

A Prayer for Reconciliation _ In Memorial to Rev. Dr. William 'Chris' Hobgood

Gracious and loving God, Holy is Your name.

Lord God, you are the giver of every good and perfect gift.

You are the lover of our very souls and for this we give you thanks and praise.

For the gift of our beloved brother, husband, father, grand dad, mentor and pastor, we thank you for the blessing of his soul, for sharing his soul with our souls, and his life with our lives. We are forever changed because of him, his commitment to You, the body of Christ, and his tenacity to teach us to love. In memorial to this, Your beloved soul and son, the Reverend Dr. William 'Chris' Hobgood, we lift this prayer for reconciliation which he so deftly embodied.

We pray the scriptures, where Paul reminds us: "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see everything has become new!"

God, we first pray for a posture of repentance for our old ways of being. Forgive us, O God, for our rush to cheap reconciliation, absent of the memory and acknowledgement of our violent and painful past. Help us to own our wretchedness in the misshaping narrative of genocide, slavery and bondage to the story of hatred as a birthright instead of love as a command and guiding principle of our faith-full lives. Help us, loving God, to resist the temptation to exert power and privilege to your abundance, by withholding access to people who need and deserve equitable access to sharing in the gifts of your lavish creation. So, like our friend and brother Chris taught us repeatedly, grant that we might know that while we have been shaped in a narrative of racism and exclusion, this is not the whole of our story. Being racist, is not all that we are. And the story continues...

The scripture further reminds us, "All of this is from God, who reconciled us to God's self through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation," We pray that you would open our eyes and our hearts so that we might show up courageous in a world that needs a witness to your undying love. With open eyes and open hearts, Lord, grant that we might move from the word of reconciliation to the deed of embodiment, to be reconciled to one another and ultimately to you. Help us to reconcile our outer selves with our inner selves, our friends with our perceived enemies and our past with our hope-full present. Fill us, we pray with your love from the inside out so that the light of Christ will emanate from us and become infectious in the lives we touch and share. Let us continue to resist the proclivity to hoard your love so that racism, sexism, heterogeneity, xenophobia, tribalism, and triumphalism have no soil to take root. Finally, having been "entrusted with this message of reconciliation", God we pray for your peace that surpassing all understanding. God grant us the kind of peace that infiltrates our restless souls and that meets us in the darkness of our grief and despair. We ask for the peace that we ourselves cannot manifest. This peace the world cannot give us, and the world cannot take it from us. Like our brother Chris, who taught us the meaning of embodied reconciliation, the world did not give him to us. Thanks be to You, O Lord, the world does not take him from us. We pursue his legacy that you have entrusted to us, with tenacity and hope in love, through Christ Jesus, a love that cannot fail. May this spirit of reconciliation be ours, now and forever.

In Christ's name we pray,