

RESOLUTION OF REPENTANCE, APOLOGY AND RESOLVE

WHEREAS, we Cumberland Presbyterians are considering the call of God to “Go” during this 186th meeting of the General Assembly; and

WHEREAS, Jesus sent the twelve with these instructions: “As you go, proclaim the good news. The kingdom of heaven has come near. Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons.” (Matthew 10:7-8); and

WHEREAS, we seek the healing of our divisions as Cumberland Presbyterians; and

WHEREAS, the Cumberland Presbyterian Church was founded in 1810 in Dickson County, Tennessee, USA, and grew rapidly in a nation that endorsed, participated in, and benefited from the practice of enslaving African men, women and children who were brought to this nation through the brutal trans-Atlantic slave trade; and

WHEREAS, the Cumberland Presbyterian Church was inconsistent in its condemnation of American slavery as an institution -- an institution that condoned the buying and selling of persons made in the image of God; an institution in which African American families were often separated, and individuals were beaten and abused in body and mind; and

WHEREAS, the Cumberland Presbyterian Church often condoned the segregation of its African American members into separate balconies, congregations, and classes because of the influence of cultural ideas of racial superiority and inferiority; and

WHEREAS, the Cumberland Presbyterian Church refused to allow its African American members full and equal membership following emancipation and the end of slavery; organizing instead separate congregations, presbyteries, and other judicatories that were denied representation in the General Assembly, and

WHEREAS, the Cumberland Presbyterian Church encouraged and supported the organization of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America (originally the Colored Cumberland Presbyterian Church) in 1874 in order to avoid the difficult work of integration, and to avoid offending its members who continued to hold fast to ideas of racial superiority; and

WHEREAS, the Cumberland Presbyterian Church was complicit in accepting Jim Crow segregation, lynching as a means of social control, economic oppression of freed slaves, and denial of educational opportunities; and

WHEREAS, the Cumberland Presbyterian Church and the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America have both suffered from their separation, a separation that is harmful to the witness of the Church and a denial of our oneness in Christ; and

WHEREAS, the Cumberland Presbyterian Church laments the loss of friendship, gifts and graces from which our life, worship, witness and service would have been enriched had we not been separated all these years; and

WHEREAS, the Cumberland Presbyterian Church affirms the providence of God, whose purpose it is “that the whole creation be set free from its bondage to sin and death, and be renewed in Jesus Christ” (COF, 1.15); and

WHEREAS, the Cumberland Presbyterian Church acknowledges our ongoing need for repentance, so that “In response to God’s initiative to restore relationships, (we) make honest confession of sins against God, (our) brothers and sisters, and all of creation, and amend the past so far as is in (our) power.” (COF, 4.07); therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Cumberland Presbyterian Church repent and seek God’s forgiveness for the many ways we have benefitted from, participated in, condoned, and been blind to our role in racism, oppression of our African American brothers and sisters, and all forms of brutality; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Cumberland Presbyterian Church apologize to our African American brothers and sisters, seek their forgiveness, and work to restore the broken relationships our sin has caused; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Cumberland Presbyterian Church commit itself to preach the Word of God without compromise, and that we resolve to “oppose, resist, and seek to change all circumstances of oppression -- political, economic, cultural, racial, by which persons are denied the essential dignity God intends for them in the work of creation (COF, 6.30). We seek to promote reconciliation, love and justice among all persons, classes, races, and nations: (COF, 6.32). (Quoted in the Resolution Marking the 50th year since the end of World War II, by Japan Presbytery of the CPC)

- Adopted by the 186th General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, meeting in Nashville, Tennessee on June 23, 2016