



Center for Faith, Justice, and Reconciliation
Union Presbyterian Seminary
William Smith Morton Library
Lou and Randall Lolley Center for Baptist History
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November 12, 2020

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Faith-Based Racial Reconciliation Organization Launches in Richmond

*Center for Faith, Justice and Reconciliation will serve as think tank
for seminaries, congregations, community*

RICHMOND, Va. -- In the former capital of the Confederacy, as calls for racial justice go up and monuments come down, a new faith-based organization with a focus on racial justice and reconciliation has launched with a bold vision of “Beloved Community” and a mission to equip and resource seminaries, congregations and communities to create a just society.

The Center for Faith, Justice and Reconciliation is a theological think tank based in Richmond, Virginia, that is dedicated to building beloved community by promoting justice, systemic change in congregations and communities, and the reconciliation of people and creation. Working with like-minded partners throughout the region and across the country, CFJR will provide short-term educational programs for students, congregations and other communities, a forum for ideas and best practices on issues of racial justice and reconciliation, and resources to equip congregations and communities in advancing the work of justice and reconciliation.

The Center’s president is Dr. Corey D. B. Walker, who is the Wake Forest Professor of the Humanities at Wake Forest University. Dr. Walker also served as vice president and dean of the Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology at Virginia Union University and consultant with In Trust Center for Theological Schools.

“With faith as our foundation, justice as our calling and reconciliation as our goal, the Center is a critical resource designed to equip individuals and communities to advance the work of justice and reconciliation in our society,” Walker said.

“In this moment of racial reckoning, the calls for deep justice and authentic reconciliation must be addressed through systemic transformation by living out the ideal of the beloved community. The Center will be a space for innovation in developing unique responses to the crisis of our moment, underwritten by an abiding theological commitment and practice that affirms the gift of all of God’s creation.”

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A Theological Think Tank for Building Beloved Community

The Center carries on the heritage of Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond. Born in 1989 as a distinctive Baptist seminary that moved beyond narrow theological ideas and perspectives, BTSR spent three decades building an intentional theological community in an ecumenical setting. Before financial pressures forced it to permanently end its academic operations in spring 2019, BTSR's trustees articulated a vision for a new organization focused on racial justice and reconciliation to carry on the BTSR tradition of a community of gender inclusivity, racial diversity and ecumenical commitment.

Dr. Bill J. Leonard is chair of the CFJR Board of Directors. The noted Baptist historian is Founding Dean and Professor of Divinity Emeritus of the Wake Forest University School of Divinity. Leonard said, "Just as BTSR was founded at a divisive and critical juncture in Baptist life when the denominational status quo wouldn't hold, the new Center for Faith, Justice and Reconciliation begins at a parallel moment in our national life when divisions are intense, justice often seems elusive, and when religious traditions and American culture alike require new resources for addressing our chaotic times. We envision it as an important gathering place for individuals, community organizations, educational institutions, and congregations in pursuing justice, fostering reconciliation, and nurturing faith."

Union Presbyterian Seminary in Richmond, which was represented on the founding board of BTSR and partnered with it in the Richmond Theological Consortium, is providing support to the Center as well. The CFJR will be based in the Lou and Randall Lolley Center for Baptist History in the seminary's William Smith Morton Library, and Union president Dr. Brian Blount is a member of the Center's board of directors.

"Union Presbyterian Seminary is delighted to host and support the Center for Faith, Justice and Reconciliation, and we are eager to partner with them on building through faith a communal reality that realizes reconciliation through the enactment of justice," Blount said.

"The Center's focus on building beloved community aligns wonderfully with the strategic vision of the seminary, particularly as that vision lives itself out through two of seminary's like-minded strategic initiatives: the Katie Geneva Cannon Center for Womanist Leadership and the Center for Social Justice and Reconciliation."

Other CFJR board members in addition to Walker, Leonard, and Blount are: Dr. Linda McKinnish Bridges, Advancement Officer at Salem College in Winston-Salem, NC, and former president and faculty member at BTSR; Dr. Brad R. Braxton, Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer at St. Luke's School and Curator for Living Religions in Twenty-First Century America for the Smithsonian Institution; Beth Harris McMahon, consultant at fundraising firm BrightDot and former director of communications for BTSR; Dr. Jonathan Lee Walton, Dean of the School of Divinity, Presidential Chair of Religion and Society, and Dean of Wait Chapel at Wake Forest University; and Dr. Bill Wilson, Director of the Center for Healthy Churches and chair of the BTSR board of trustees.

The Center is an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit educational organization, and plans to launch its first programs in the spring of 2021. For more information, visit www.faihandjusticerva.com.

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