in a family that embraced Presbyterian faith, we were not really practicing Christians until a great miracle occurred in our family. My younger sister, Tehmina, lost her eyesight because of a sickness. She could not see anything for almost a year until a pentecostal preacher prayed for her.

After a few months of prayer and fasting, her sight was totally restored and she continued her education. Now she is serving as a high school teacher in a Christian school in Pakistan. That miracle introduced us to the healing power of Jesus. We were born-again, baptized and filled with the Holy Spirit.

We start sharing the gospel with others and many accepted Jesus Christ. Many people, including Muslims, traveled from far places to come to our home for prayer. They received miracles in the name of Jesus. The Holy Spirit was moving throughout our city, and people with diseases such as cancer were healed. Others were delivered from demons.

I was working in a textile mill in Faisalabad with a decent salary and good position. But God convicted my heart to leave everything and serve him. Despite criticism I resigned from my job and went to Bible College. Upon completion of my

studies, God opened a door for me to come to the United States for further education.

When I obtained a visa to come to the United States, I was so excited because it is known to the rest of the world that America is a Christian country. My attitude was, "God loves the USA." I assumed that a great revival was sweeping through America.

Upon my arrival in the United States, I found that God really does love America. But I was shocked to discover that this nation struggles to keep its Christian values. Such issues as gay marriage, abortion, transgender bathrooms and divorce are unthinkable in Pakistan. And some of the American churches I attended seemed like social clubs. I didn't hear many biblical sermons.

Meanwhile I was also challenged because of my poor English. At my Bible college, I was assigned tasks such as mowing the lawn and cleaning classrooms and restrooms. I never had done anything like that in my life. I cried in my bed often.

In those months I realized that immigrants, especially those from developing countries, are treated like second class Christians. I wondered why. Was it because wealth makes people proud? Was it spiritual pride? Or was there a root of white supremacy in the hearts of believers?

I don't know the answer. But I do know that when churches ignore immigrants, they are missing a big opportunity to reach nations with the gospel. In my observation, there are many ways churches can open their doors to immigrants. Here are a few:

1. BE A FRIEND.

New immigrants are like newborns. They don't know many things about your culture. God gave me some good friends when I came to South Carolina, and they helped me understand how life works here. I have asked them hundreds of questions and they helped me to understand things I didn't know.

For example, in Pakistan, men typically walk down the street holding hands. It is a simple expression of friendship. But when I came to the United States I learned that men don't hold hands publicly unless they are in

a gay relationship. There are so many little things Christians can do to help immigrants navigate life in a new environment.

2. PROVIDE MENTORING.

After I came to this country, God connected me with some wonderful people who modeled the Christian life for me. I am very thankful for Lee Grady, an IPHC minister who has a heart for discipleship. He befriended me in 2010 and he has prayed for me and encouraged me ever since. Likewise, Rabon Stewart and his wife, Jewell, who lead Socastee Family Worship Center, have been very supportive in so many ways. These mentors inspire and motivate me as I watch them do ministry around the globe.

"When churches ignore immigrants, they are missing a big opportunity to reach nations with the gospel."

3. OFFER MEALS AND HOSPITALITY.

The biggest desire of any international student in this country is to have an American friend. Immigrants leave everything when they come to the United States to find a better life. Often they are lonely and without friends and family.

When I first came to the United States I was very lonely. Christmas day was the longest day because I was alone in the dorm. All the other students

had left to celebrate Christmas with their families. You can build bridges by including immigrants in your family meals and holiday celebrations.

4. RECOGNIZE THE OPEN DOORS.

Immigrants are strategic keys to the mission field. When God brought the Ethiopian eunuch to Israel, he was converted to Christ and went back to his country as a preacher of the gospel. Immigrants unlock doors for Great Commission opportunities in their homelands.

Do not view immigrants as burdens; they are assets to your ministry! Win them, train them and give them opportunities. Then send them when the time is right.

Pakistan is a needy mission field. It is 96 percent Muslim. We need churches, mission schools, colleges and hospitals. We need your help. I would love to assist you and your church in taking the gospel to my country.

5. PROVIDE A REFUGE.

When I was in Bible college, I returned home twice for summer vacations and hosted gospel campaigns in different cities of Pakistan. Many people came to know Jesus, but in 2013 I received serious threats from extremists. As a result my wife and I began the process of seeking asylum in the United States so my family can have protected life.

There are many immigrants who flee from their countries and come to the United States. Your church can adopt them and help them to adjust in this blessed land of opportunities where everyone enjoys freedom.

Please search your heart. How would you treat Jesus if He had come to America as an immigrant from Israel? What if Mary and Joseph had migrated to America instead of Egypt when they were fleeing from King Herod?

Immigrants are coming to the United States seeking a better life. They are also fleeing persecution. May God give the IPHC a special grace to reach the immigrants who have moved to this country. May we open our hearts wide and show them the love of the Savior. ■

White Supremacy Has **NO PLACE** in the Church



PHOTO: STOCK SNAP

We cannot allow the ghosts of our past—or today's culture of division—to hinder our mission.



BY J. LEE
GRADY

J. LEE GRADY is an author, traveling minister and former editor of *Charisma* magazine. Author of several books including *10 Lies the Church Tells Women* and *Set My Heart on Fire*, Lee leads The Mordecai Project—a missionary organization that focuses on bringing the healing of Christ to women who are abused and marginalized. Lee has been ordained in the IPHC since 2000, and he and his wife, Deborah, live in LaGrange, Georgia. You can learn more about his ministry at leegrady.com.

March 15, 2019, was a dark day. That was when a 28-year-old Australian man—a self-described “ethno-nationalist”—opened fire on two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand. Using five different shotguns and rifles, Tarrant killed 50 worshipers and injured 50 others. And he broadcast the massacre live on Facebook until the video feed was abruptly shut down.

Why would someone do something so brutal? When police recovered his guns, they found that each weapon was covered in white supremacist slogans including “Remove Kabob”—an anti-Muslim term used during the Serbian conflict.

Prior to his killing spree, which he planned for two years, he wrote a 73-page manifesto filled with white supremacist symbols. In it, he demanded that all non-European immigrants leave his country.

We typically blame this kind of bizarre crime on mental illness—and I am sure that was involved in this case. But the ideology that the shooter espoused is not unique to his native Australia. The cult of white nationalism has also seduced many people in the United States.

In 2015, a young man walked into an African-American church in Charleston, South Carolina, and shot nine black Christians—including their pastor—during a Bible study. Investigations showed that he was “self-radicalized,” meaning he adopted his white supremacist views from reading articles on the internet. He later confessed that he shot his victims in order to start a race war.

Then on August 12, 2017, white supremacists marched in Charlottesville, Virginia, to protest the removal of a Confederate statue. During the demonstration a 20-year-old white nationalist plowed his car into a group

of counter-protesters, killing one person and injuring 28 others. The young man responsible for the mayhem was identified with a hate group that promotes the idea that America should be an exclusively white nation.

He had been diagnosed with schizophrenia—and this may explain why he wasn't accepted in the U.S. Army when he tried to enlist in 2015. He was also considered a neo-Nazi. He had been fascinated with Nazi Germany and white supremacy since ninth grade. He idolized Adolf Hitler.

He was sentenced to life in prison late in 2018, is now classified as a domestic terrorist. He is part of a demonic movement in this country that needs to be denounced in the strongest terms.

Racism is sick. Neo-Nazism is sick. And despite what some churchgoing racists may tell you, these philosophies are totally incompatible with Christianity. White nationalism is an idea that was hatched in hell itself.

Nazism was spawned in Germany with the idea that white Aryans ("pure" Germans with no mixed-race lineage) are the "superior race," and that nature has selected them scientifically to outlast darker-skinned people. This fueled Hitler's rise to power.

Hitler was totally opposed to belief in God. He was convinced that Darwinian evolution controlled the world, and that all of life could be understood by watching the Aryan race struggle to gain dominance. He championed the idea that Jews, Southern Europeans and Gypsies were human vermin, destined for extinction.

Hitler also supported bizarre eugenics programs, forcing people he considered inferior to be sterilized. And a huge majority of Germans, under the spell of this spiritual deception, supported Nazi policies.

It is no surprise that many Christians in the 1940s viewed Hitler as the Antichrist. He once told an eyewitness: "The biggest evil for the German people is accepting Christian humility." At least 6 million Jews died in the German holocaust because of the führer's sinister ideas, along with 1.8 million non-Jewish Poles, 220,000 Gypsies, 250,000 handicapped people and an undetermined number of homosexuals.

When the Nazi regime failed in 1945, Hitler killed himself. But his ideas did not die. There are more than a dozen major neo-Nazi and white nationalist groups operating in the United States

and Canada today. The spirit that possessed Hitler is still at work.

White supremacy is part of the antichrist spirit mentioned in the New Testament. It is in complete opposition to Christ's gospel, for the following reasons:

When God chose to send His Son into the world, He was born to a Jewish woman. Jesus would not have been considered "Aryan"—He was a man of color. Yet He called people of all races to a salvation that was not based on race but on faith in God's incredible love and mercy.

The church that Jesus founded began with His first Jewish followers, but it quickly became mixed with Italians, Greeks, Ethiopians and other Gentiles. Jesus broke the "dividing wall" between Jew and Gentile (see Eph. 2:14). He defeated racism!

Jesus commissioned His followers to take the gospel to all nations. Christianity has always been multiethnic and non-discriminatory. The Great Commission mentioned in Matthew 28:16-20 includes (1) Jerusalem (the headquarters of early Christianity), (2) Judea (the land of the Jews), Samaria (a region in Israel inhabited by people of mixed race), and (4) the ends of the earth (all regions of the globe inhabited by Gentiles). People of all races were to receive the good news of Christ's salvation, with no exceptions.

The first apostles made it clear that Christ's kingdom is based on love for one another. Christians are not allowed to hate people—and they are certainly not allowed to belong to hate groups. John made this clear when he wrote: "If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar" (1 John 4:20a). Racial hatred, bigotry and prejudice of any kind are polar opposites of Christian faith.

A question for pastors: How long has it been since you addressed racism from your pulpit? White nationalist philosophy is a demonic spirit that still haunts America. We can't soft-pedal on this. We can't compromise with it. And we certainly can't let racial hatred go unchallenged if a member of one of our churches espouses such an attitude.

In today's tense political climate, it is tempting to jump on the anti-immigrant bandwagon—all in the name of patriotism. But when we stand before God, we will not be judged by whether we waved the American flag. Our ultimate loyalty is not to a

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political party. Our allegiance is to the kingdom of Christ—which transcends race and ethnicity.

Let's be honest: Our denomination began in the American South, and some of our early members held racist views that were common in the early 1900s. We cannot allow the ghosts of the past to hinder our mission today. We must lay the axe to the root of the tree and sever any connection to a racist past.

When Jesus cast out a demon, He named it. We, too, should name the evil that is in our midst. We can't dance around this. Every pastor in America—and every government leader—should expose white supremacy and every other form of racism for what it is. Only when the church falls out of agreement with the stronghold of racism will we see the walls that divide us collapse. □