

**CONFESSIONAL LITURGY & COVENANT
Renewing Our Commitment to One Another**

Convention President:

God of Justice and Love, as a Convention, we confess the sin of racism and other related sins, which we have sometimes expressed by our thoughts, words and deeds. We have victimized others and ourselves and have fallen short of our understanding of the Biblical affirmation that all humanity is created in the image of God. (Genesis 1:26-27; Jeremiah 13:23).

AUBA Moderator:

We acknowledge that we have sometimes allowed our historical past to create in us a bitter and unforgiving spirit towards those who have caused us pain.

Convention President & AUBA Moderator (Jointly):

As Your Word instructs us we seek your forgiveness in Christ's name, even as we seek to forgive each other. Amen. (Job 42:7-10; James 5:16)

Convention President & All General Convention Attendees:

To our Brothers and Sisters in the African United Baptist Association: Forgive us for all our negative thoughts, attitudes and behaviours and that of our ancestors. (1 Peter 4:11)

AUBA Moderator & All AUBA Attendees:

By God's grace, we forgive you, in the name of Jesus Christ. May God help us today to be obedient to our Lord who taught us to forgive others even as we have been forgiven. In that spirit, we ask your forgiveness for our suspicions, mistrust, alienation and anger. (Amos 5:14, 24; Luke 17:3-4)

Convention President & All General Convention Attendees:

By God's grace we forgive you. Forgive us for when we have used derogatory language and stereotypes that have been hurtful. (James 4:11)

AUBA Moderator & All AUBA Attendees:

By God's grace, we forgive you. (Matthew 5:23-24)

Convention President & All General Convention Attendees:

Forgive us for our insensitivity to and neglect of your history, experience and contribution to our human and spiritual development.

AUBA Moderator & All AUBA Attendees:

By God's grace, we forgive you.

Convention President & All General Convention Attendees:

Forgive us for our attitude of superiority and our unwillingness to allow you to work with us in partnership in ways that respect your gifts and resources.

AUBA Moderator & All AUBA Attendees:

By God's grace we forgive you. (Colossians 3:13)

Convention President & All General Convention Attendees:

We confess that we have developed structures which have concentrated power and prestige in the hands of members of the dominant culture, and have been silent when, at specific points in our history, we have watched you and others being victimized and unjustly treated.

AUBA Moderator & All AUBA Attendees:

By God's grace we forgive you. (Matthew 7:12)

ASSEMBLY IN UNISON:

Dear God, we earnestly seek to be a people committed to building Your kingdom. We pray that You would heal our brokenness and empower us to work for healing in our relationships. Grant us the courage to put our faith into practice to take the steps necessary for authentic reconciliation. (Matthew 18:18-19; Colossians 3:7, 24)

And So We Covenant Together:

- To commit ourselves to greater sensitivity in the future to the impact of our language, attitudes, and actions.
- To actively and intentionally work for the elimination of racial discrimination and the promotion of racial justice, first within each of us, then within our Baptist family and then, within our broader society, in keeping with the Great Commandment.
- To ensure that the principles of equality, equity for all races, languages and cultures are reflected in the policies, procedures, structures and relations within CBM, our Convention, Associations, and affiliated agencies and boards.
- To confront racism within our Baptist Family, so that we may with integrity and authority speak God's message of reconciliation into our culture and to other people groups around the world. SO HELP US GOD, AMEN.

(Formal Exchange of signed Official Covenant Scroll by Convention President and AUBA Moderator)

**Unity in Diversity:
Celebrating Our Oneness in Christ**

PREAMBLE

Understanding Racism:

Racism is the sin that perceives persons to be inherently inferior to others, simply because of their race. It devalues persons in terms of their dignity and contribution to society.

Racism demands, supports and legitimizes the use of power in order to define, devalue, dominate and discriminate against those considered inferior.

Racism is not simply prejudice. Prejudice leads people to view other groups unfavourably, based on negative preconceived ideas. Prejudice combined with power produces racism which uses the power structures of society to provide privilege for some and disadvantage for others.

Racism is personal and systemic, affecting the structure of institutions both sacred and secular. It provides the social, rational and philosophical justification for debasing, denying and doing violence to persons on the basis of ethnic identity. Consequently, racism results in such dreadful acts as slavery, colonialism, religious wars, the denigration of women and children, the horror of ethnic cleansing, mass murder, the displacement of millions of persons, criminal actions against indigenous people, clan and civil wars and gross violations of civil and human rights. These horrible manifestations may sound distant, and yet have modern equivalents. For example, in our present day it became necessary for the government of Nova Scotia to enact legislation to compel law firms to hire minority lawyers under the threat of loss of government business.

Racism is a spiritual problem which denies our true identity as children of God and diminishes our effectiveness in mission and ministry. Racism is sin.

Historical Relationship between AUBC and CABC:

It may be difficult for churches and individuals in the CABC family to fully understand the pain and lingering effects of overt and covert expressions of racism. However, until we acknowledge our active and passive complicity in the perpetuation of racism our witness as a denomination within Atlantic Canada and the effectiveness of our local ministries will continue to be compromised. Though many

members of the CABC family may not consider themselves racist, they live with advantages and wealth in a society created by a racist past. This past gave rise to unjust practices, many of which continue to this day. Whether through ignorance or indifference, little is done today to address or correct these systemic effects.

Following are a few examples from our Convention relationship and society as a whole which illustrate the above:

- i) David George, the first Black Baptist pastor in Canada and founder of Baptist churches in the US, Canada, and Sierra Leone is rarely celebrated among us. As a result, his name and work is little known when compared to that of his non-Baptist contemporary Henry Alline, a New Light Congregationalist;
- ii) The church David George founded in Birchtown, Shelburne Co., was burned to the ground by white soldiers incensed because George had baptized a white couple;
- iii) In 1827 Black Baptists in Halifax broke from the white Regular Baptists over the issue of their autonomy and control of their church life thus forming the African Baptist Church. Although this predates the AUBA, it does speak to the issue of historical relations between Black and (eventual) Convention Baptist Churches. This development led, in time, to us having a white First Baptist Church in Halifax, when, in fact, the first Baptist church in Halifax was Black.
- iv) At First Baptist, Truro, Black Christians were relegated to the gallery seats, as was the prevailing attitudes of the day. (As a result, Zion Baptist Church, the AUBA church in Truro, was established out of the Black Baptists' distaste for their second class status, and desire for autonomy and liberty in worship.) The 1833 Meetinghouse Covenant for the Calvinists Baptists of Digby and Clements stated: "That there shall be a place reserved for the colored people in the gallery on the north side of the house and at the west end and that no pew holder may sell his pew to colored people.
- v) Local Baptist and Convention support was lacking for Richard Preston, founder of the AUBA. He had to go to England for his further education, and ordination, and even to raise funds to erect a church building in Halifax;

- vi) while the Black churches have always been open to white pastors, it is well documented that black pastors have been predominantly directed to AUBA churches. Many white churches are still closed to black pastors today.
- vii) Although Atlantic Canada has the largest indigenous Black population in the country, there has been a noticeable absence of resource materials pertinent to the life of the Black community and AUBA churches in our Convention and seminary libraries.

The Rise of African Baptist Churches and Association:

The African Baptist churches have a distinct and distinguished history that predates the formation of the Maritime Baptist Convention in 1846. Racial prejudice and racial discrimination led to the formation of separate Black churches through the first half of the 19th Century and to the formation of the African Baptist Association in 1854. Consequently, the AUBA has since its inception functioned more like an independent and autonomous convention in its own right than as one of 21 Associations comprising the broader Baptist Convention family.

Past Responses and Current Action:

In the past, the only visible relationship between CABC and AUBA was largely financial, and restricted to pastoral support for smaller church ministries. While successive Convention and AUBA leadership in the past did not aggressively pursue the need for closer ties, this is no longer the case. Recently, both CABC and AUBA leadership have been working hard to create a closer relationship between the two bodies. In keeping with the call of the Atlanta Covenant, Canadian Baptists attempted a process towards healing at Assembly 2000. Following the 2000 tri-annual Baptist Assembly in Halifax, the CABC declared the first decade of the new millennium the Decade for Eliminating Racism in our structures. This is poignantly reflected in the current official CABC letterhead. This marked a major step forward beyond past Assembly resolutions denouncing racism.

The creation of the CABC Racism Working Group (RWG) in 2001 put structure to the process of achieving the goal. **Since its inception the RWG has done much work, including the following:**

- i) sensitizing members to the issue of racism by providing opportunities for personal stories, and dealing with questions related to racism in personal, community and church experience;

- ii) publishing a ground-breaking brochure acknowledging racism in our Convention, and setting out a clear mandate and vision for dismantling racism as it is experienced throughout our Baptist community in Atlantic Canada;
- iii) organizing sensitivity training workshops for Convention Council and senior staff;
- iv) holding consultative meetings with the appropriate leaders and staff of our two educational institutions (Acadia Divinity College & Atlantic Baptist University), to inform them of the work of the RWG and to encourage them to address these issues at the academic levels;
- v) serving as a resource to Associations in highlighting the issues;
- vi) suggesting to Council and AUBA Executive to designate 2007 Assembly as a Joint Assembly, dedicated to the Racism theme;
- vii) leading the planning and preparations for this year's Joint Assembly; and
- viii) providing yearly progress report and update at all Assembly and AUBA Annual Sessions.

We celebrate and highlight other noteworthy developments:

- Since the formation of the RWG, it has been reported to us that all Convention Committees, Boards and Working Groups are sensitive to ensuring gender equality and proportional representation relative to the AUBA
- There has been a steady increase of members of the AUBA serving on CABC boards and committees.
- The recent election of two Convention Presidents who are of African ancestry; the appointment of Dr. Lionel Moriah to the faculty of ADC, and the establishment of an Equity Award Bursary at ABU.

We have worked hard as a group to carry out the mandate entrusted to us by this Assembly. This is how we arrived here today.