

# “Reconciliation and Our Call to Justice”

Pastor Megan Berry

## FOUNDATIONS of Faith

Fall 2025 Sermon Series

Sunday, September 21, 2025

“Reconciliation and Our Call to Justice” | Isaiah 61:1-4 | Pastor Megan Berry

Today, we will be learning a bit more about the Confession of 1967, so aptly named because it was written in 1967 in response to some questions about whether the Westminster Confession and Catechisms were still the confessions we wanted to use and learn from. So, while C67 may seem like a poor title, part of the reason it was titled this way was because the men who wrote it wanted the confession to be a confession for its time, not for all time. And they wanted to start reinforcing the idea that confessions were written in a time and space for a certain audience, and while many ideas may remain timeless like reconciliation, some of the language we learn and grow from may need to adapt as we continue to learn.

One of the confessions' major themes is that of reconciliation. The confession states

*“God’s reconciling work in Jesus Christ and the mission of reconciliation to which he has called his church are the heart of the gospel in any age. Our generation stands in peculiar need of reconciliation in Christ. Accordingly, this Confession of 1967 is built upon that theme.”*

And so, it is built upon that theme. As we weave our way through the confession, we find Jesus’ reconciliation with the world, God’s reconciliation work through Jesus, and the Holy Spirit’s empowerment to help us reconcile with one another. They also devoted an entire section to the ministry of reconciliation and what that looks like, including some very logistical needs like

*“In recognition of special gifts of the Spirit and for the ordering of its life as a community, the church calls, trains, and authorizes certain members for leadership and oversight 9.39.”* to some very real call to actions that are as true now as they were then like

*“God’s reconciliation in Jesus Christ is the ground of the peace, justice, and freedom among nations which all powers of government are called to serve and defend. The church, in its own life, is called to practice the forgiveness of enemies and to comment to the nations as practical politics the search for cooperation and peace 9.45b.”*

or

*“The reconciliation of humankind through Jesus Christ makes it plain that enslaving poverty in a world of abundance is an intolerable violation of God’s good creation. Because Jesus identified himself with the needy and exploited, the cause of the world’s poor is the cause of his disciples.*

*The church cannot condone poverty, whether it is the product of unjust social structures, exploitation of the defenseless, lack of national resources, absence of technological understanding, or rapid expansion of populations. 9.46c”*

So, what does reconciliation look like in the Bible? It might seem a little odd to have two readings from the Old Testament and to be talking about a central theme of the gospels, but I think these scriptures help us to see why reconciliation was a big deal for Jesus in the gospels and something he stressed over and over in his actions.

Our Isaiah scripture is actually referenced by Jesus in Luke 4 right before he’s rejected from his hometown of Nazareth. In this passage, we hear about the Spirit of God empowering someone (in our case Jesus) to bring good news to the oppressed, to proclaim liberty to the captives, to comfort those who mourn, and more. Because our Lord loves justice and hates wrongdoing. Sounds an awful lot like our call from Micah to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God.

If we look at what Jesus did in his ministry and modeled for the disciples and for us, we see so much of this justice work that ultimately leads to reconciliation amongst people. In many of his healing narratives, Jesus wasn’t healing people for the fun of it or because they were sinful, he was healing them because disabled and sick peoples were often outcast from their communities and left to face things alone without any support system. So, Jesus was healing them but ultimately, Jesus was bridging that gap so they could be welcomed back into their communities, to be reconciled with those who had cast them out.

Jesus frequently broke bread with people he “wasn’t supposed to” or put the needs of the human right in front of him above everything else like sabbath practicing or not touching unclean people. Jesus wasn’t afraid of the messy work, and this work can get pretty messy because let’s be real, humans are \*complicated\*.

I think one of the hardest parts of reconciliation is leaning a little too heavily into blanket forgiveness and forgetting that Jesus calls us to repent and apologize as well. Too often, we want to force people straight to forgiveness and then reconciliation, forgetting that there are some actions that need to happen first for forgiveness and reconciliation to be a viable option and not lead to resentment or further division.

And you might be wondering, but Megan Jesus tells us to love our neighbor, even to love our enemies. And yes, he does, but he also LOVINGLY calls people out and reminds them how to be loving to others and pushes them towards a better, more just, life.

So, part of the messy but deeply important work of reconciliation is owning when we were wrong, apologizing for it, and then working to do better. Fun fact, Presbyterians have never been perfect Christians. Shocking, I know. We can see racist, antisemitic, and homophobic statements written into our *Book of Confessions* and into our polity throughout time. AND, we can also see when we owned that that was incorrect thinking, when we apologized and said

“hey let’s do better, let’s have policies that ARE inclusive instead of exclusive, let’s have a systematic theology that doesn’t denigrate our Jewish siblings, but affirms their beliefs and existence.”

We don’t try to erase the past, pretend it never happened, or not own up to our mistakes. That wouldn’t help the efforts of reconciliation, instead we have to own up to what we did, apologize to those we’ve hurt, and then take actions that SHOW we’ve learned and won’t further harm people in that same way.

One of the things I love about our theology as Presbyterians and our order of worship is every week we have a reminder with the prayer of confession that we’re not perfect, that there’s been something we’ve done that needs to be apologized for. Whether that’s a personal sin or a communal sin, we recognize week after week our imperfections and name our intent to do better with God’s help. It’s a great reminder that we will make mistakes, forgiveness is always there, but we do HAVE to name what we did wrong and take that next action step to try to do better.

So that’s our calling, to be a reconciled people and follow Jesus’ example of loving our neighbors, putting humans first above all else, and helping those around us to feel loved, appreciated, an equal part of the community. Easy right? Whether we want to remember Jesus’ greatest commandment to love our God with our heart, soul, and mind and love our neighbors, or to remember Micah’s words “do justice, love kindness, walk humbly with God” or any other phrasing. They all point back to Jesus’ reconciling work in the world and remind us that we are empowered to do that same work with the help of the Holy Spirit and one another.

And while I may quibble with a lot of what C67 says, especially the use of exclusively male language for God and humanity, they were right on a few things. *“God’s reconciling work in Jesus Christ and the mission of reconciliation to which he has called his church are the heart of the gospel in any age. Our generation stands in peculiar need of reconciliation in Christ.”* And so let us do our best to do justice, love kindly, and walk humbly with our God. Amen.