



NETWORKING THE BAPTIST FAMILY TO IMPACT THE WORLD FOR CHRIST

BWA General Council Resolution 2022.4

SLAVERY REPARATIONS

The Baptist World Alliance General Council, meeting in Birmingham, Alabama, USA, July 10-15, 2022:

ACKNOWLEDGES important local, national, and global conversations about chattel slavery, its enduring generational impacts, and the possibilities of reparations to repair the damage for wealth stolen from centuries of forced labor.

COMMENDS Baptists for engaging in important conversations and steps toward reparations at meetings of the BWA and some BWA member bodies, so that this issue is not merely considered in the realms of various governments and secular universities and corporations.

AFFIRMS the biblical basis for reparations in the books of law (Exodus 22:1; Leviticus 6:1-7; Numbers 5:5-7), the proclamation of King David (2 Samuel 12:6), the wisdom literature (Proverbs 6:31), the prophets (Ezekiel 33:15-16), and the example of Zacchaeus that led to Jesus proclaiming that “today salvation has come to this house” (Luke 19:1-10). Throughout the scriptures, those guilty of stealing from others must pay back in full—and sometimes four or seven times as much.

RECOGNIZES also the biblical teachings about the sabbath year and the year of jubilee (Exodus 23:10-11; Leviticus 25:1-55; Deuteronomy 15:1-18), which included freeing persons from bondage (with payment) instead of creating a system of lifelong, hereditary enslavement.

NOTES the theological importance throughout biblical teachings of the call to “remember that you were slaves in Egypt,” which was to impact how the people of God behaved toward others.

CONDEMNS slavery in all forms, especially the racist system of chattel slavery fueled by the transatlantic slave trade of the 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries—as well as the violence, family separation, torture, rape, and murder that sustained this system.

LAMENTS that many Baptist clergy, laypersons, churches, and institutions supported chattel slavery with spurious theological claims and/or enriched themselves from the transatlantic slave trade and/or the enslavement of their fellow humans.

RECOGNIZES that the economic, political, psychological, and spiritual impacts of chattel slavery and the transatlantic slave trade did not end but continue to impact many communities and nations today – including those of many BWA member bodies.

RECALLS that in numerous cases the enslavers received significant reparations once the enslaved persons were freed, including in Washington, D.C., France (from Haiti), and in the United Kingdom (for holdings in colonies in the Caribbean and Africa).

REMEMBERS examples of reparations efforts for other injustices—such as in South Africa for apartheid violence, in Canada for its residential school system, in the U.S. for the internment of Japanese Americans, and in Germany for the Holocaust. Many other injustices demand reparations, including ones for which Baptists in various countries could advocate.

CALLS on older Baptist churches, colleges, unions, and other institutions to thoroughly study their own history and publicly acknowledge institutional and leadership ties to chattel slavery, and then explore ways to repair the damage from previous support for and profiting from slavery.

URGES Baptist individuals and institutions to participate in reparations conversations in their own communities and national governments.

ABOUT THE BWA

Since its formation in 1905, the Baptist World Alliance has networked the global Baptist family to impact the world for Christ with a commitment to strengthen worship, fellowship and unity; lead in mission and evangelism; respond to people in need through aid, relief, and community development; defend religious freedom, human rights, and justice; and advance theological reflection and leadership development.

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