

Steps Toward Bringing Racial Understanding

You know from reading the Strang Report that I've been involved in the work of racial reconciliation in our area after the tragic death of Trayvon Martin and the unrest created by the George Zimmerman acquittal.

That seems to have opened further a deep wound of racism in our country. Thankfully, we've had no violence in our area, but there's been protests and violence in other areas. We believe it's time for the church to step up and we have called for reconciliation meetings similar to what we've had here in Sanford in cities all over North America.

Our vision to spark racial reconciliation around the country is slowly gaining traction. You'll remember I have written about this several times over the last several months. People are signing the Sanford Declaration, so I encourage you to read it and add your signature.

At the same time this week in Sanford, a delightful event is being held that I believe will help bring understanding between the races. It's a performance of the play *Crowns*. I was humbled to learn that it was inspired partly when a member of my staff, Brenda Davis—who is also a long-time friend—heard me in a meeting challenging those to do things that would help bring understanding in our community. We were discussing possibly having a citywide rally or another event. She remembered seeing *Crowns* based on a book about how black women in the church always wore their finest hats to services. It's a story of their lives and it gives a wonderful peek at the culture of the black church.

She started dreaming, praying and talking to people, and the play debuted in Sanford last weekend. If you live anywhere

near the Central Florida area, I urge you to attend. The performances are on Friday night, Saturday night or Sunday afternoon at the Wayne Densch Performing Arts Center.

On July 31, we held a four-hour reconciliation meeting in Orlando, which we televised and have lightly edited. I put all four hours on YouTube in two parts [here](#) and [here](#) in case you would like to watch it as if you had attended. Or you can see this 16-minute edited version of the meeting we had a year ago after the tragic death of Trayvon Martin in Sanford, Fla., only two miles from my office, as I have written about before.

What was a tragic local story has become one of national concern because it has touched a deep root of racial resentment in our country.

We believe that believers in Jesus should step up and do something like Brenda has.

We already have received quite a bit of press with our efforts, including the fact that last week the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) was filming some of the local pastors talking about reconciliation, which they discovered from my Strang Report. You can watch it by [clicking here](#), and advancing to the 6:08 mark.

The next reconciliation meeting will be in Toledo, Ohio. Pastor Tony Scott will be leading a reconciliation and relationship meeting on Sept. 28 at International Park at 11 a.m that will include the city's mayor.

Our plan is to have meetings like this in many cities that discuss racial insensitivity on the part of Christians in the church as well as institutional racism in our country. We want to discuss, in a spirit of Christian love, the feelings of the black community in the aftermath of the George Zimmerman verdict, a part of which you can see in the video referenced above.

To generate more interest around the country, next week I'm having a conference call with national leaders about holding these meetings in other cities. If you're interested in being on that conference call, email my assistant @ and he will send you the information about calling in at 4 p.m. ET, Tuesday, Sept. 17.

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