The Mission of the Social Justice Commission of the Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc. is to create and sustain a cohesive social unit, composed of churches, pastors, and members of The Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc., advocating for equity, justice and fairness for Black people across the world and especially in the United States of America.

We will accomplish our mission by strengthening communication between our constituents, and like-minded organizations, by demonstrating and developing, or joining, where we deem appropriate, direct action campaigns.

The foundation that supports our mission is best stated in three declarations put forth in three major U.S. cities, Washington, D.C., Birmingham, AL, and New York, NY

We invite you to read our declarations and join us as we confront and resist the evils of:

1. The lie of white supremacy
2. Mass Incarceration
3. Cultural exploitation
4. Theft of land and labor
5. Misogyny
THE D.C. DECLARATION STATEMENT

America is in Crisis

EPHESIANS 6:12-13

12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Once again, the body of Christ has been called upon by God to witness to the creative power of love, Justice, mercy and righteousness over the cruel and infernal powers of darkness that has usurped God’s creation and bent it to the will of political corruption, cruelty, avarice and greed. But the forces of darkness however apparent their ascendency may seem at this present hour, shall not ultimately prevail.

For the struggle before us is more than a mere contest of political will and ideological difference but rather a clear and consequential contest betwixt the darkness and the light. We will determine whether this nation shall go boldly forward into the future or cower in the shadows of an antiquated tribalism and join the list of the morally bankrupt fallen empires whose rattling bones crowd the dustbin of history- a rattling siren song that seems to have captured the moral and political imagination of far too many of our fellow patriots.

We stand firmly planted in a spiritual tradition committed to freedom in the deepest sense. And who better to understand its nature and value than those most often and most readily deprived of its blessings? We are here because we are devoted to the ideals of justice and equality as indicated in the noblest articulations of the American ideal; but not as mere abstractions to be touted emptyly in idolatrous celebrations of an ideal American self that does not exist. We are here not to simply reinforce rhetorical commitments to abstract principles proclaimed in high places that never manage to trickle down to “the least of these”; but to demand practical responses to the concrete failures of our Republic to guarantee these realities in everyday experience. So, it can be said indeed(!) all lives matter in the abstract but clearly you must be reminded that Black lives matter in the concrete.
The African American Christian Church occupies a uniquely strategic position in the present situation being seated at the spiritual center of the political whirlwind now rocking the foundation of the American Republic; a whirlwind driven, we firmly believe, by the unfinished business of America’s stormy legacy of White racism and its perniciously torrid spawn. As the Christian Church we, in principle, stand apart from those on the left and the right. As the body of Christ, we do not serve as mere mascots of the liberal left, sent by patronizing paternalists to serve as point on the head of their ideological spear. Nor do we set horses with those of the religious right who hide their rampant racism and hysterical hypocrisy amidst the existential ruins of a morally and theologically bankrupt spirituality. We unabashedly declare with the Apostle Paul (Ephesians 3:10-11), “His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

We have called this press conference in part because we realize that to ignore this reality, that is to say the pivotal role of race and spirituality in our present malaise is to court disaster in the upcoming mid-term elections. America, we have a problem.

Stated succinctly: the American Republic is in crisis. In light of this crisis we are compelled to remind America and her leaders of some essential truths.

1) Authentic and integral leadership is not pandering to public opinion in such a crisis. It may call for the sacrifice of mundane personal preoccupations with one’s political career on the sacred altar of the common good.

2) Journalism is not treating both sides of an issue as equally valuable because they appear to be held by two or more opposing but substantial parties; but rather in subjecting both sides equally to the truth regardless of who comes out ahead in the assessment. We reject the notion that an opinion or a position is of equal worth just because someone (usually White) happens to hold it.

3) “No kingdom divided against itself can stand.’ (We) believe this government cannot endure, permanently half suffering arbitrary state surveillance, subjugation and cruelty] and half free.”

4) It is absolutely crucial to vote. But we hasten to add that it is not enough to remind people of an abstract obligation to vote. It is time for the powers to be to give the people a positive reason to vote. No version of the politics of fear is acceptable. Relying on cheap, morally tinged rhetorical tricks and manipulation instead of dealing practically with substantial issues particularly on race questions is what got us back here in the first place.

5) The presidency of Donald Trump is not the cause of the American malady but a symptom, a consequence, an effect; although by the aide and abetting of the present administration the sickness has received license and worsened.

6) It is Christian heresy to call any nation that forsakes the needy, the sick, the poor or mistreats the foreigner in their midst, blessed. This is to say the policy and practices of the current administration and the party in power are clearly and irredeemably Anti-Christ.

7) You can identify the true Christian Church by what it identifies with. The true Church identifies with the poor, the prisoner and the oppressed; the vulnerable and the at risk; the sick and the disabled; the lost and the mentally ill. The Christian Church cedes preeminence and affirms the primacy of the Kingdom of God in all matters finite and eternal. The Body of Christ does not identify with the interests of empire. It does not identify with the principle of profit or power over persons. It does not identify with racial supremacy. No true Christian believer prioritizes patriotism over piety or assumes the false equivalence of God and country. The identification with Christ and his Kingdom supersedes and relativizes ALL other worldly commitments.
PROGRESSIVE NATIONAL BAPTIST CONVENTION, INC.
Dr. Timothy Stewart, National President

THE BIRMINGHAM DECLARATION

In various and sundry times throughout its history the Christian Church has been called upon by exigent circumstances in its native context to respond spiritually to social, cultural, economic and political crises. These responses often came up short either because the Church establishment was beholden to the political hierarchies of its day, or the church was anxious about its status in the world or the cultural comfort level of its constituency, or its financial or worldly interests were bound up with the principalities and powers of its age or perhaps it honestly failed to adequately assess prevailing circumstances. Nevertheless, these failures jeopardized the Church’s witness and its spiritual integrity in subsequent generations. This judgment was not always apparent at the time. However, after sufficient time had elapsed the Church’s complicity with oppressive and exploitative regimes became apparent. These titanic forces of systemic degradation wash over history like a tidal wave leaving human lives, hopes, potential and entire races of people ruined in its wake. In America and the West in general, this process of degradation has been sanitized in the master narrative through the claims of progress and moralized to the advantage of the privileged by the spiritually bankrupt profession of the “white man’s burden.”

People of color, particularly those with African ancestry have historically been the most degraded of these peoples in the modern world and, time and again, the larger Church has failed to respond meaningfully except for perhaps in the aftermath. In the aftermath of systemic devastation, the larger Church works at a safe distance from the command of Christ to risk all for the cause of the Kingdom. By dealing only in the aftermath of systemic devastation the larger Christian Church, mainly the White Church (but also those who buy into their flawed theological presuppositions), create a moral loophole where it can leave the assumptions of White supremacy intact, reaping the morally illegitimate harvest of oppressive and exploitative privilege, while at the same time preserving a semblance of Christian commitment; enough of a semblance to reinforce White supremacy through a veneer of moral and spiritual authority.

Here in Birmingham we are faced with a resurgence of this spiritual deformity and moral monstrosity, which even threatens to consume the liberative vision of the African American Christian Church. Recent events have again brought this apparently benign but indeed cancerous malignancy to the fore. We are therefore, as Christian pastors and ministers, compelled by circumstance to respond faithfully to the call of Christ to resist this resurgent moral, spiritual and indeed Christian theological heresy in the living moment. We understand the Church to be in crisis. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to establish and defend its theological perimeter in order to protect and preserve the integrity of its witness.
We come to this historical moment deeply disturbed by the overwhelming confluence of troubling dynamics that have converged in a potentially devastating tide of spiritual, political and cultural chaos. For some it appears that the current crisis emerged rather suddenly with the ascent of the present presidential administration, which through a torrent of lies, innuendo, perverted public policy initiatives and Machiavellian machinations simply overwhelmed our capacity to absorb and process it all. But the current crisis is no flash flood. The debris laden tide swelling around us is laced with pathogens years in the making. Were the waters to recede with an overnight impeachment, the landscape of American life would yet remain scarred for years after and the soil of our republic, poisoned by the toxins left in its wake. Nor will the unwholesome aftermath be so easily cleared, nor the atmosphere so quickly cleansed of airborne disease. And it’s still raining.

As with any flood the thin veneer of carelessly laid coverings is washed away exposing what is often the wretched corruption of what lies beneath. Issues declared dead and long thought laid to rest but merely buried alive eddy to the surface in swirling conflict. Issues of race, of labor, of economic justice, of the bill of rights, issues of education such as the fair administration and allocation of resources, of criminal justice etc., all covered by the thin sediment of sentimentally cheap religious ideologies of togetherness and glib, self-congratulatory discussions of incremental progress re-emerge as the deep fractures in the bedrock of our socio-cultural topography are once again exposed. And the fissures run deep.

The marauding waters of our current historical surge, running roughshod and reckless has failed, in the nature of the case, to discriminate between our cherished social institutions leaving the Church of Jesus Christ no less damaged and exposed than the other artifices and edifices of our cherished American experiment.

Exposed is the spiritual rot, moral corruption and the delusional racism at the heart of White Conservative Evangelicalism.

Exposed is its root and ground in an idolatrous worship of Whiteness masquerading as the Christian Faith.
Exposed is the idolatrous worship of Whiteness as the ultimate ground of value and final arbiter of all values heretofore referred to simply as American or Christian, such as Democracy, freedom, the rule of law, Justice and Christian Faith.

Exposed is the complicity of many African American preachers and parishioners who betray their worship at the same altar, gouging their own eyes in an act of devotional sacrifice to tap the source of their supreme validation.

Exposed is the intersection where the worship of Whiteness and an adulterous Christian religion are wedded Ideologically to an exploitative and predatory economic system.

Exposed is the virtual identity of White Christian Nationalism and White Evangelical Christianity betrayed by the invocation of the Divine to sanction the subduction of our deepest value claims, shameful crimes and transparent political corruption for the sole purpose of shoring up the decaying underpinnings of Western White Supremacy and identity. In the end the Conservative Evangelical Right is no less nihilistic than they claim the relativistic liberal left to be. And it is no wonder since each share in the same self-righteous presumption of Whiteness filtered through related but alternative semantic grids. But at the core of both is an identity that supersedes God as the Supreme source of human worth and the arbiter of value.

Exposed is the false narrative of a White righteous America, to which all others are at best an addendum and at worse a contaminant of its otherwise God ordained perfection. We see clearly what you are.

Over against the collapse of the more popular expressions of the Christian Faith into the spiritual rot of a Materialistic, Nationalistic, Corporatized Americanity thinly veiled by the sanctimonious odor of enthusiastic Pentecostalism, comes THE CLEAR CALL OF GOD IN CHRIST TO RESIST!

Unlike the objective of Martin Luther King Jr.’s Letter From A Birmingham Jail this is no plea for cooperation but rather the wholesale condemnation of the complete prostitution of the Christian Faith; of the idolatrous worship of Whiteness and the heretical synthesis of God and Nation. We condemn and resist the moral bankruptcy of a perverted form of the Christian Faith in Black and White that affirms as Divinely ordered and sanctioned an economic system that places profit over people; the religion of wealth, the idolatry of celebrity; the culture of greed that encourages a criteria of success defined by the abundance of one’s possessions or American Middle Class status as the summum bonum of life; and finally the merciless exploitation of ignorant but trusting sentimentality to the detriment of the spiritual wellbeing of persons, the environment, the other or the most vulnerable among us.

We hear anew, in this hour and in THIS world the summons of the Apostle Paul, “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” (Romans 12:2)

Likewise, we reject and resist the claim of the more cynical among us that the Christian Faith is the White Man’s religion or that justice is tangential to the thrust of God’s redemptive work in human history declared in and through the person of Jesus the Christ and sustained through the activity of the Holy Ghost. The fact that slave holders and those who trafficked in the souls of folk throughout Western History sought to either excuse, dilute or otherwise obscure the Biblical testimony to God’s emancipatory providence gives eloquent testimony to the revolutionary potential of God’s Word wherever oppression abounds. For, “By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.” (Hebrews 11:24-27)

We are the Christian Resistance. And this is the CRM, the Christian Resistance Movement.