

The Decatur Coalition of Church Leaders

The purpose of the Decatur Coalition of Church Leaders is to gather church leaders in our community to listen to one another with understanding and to speak as one voice in the common cause of a just peace and unity for our city. Though the differences of the various theological views of our members are significant, we can, without reservation, affirm and confess our agreement with these important truths.

We believe that all human lives bear the image of God and are equal in value, worth, and dignity. We are therefore required to love our neighbors as our own selves, and sacrifice to seek their good, regardless of racial, cultural, social, or religious differences.

(Genesis 1:27; Galatians 3:28; Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:39; Matthew 5: 44; Luke 6:27,35; 1 Corinthians 13:4-6)

We believe that law enforcement officials are appointed by God to restrain evil, protect the innocent, and bring evildoers to justice. Every citizen is therefore required to obey all just laws as well as to respect, honor, and support law enforcement officials in their self-sacrificing mission to love, serve, and protect our city. (Romans 13:1-6; 1 Peter 2:17; 1 Timothy 2:1,2)

We believe that there is no partiality with God and that every official is held accountable, both by human authority and our Supreme Judge, to ensure that all persons are treated equally and fairly under the law and that no government official abuses the power entrusted to him or her.

(Acts 10:34; Romans 2:11; Galatians 2:6; Colossians 3:25; James 2:1; Proverbs 15:27)

We believe that professing Christians are obligated to pray and work for the peace and prosperity of the city in which they live, which will require us to speak for the oppressed and address any underlying and systemic injustices. We are equally bound to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God, in Jesus' name. To this end we will instruct, by our teaching and example, the members of our respective congregations who are commended to our care.

(Jeremiah 29:7; Colossians 4:5; Micah 6:8; Colossians 3:17; 1 Timothy 4:12; 1 Peter 5:1-4)

We believe that in his atoning work on the cross, Jesus has broken down all dividing walls of hostility, whether cultural, generational, racial, or economic. Jesus Christ is the only Son of God, eternal second Person of the Trinity, in nature both fully God and fully man. Jesus himself, the conqueror of death and the risen king of the universe, is our peace.

(John.1:1,14; Colossians 1:15-23; Hebrews 1:1-3; Ephesians 2:14)

Edwin R Crump, Pastor, West Side Missionary Baptist Church
Tommy Lee, Pastor, Decatur Presbyterian Church
Troy Brand, Elder, Alpha Seventh Day Adventist Church
Rob Jackson, Pastor, Central Baptist Church
Daylan Woodall, Pastor, First Missionary Baptist Church
Blake Kersey, Pastor, First Baptist Church
Harold Gilmore, Minister, Moulton Heights Church of Christ
J.D. Thorne, Pastor, Point Mallard Parkway Baptist Church
Sam Rice, Bishop, New Genesis Community Church
Doug Ripley, Pastor, Decatur Baptist Church
Daryl Little, Pastor, The Nations Worship Centre
John White, Pastor, Decatur Christian fellowship

Ronnie Powell, Pastor, Abundant Life Church of Jesus Christ
Gary Heathcock, Ninth Street Methodist Church
Scotty Hogan, Pastor, Westmeade Baptist Church
Ben Hayes, Pastor, Southside Baptist Church
Tim Bolding, Director, Neighborhood Christian Center
I.V. Marsh, Pastor, Epic Church
Steve Smith, Minister, Beltline Church of Christ
Darius G. Crayton, Pastor, Bridge Builders Church Int'l
George Sawyer, Lead Pastor, Calvary Assembly of God
Jerry Baker, Pastor, Saint Peter Missionary Baptist Church
Steve Bateman, Pastor, First Bible Church

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In the summer of 2016, several local pastors joined the discussions taking place in the "Community and Justice Forum." The Forum was organized in the wake of several high profile and deadly encounters across the nation between law enforcement and minorities. In several American cities, racial tension that had been simmering under the surface boiled over in angry protest.

Flowing out of the Forum discussions, these church leaders began to cast a vision for forming a coalition with the purpose of gathering church leaders in our community to listen to one another with understanding and to speak as one voice in the common cause of a just peace and unity for our city. In their first meeting together, these church leaders agreed on a founding charter that would define their identity, clarify their purpose, and guide their efforts. They committed to meet together for one year, every other month, and the Decatur Coalition of Church Leaders was born.

The purpose of these meetings was to foster genuine friendships and mutual trust among racially diverse church leaders. Their prayer then and now is that authentic friendships and ministry partnerships would naturally arise out of these meetings. They recognized that this would be a slow process requiring patience and tenacity, but they believed that racial reconciliation for God's glory is worth the effort.