

Racial reconciliation must start with churches, pastors say

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Jeff Warren is pastor of [Park Cities Baptist Church](#) in North Dallas. Bryan Carter is pastor of [Concord Church](#) in South Dallas. Both congregations are large, and both pastors are excellent communicators. The surface similarities end there.



Dallas pastors Jeff Warren of Park Cities Baptist Church and Bryan Carter of Concord Church led a dialogue on racial reconciliation at the Movement Day Greater Dallas event. “Let me just tell you straight up—we are white; we are white,” Warren said as the two men began their joint session on the gospel and racial reconciliation at [Movement Day Greater Dallas](#). “We seek to be less white than we are, but yeah.”

More than 2,500 people attended the second-year event, representing a diverse cultural and ethnic constituency of Christian leadership from business, education, health care, nonprofit organizations, government and

churches. The goal of the gathering is to transform the city through the cooperative efforts of God's people.

"His church is white; my church is black," Carter added. "We are here to talk about: How do we bridge the gaps? How do we make Dallas greater by connecting and not allowing our races to separate us?"

Responses to 'Black Lives Matter'

Following the turmoil in Ferguson, Mo., and the death of Eric Garner in New York City, Warren said, he began to write about race and used the hashtag #blacklivesmatter.

"I did so knowing, frankly, how some white folk would respond—but a preacher's got to preach. And sure enough, I waited, and in came the response: 'All lives matter.' Missing the point altogether. If you're sitting there thinking, 'What's the point?' you're probably white," Warren said.

"White people don't understand what it is to live in a culture—in a nation—where you believe, and it may be the case, that some people might think your race does not matter. White people don't understand this," he said.



Jim Denison of the Denison Forum on Truth and Culture spoke at the event in Dallas. Previous speakers noted Dallas is home to some of the largest populations of both affluent and poor people. Following up, Warren said: “Dallas is the tale of two cities. But we believe the gospel is the answer, and the church is the vehicle through which racial reconciliation will come.”

That will only happen after a time of introspection and confession, he said.

“We must come before God Almighty, because he knows our hearts, and come before each other and admit we are all wrong. We’re all wrong. The problem is what the Bible calls sin.

“We’ve got to recognize that I’m a sinner in need of rescue—I am the problem,” Warren said.

Several key principles allow racial reconciliation to become a reality, Carter said.

For racial reconciliation to occur, it must be intentional, he said.

“The truth of the matter is that we are all sinful, and we are all broken. Out

of that brokenness, we are divided racially, economically, culturally, socially and geographically. It is the gospel that becomes that central point of reconciliation,” Carter said.

“Reconciliation” comes from a Greek word that means to undergo a change for the better, he noted. “The idea behind this word is to put something down to pick up something better. It is to put down prejudices; it is to put down indifference; it is to put down unforgiveness; it is to put down a grievance in order to exchange it for oneness and togetherness.

Reconciliation requires a first step

“At the end of the day, we can pray about racial reconciliation, read about racial reconciliation, talk about racial reconciliation, but it still requires a first step. When we think about how God reconciled us unto himself, he took the first step. He took the first step by sending his Son, Jesus Christ, to die on a cross to reconcile us back to him.”



Buckner International

was one of many non-profit groups with booths at the Movement Day Greater Dallas event. Since the first Movement Day last January, Carter's and Warren's lives have been connected. They have met for lunch, texted one another and generally kept in touch, Carter said. "We've committed to taking first steps."

Racial reconciliation also is relational, Warren pointed out.

"The gospel moves at the speed of relationships. It's always been that way," he said.

It's important to remember, however, that the gospel is the driving force, he added.

"I hear a lot of Christians talk about Jesus as being our example—more than they talk about him being our substitution," he explained. "Jesus is not our good example. He is our substitution. If Christ is only our good example, that is not good news. That's bad news, because whatever he would do, he would do it perfectly. And so what has happened is the gospel has become no news, because we think Christianity is just another religion, it's one of the best of all religions, but it's just another religion: 'Do this and do this and work hard.'"

A new identity in Christ

"If there is ever going to be transformation in our city, if we're going to see the racial divide in our city bridged in our city, it is going to happen because the gospel gets ahold of each of us. It's going to happen in my life, and I'm going to realize I've got a new identity in Christ. I'm going to love others without any love in return because all the love I need I've already found in Christ."



“It was Pastor Bryan Loritts who recently said this: ‘My blackness must always be trumped by my Jesusness.’ This is true,” Warren added. “My whiteness must always be trumped by my Jesusness. I am white. That’s part of my identity. But at the core of my identity, who I am, because I have been saved by Christ, because his spirit dwells in me, I am first a child of God.

“And I see the world differently. Dr. (Martin Luther) King said it: ‘I’ve decided to stick with love. Hate is too great a burden to bear.’”

“This is Christ’s great prayer for the church: ‘That they may be one even as we are one’ (John 17:11). That we would be one. That Bryan and I would be one. That all of us we be one. We are asked to come into this Trinitarian dance of perfect love and then to love one another the same way,” he said.

Grace trumps everything

“If your church is truly a gospel-centered church, then grace is going to trump everything. And grace leads to inclusion—by nature, everyone is invited to the foot of the cross. Inclusion leads to diversity, and then diversity leads to one of two things: It leads either to conflict, or it leads to celebration. If it leads to celebration, it is proof that grace abounds, and you are in a gospel-centered church.

“It is not going to be white guilt or black anger that solves the problem. It’s going to be the gospel. It’s going to be us loving others and befriending others,” Warren said.

“If you don’t know people of color, you cannot say that you love them. You cannot say you understand someone you do not know, and you can’t love someone you do not know,” he added.

Reconciliation also is a biblical thing, Carter reminded participants through the reading of several Scripture passages, focusing on Ephesians 2:14-16. The passage deals with Christ's death on the cross making Jew and Gentile Christians all one people.

'We are one church'

"There was a God-ordained Christian community perspective that we all ought to be in harmony," he said. "That there is no black church, white church, Hispanic church, Asian church, but in God's eyes, we are one church.

"The truth of the matter is that our greatest commonality is not our skin color or our social status or our economic status, but our shared status of being the adopted children of God.

"Billy Graham said these words, 'The greatest hindrance to effective evangelism around the world is the racism that still exists in the body of Christ.'

"Perhaps it's true that if racial reconciliation is not importance to us, then maybe we need to question our own salvation, because reconciliation is at the core of our gospel. It is at the core of who we are—our ability to connect with others and live in harmony despite our differences is found at the cross of Jesus Christ.

"That cross reflects a great cost, so when you choose to go about racial reconciliation, it's going to cost you something. It's going to cost you some awkward moments, because you're trying to get to know someone who may be a little different than you. It may cost you some friends or church members who may not embrace the idea. But the cost we pay is a small cost compared to what Christ paid to reconcile us."