

The Racial Justice Ministries Committee worked with Rev. Cameron Barr to develop this statement on the UNC Settlement with the Sons of Confederate Veterans.

Covenantal Statement on UNC Settlement

United Church of Chapel Hill continues to work on dismantling our own patterns and practices of personal and institutional racism, and calls upon the university and our wider community to join us in doing the same. Specifically, we urge the university to examine its values and actions, and to reconsider the recent decisions regarding the Silent Sam monument.

Our church covenant acknowledges that systemic racism is “deeply embedded” in our own hearts and in our institutions. Our covenant also commits us to “transform ourselves” with the help of God, so that we might be redeemed of our sinful participation in behaviors, ideologies, and systems that privilege whiteness. Our transformation begins with practices of listening to the voices of people of color; critically examining our words, actions, and choices; confessing our failures of justice and equity; and advocating for the liberation of all people from racial oppression.

Because of our covenant before God and one another, we can hardly keep silent when there are egregious examples of racial oppression at work among us. The recent decision of the UNC Board of Governors to accept a settlement that will transfer ownership of the confederate monument as well as funds to secure its preservation to the Sons of Confederate Veterans shows the power that whiteness holds over our state. The SCV legitimizes ahistorical narratives that deny the Civil War was fought to bring an end to slavery. Groups that venerate confederate monuments also deny the tyranny of whiteness that gripped the American South and omit the violence done to black bodies in forced labor, family separation, and extrajudicial killings that continue in evolving forms to this day. The SCV is a particularly outrageous settlement partner for the university because it contains factions associated with white nationalism. This settlement sends a strong, negative message about our community’s values and commitments that is being heard across our state and our nation.

Because the confederate monument on UNC’s campus was a sign of hostility to people of color, especially to African American students for whom it was a violent reminder of a racial caste system, we give thanks to God that it is no longer a presence at the university. But a settlement that neither disposes of the statue permanently nor provides factual and sensitive historical information about its meaning demonstrates just how deeply embedded racism is to the fabric of our life in North Carolina.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we ask for God’s forgiveness. As people of faith who are also citizens, we will continue to press for the salvation of our public life from the sinful ideology of white supremacy. Please join us in this important work.