

September 2, 2023

Greetings,

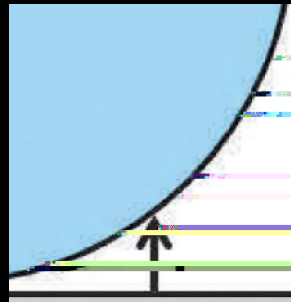
Once again, I am pleased to present *Journeying Toward Reconciliation Together*, the diversity strategic plan for Messiah University. This document represents the collective efforts of a university community dedicated to diversity and inclusive excellence grounded in our Christ-centered mission of service, leadership, and reconciliation. Each year the plan has grown more robust and this year is no exception. Among the many highlights of this year's diversity strategic plan are:

- x An expanded commitment and embrace of diversity to encompass action items related to accessibility in terms of disability, neurodivergency, and language.
- x Continued support for the recruitment and retention of a more diverse student body resulting in a combined incoming class this year of 26% students of color placing our overall undergraduate student of color population at 22.4% as we continue to reach the University strategic plan goal of 25% by 2025.
- x Growth in campuswide use of professional development resources in diversity and inclusive excellence.

State of
the University address, this is Messiah's moment. May the plan here submitted and the work we do to fulfill these commitments bring us not only closer to our institutional goals, but may they also bring glory and honor to our Lord and Savior.

As we journey together,

Dr. Todd Allen
Vice President for Diversity Affairs
Messiah University



Reconciliation and Messiah University: Pursuing our Christ-Centered Calling

George Pickens, Emerson Powery, and Cynthia Wells¹

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us.

So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us.

2 Corinthians 5:17-20a

Reconciliation is at the heart of Christianity, the “inspiration and focus of the Christian faith”². A biblical teaching, an action and a process, reconciliation is grounded in the conviction that through Jesus Christ God has made peace with and between humanity and all creation. The embodiment of this alternative way of being, living and relating is a test of the Gospel’s presence in the world, and a most valuable and hopeful contribution Christianity can make to the world.

The journey toward reconciliation is central to Messiah University. The three theological strands that inform Messiah’s identity all emphasize reconciliation, proclaiming and demonstrating the need and promise for individuals to be reconciled with God and with each other.³ Messiah’s “embracing evangelical spirit” proclaims its intention to demonstrate

news of reconciliation through cultivating a welcoming and gracious environment, and its mission is to be a formative community for the work of reconciliation.

The term reconciliation is embedded in Messiah's foundational documents. The fifth of the University's five foundational values depicts reconciliation as central to the Gospel and links reconciliation with an ethic of service and the pursuit of justice.⁴ Furthermore, reconciliation appears prominently in the University's statement of mission: Our mission is to educate men and women toward maturity of intellect, character, and Christian faith in preparation for lives of service, leadership, and reconciliation in church and society.

Because the work of reconciliation is so deeply embedded in its past and present, Messiah University's journey toward reconciliation with God, each other and with all creation is essential to the faithful fulfillment of its identity and mission.

Reconciliation: A Biblical Story

The Bible testifies to the story of reconciliation between God and the world. It is also a witness to reconciliation between God

immigrants (Lev 19:10; Deut 24:14); to seek the benefits of the Sabbath for all (Exod 20:10); to include non-Israelites in Israel's worship practices (Num 9:14; 15:14-16). The story of "Ruth" is a classic example, in which a Moabite woman cared for her widowed Israelite mother-in-law and, eventually, became an ancestor of Israel's most memorable king,⁷ David.

The Prophets attempted to hold Israel accountable to God's covenant. Their charge associates fair treatment of the "immigrant" (CEB) along with acts of kindness toward the Israelite widow and orphan (Jer 7:6; 22:3; Zech 7:10; Mal 3:5). Several prophets envisioned the Lord's Temple as a place of reconciliation for all nations (Isa 56:7; Zech 8:23). The prophets envisioned a future in which God – who loves justice (Isa 61:8) – places God's spirit on the people of God to bind up broken hearts (Isa 61:1), to

Moreover, Gentile inclusion energized Paul's mission. Paul recalls one of the grand confessions of the early church – a confession offered at its baptismal ceremonies: "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in

This past connects to the present and future in our journey toward reconciliation and this shared journey is the third component of the work of reconciliation. Scripture and Christian history confirm that reconciliation is a goal of our faith, and yet it is always a work in progress. Reconciliation is a journey toward a preferred future; it is always incomplete, and its final destination is still to come. Educating God's people and the world about God's purposes is a necessary part of this journey, and Messiah University is called to this educational task.

Embracing our Call to Reconciliation

As an extension of its Christ-centered mission, Messiah University strives to be an academic community that faithfully responds to the ministry of reconciliation. Reconciliation is a commitment to which Messiah University has already laid claim. It is not a new mission, even as the nature of this work must adapt to address both new divisions as well as existing divides seen through fresh eyes. Toward this end, our collective efforts to embrace our calling as reconcilers must be holistic and comprehensive, originating in our loving response to God's unconditional love for us and embodied in our efforts to love our neighbor.

We can heed the words of Messiah University alumnus Dr. Ernest L. Boyer Sr. who

Attending to the character of our university is foundational to fulfilling our calling to reconciliation. Thus, we endeavor to engage with each other across the university in order to repair our communal brokenness. Recognizing that we are journeying together toward new ways of being and doing, professional and spiritual growth opportunities guide us toward both deeper understanding and restorative action. Through both personal and communal growth, we endeavor to provide an environment that beckons all members of our community to participate in our shared vocation in reconciling individuals with God, with each other, and with all of creation.

The ministry of reconciliation requires distinctive leadership skills and a commitment to the service of others for the sake of Christ. This means listening with compassion to those who have experienced brokenness because of inequities and lamenting the ways our community falls short of God's perfect vision. This also entails boldly speaking up for restorative justice for the benefit of the common good and encouraging others as they demonstrate a commitment to reconciliation. Ultimately, all members of the university must model long participation in the journey of reconciliation.

As an academic community, we endeavor to provide an education that beckons students to join the journey of reconciliation. Simply put, Messiah University students must discern their Christian calling to be reconciled. Toward this end, students will comprehend the Biblical rootedness of reconciliation, including recognizing that all of humanity is created in the image of God and cultivating an ethic that focuses on healing in the world. Moreover, it is our genuine hope that students learn to see the world through the lens of compassion and to refine their decisions and actions in and for a life-long pursuit of justice.

Education programs cultivate the vocational vision graduates will need to embody a sustained commitment to God's ministry of reconciliation in the world. Thus, educational

programs across the university demonstrate our institutional commitment to reconciliation.

Students are taught to grow through the tensions inherent in learning and serving with others whose life experiences differ from their own. Students participate in transformative educational experiences both on and off campus that model

STRATEGIC PLAN FOR DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE

ROLLING STRATEGIC PLANNING

(THEMES & GOALS)

THEME ONE — Foundational Outcomes

The purpose of foundational outcomes is to systematize a sustainable, mission-driven infrastructure committed to diversity and inclusive excellence.

Goal: **Develop and implement appropriate structures including procedures, processes, policies, resources, and assessment that intentionally drive decision making around diversity and inclusive excellence.**

THEME TWO — Compositional Outcomes

The purpose of compositional outcomes is to recruit, retain, and develop a community of students, faculty, staff and administrators who help facilitate the University's commitment to diversity and inclusive excellence.

Goal: **Implement and assess recruitment and retention strategies to increase rates of domestic and international diversity of both undergraduate and graduate students.**

Goal: **Implement and assess strategies to effectively recruit, hire, and retain employees from historically underrepresented populations at all levels of the university.**

THEME THREE — Campus Climate Outcomes

The purpose of campus climate outcomes is to nurture the capacity of members of the University community to create and sustain a campus environment that is healthy and welcoming for all.

Goal: **Promote a campus climate marked by a commitment to diversity, inclusive excellence, and reconciliation in which all members of the University feel a sense of belonging.**

THEME FOUR — Educational Outcomes

The purpose of educational outcomes is to advance the development of an innovative and sustainable educational program that enables and equips educators, co-curricular educators, staff and students to critically and compassionately understand diversity and inclusive excellence.

Goal: **The University will develop educational programs, as well as provide support for teaching, scholarship, and institutional service in ways that promote diversity, inclusive excellence, and cultural intelligence.**