

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

By the Human Rights Team and Theology Subcommittee, International Headquarters

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The church asserts the inalienable human worth and dignity of persons.

The struggle for human dignity and human rights is entangled deeply in our Christ-centered faith.

Human rights can refer to a list of legal or political obligations, name a moral responsibility, or describe inalienable human worth. The Human Rights Team defines human rights to mean the fundamental rights and freedoms that belong to every human by virtue of being human from birth until death.

Our approach to human rights is universal. By that, we mean the historical struggle for human rights encompasses past, present, and future struggles for justice. Universal human rights are based on the inalienable human worth inherent to all persons, regardless of nationality, gender or sex, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, language, ability, or any other status.

Fundamental human rights include the most basic entitlements that sustain and fulfill the conditions of life. They include adequate nourishment (food), safe and nurturing relationships, access to education and

possibilities of human development, meaningful work (economic opportunity), health, and liberty (freedom and responsibility).

Human rights have their origin in God's justice (see accompanying article). Human dignity and rights are not the property of any one people or culture, tribe, nation, or state. As Christians, we recognize fundamental human rights and uphold them in mutual trust, one with another and God.

Community of Christ asserts the inalienable human worth and dignity of persons. This inalienable human worth and dignity is inherent and intrinsic to being human and sharing God's divine image.

THE IMAGO DEI AND IMAGO TRINITATIS

The foundation of inalienable human worth and dignity is embedded in scripture.

In the stories of creation, God declares human beings made in God's divine image (Genesis 1:26–27, 31). God also declares creation and human beings good (Genesis 1:31). These proclamations from scripture form the basis of the Imago Dei. Imago Dei means "image of God." The Imago Dei is shared universally with all humans.

Being created in God's image expresses the essence of what it means to be human.

Bearing God's image includes the human capacity for a relationship with God, others, and creation. It includes our human potential to reason and to love. Our love, as humans, participates in the power of God who loves extravagantly and unconditionally.

Created in the Imago Dei, we are called to dignify ourselves and others in solidarity by generously participating and incarnating God's creative love and grace.

Community of Christ tradition further understands the Imago Dei in the image of Trinity: Imago Trinitatis.

What is Imago Trinitatis? It refers to the image of God as three in one. "We affirm the Trinity—God who is a community of three persons" (Community of Christ Basic Beliefs). Our trinitarian belief is important: God's nature is, itself, revealed as one in community.

Bearing Imago Trinitatis, we understand being human also is being one and in community. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit form the image of God in relationship. Likewise, being human is both individual and being in relationship with others as one humanity.

God's image in trinity reveals the interrelationships of dignity, mutuality, and reciprocity, one with another.

Revealed in humanity, this is an image of divine "life where people become vulnerable to God's grace and each other" (Enduring Principle: Blessings of Community). The fulfillment of human community, therefore, is revealed when disciples discern life together with neighbors in dignity, mutuality, and solidarity one with another. The struggle for human dignity and worth aims to fulfill this divine image in human relationships. It is a divine ideal that takes equal vulnerability and faith.

UNITY OF SPIRIT AND BODY

In addition to the Imago Dei, Community of Christ affirms that the essence of human being is body and spirit.

Human beings, as individuals and as a species, are the unity of spirit and flesh. This is depicted in the creation stories (Genesis 1:26–31; 2:4b–25). This scriptural vision of human being as the unity of spirit and flesh also is found through the writings of Paul.

Both spirit and body are good.

The body and spirit, like the spiritual and temporal,

are not separate. One is not good, the other bad. Rather, they are co-created. Our concept of humanity as a divine creation of body and spirit is holistic.

The universal struggle for fundamental human rights concerns the fulfillment of life in its spiritual and physical possibilities and needs. This includes the needs of spiritual and physical fulfillment, and human development, individually and collectively. The struggle for fundamental human rights aims at our temporal and spiritual well-being.

JESUS CHRIST

Jesus reveals the unity of body and spirit in human form. Jesus Christ is our revelation of what it means to be truly human. We affirm Jesus Christ as fully human and fully divine (Community of Christ Basic Beliefs).

Jesus is the one who breaks down the walls of injustice and unjust relationships. The life, teachings, and ministry of Jesus Christ point us toward the meaning of life together with shared fundamental human rights. Through our covenant relationship with Jesus Christ, we seek to reveal God's image in humanity, who is steward within the world and for the world.

THE PEACEABLE REIGN OF GOD

God's peaceable reign on Earth, or Zion, includes the fulfillment of inalienable human worth and dignity of persons among God's creation. The fulfillment of God's creation has many names: the peaceable reign of God, the cause of Zion, or God's yearning shalom. All are interrelated.

Each name speaks the purpose of the church in the world revealed in Jesus Christ. Since all people have inestimable and equal worth, our lives are of inherent value and require whole-life stewardship, that is living in right relationship with creation, ourselves, God, and others.

The struggle for human rights is ongoing because creation is ongoing.

You do not fully understand many interrelated processes of human creation. Through its wonderful complexity, creation produces diversity and order. Be not consumed with concern about variety in human types and characteristics as you see them. Be passionately concerned about forming inclusive communities of love, oneness, and equality that reveal divine nature. Oneness and equality in Christ do not mean uniformity. They mean Unity in Diversity and relating in Christ-like love to the circumstances of others as if they were one's own. They also mean full opportunity for people to experience human worth and related rights, including expressing God-given giftedness in the church and society.

—Doctrine and Covenants 165:3c–3e

The call for all to experience human worth and fundamental human rights is a mission to which all are called.

