

Statement of Concern Regarding COVID-19 Pandemic and the Anti-Asian Racism

We, the Leadership Council of Coordinators of the Alliance of Asian American Baptist Churches, a group of American Baptist clergy and lay leaders representing Asian American Baptists in the American Baptist Churches/USA hold our community and nation and world in our daily prayers, and wish to express our position concerning events surrounding the pandemic of COVID-19:

1. Along with all our brothers and sisters, we recognize the enormity of the impact of COVID-19. We express our deepest care and desire for healing for individuals who are suffering from the invidious disease, for safety of those who are at-risk and vulnerable, and for the continued health of all essential workers. We pray for the doctors, nurses, respiratory therapists, medical workers, environmental services staff, first responders, and all front-line essential workers. We urge everyone to take the highest levels of precaution possible to protect yourselves, all of those around you, and the strangers you may encounter. In Christ, we are to love all our neighbors and we can best do so by maintaining healthy practices.
2. We recognize that the fear and insecurity caused by the pandemic have led many persons to racialize the disease and revert to biased, vengeful, and discriminatory acts against Asian Americans - a practice that is unchristian and unacceptable. The recent rise of this practice is ill-considered and brings to mind historical precedents in the U.S. against Asian Americans, including the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the incarceration of those of Japanese descent in World War II, and discrimination against Asian Americans during various wars (the Korean War, Vietnam War, etc.). Terms such as “Chinese virus” or “Wuhan virus” are inappropriate insofar as they lead to scapegoating and the targeting of Asian American businesses and individuals (the World Health Organization has long advised against using geographic terms to name illnesses to prevent such backlash).¹ In the last several weeks alone, more than a thousand incidents of harassment, verbal and physical violence have been documented, with many more remaining uncounted. These acts polarize and divide us and are a direct contradiction of the command of Jesus to “love one another.” We condemn such xenophobia in the strongest possible terms.
3. We recognize that nurses, doctors, respiratory therapists, and other health professionals are on the front lines of COVID-19 care, including many within our Asian American and greater American Baptist family. In this they are modelling the life of Jesus in giving sacrificial care to patients in need, and we express our gratitude for their gifts and pray for their safety. We call upon public and private sectors to use every means possible to provide them with appropriate personal protection and medical equipment, and for widespread testing as needed in this time of crisis.
4. We recognize that the measures taken to prevent disease transmission, including lockdown orders in many states, are having an enormous economic impact on businesses, families, and individuals. Many of the hardest hit are immigrants and refugees, low-income workers, the elderly, those with pre-existing medical conditions, those with mental health challenges, those imprisoned, and victims of violence. We call upon churches, individuals, and governments of every level to provide assistance to all who are facing food and economic insecurity.

¹ See “The ‘Chinese Flu’ is Part of a Long History of Racializing Disease,” Citylab, March 17, 2020. Available [online](#).

5. We call upon all of our brothers and sisters of all racial/ethnic backgrounds, to unite with us in publicly condemning this rise of racism and xenophobia in every way possible. We urge our national and local American Baptist leaders to join us and to speak out against all acts of discrimination and violence - from the pulpit, the pew, and all other possible venues. We urge individuals who experience these acts to share them with organizations collecting incident reports.² We also urge *all* clergy and lay leaders to join us in [signing](#) the “Statement on Anti-Asian Racism in the Time of COVID-19” produced by the Asian American Christian Collaborative.

We are thankful for the Word of God, which states: “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus (Gal 3:28 NIV).”

Signed,

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² To provide incident reports of acts of harassment and discrimination go to www.a3pcon.org/stopaapihate. For a wealth of resources on this topic go to www.asianamericanchristiancollaborative.com.