

# **Buckner trustees denounce 'racism in all its forms'**

July 15, 2020

DALLAS—Trustees of Buckner International unanimously approved a statement repudiating “racism, injustice and racial inequality” and pledging to ensure the organization’s racial diversity.

During their summer board meeting July 10, trustees approved the statement they titled “A Call for Love, Justice and Racial Reconciliation.”

The statement affirms both the board and Buckner’s “commitment to racial reconciliation” and states that the organization is “committed to seeking opportunities to inclusively explore and engage in significant conversations about racism today. As an organization, we denounce racism in all its forms as being inconsistent with Scripture and with Buckner’s Christian mission.”

## **'Strong history of racial inclusion'**

“Buckner has a strong history of racial inclusion among our staff and those we serve, but our board wanted to publicly affirm where we stand on this issue,” said Board Chair Rodney Henry, a Longview physician. “We wanted a statement that clearly articulated our views about the evils of racism and one that calls for action. This statement accomplishes both.”

Buckner President and CEO Albert Reyes agreed, saying that while the organization’s workforce is 67 percent non-white and the majority of clients are people of color, “it is important for Buckner to say publicly where we stand.



Albert Reyes visits a classroom at a primary school in Bungoma, Kenya. The school is run by Buckner Kenya, the organization's affiliated Non-Governmental Organization. (Buckner photo by Mark Sandlin)

"We're by no means perfect, but we have done some things right. Still, we realize that this is more than a fad or a temporary issue. As followers of Jesus, our board and the organization must keep justice and racial reconciliation front and center."

The board statement affirms "the need to strengthen our commitment to be a vibrant and racially diverse organization. We commit to listening intentionally to those affected by racism and will take steps to increase racial and ethnic diversity among our employees, board, and those we serve."

Henry said board members were clear in their desire that the statement include actions that can be measured to ensure progress.

"Buckner is an action-oriented ministry, so the board felt that any statement we issue should also include action that can be accomplished. We wanted a verbal expression of how we feel, but one that also says what we will do," he said.

# Committed to ‘tangible and systemic changes’

The statement says that Buckner is “committed to instituting and promoting tangible and systemic changes to ensure fair and equitable policies and practices and to holding individuals accountable for such actions and activities that contradict these policies and practices.”

“We believe that the power of transformation comes from Jesus Christ,” Reyes said. “The board of trustees and our entire organization is rooted in Scripture, so when we talk about justice and reconciliation, a relationship with Christ is at the core of what we mean. We believe peace, justice and reconciliation are ultimately found in Jesus.”

Quoting the late civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr., the statement cites King’s words “that love has within it a redemptive power, a power that eventually transforms individuals.”

The statement ends with a commitment to “greater ethnic and racial diversity in all aspects of Buckner International” and acknowledges “that although we are imperfect people, we nonetheless commit ourselves to the redemptive power of God’s love that transforms not only each of us individually, but our world.”