



The International Decade for People of African Descent (IDPAD) 2015-2024

Learn more here:

<https://www.un.org/en/observances/decade-people-african-descent>

Why have such a decade and why is it important to mark in churches?

In materials describing the reasons behind and support of the decade, the United Nations says, “In proclaiming this Decade, the international community is recognizing that people of African descent represent a distinct group whose human rights must be promoted and protected.”

The themes of the decade are recognition, justice, and development. Each of these themes play an important role in promoting and supporting the human rights of people of African descent and while it is important for people and organizations across society to engage in the themes of the decade, churches have their own unique role to play. At times, churches have been a space for people of African descent to gather in community or with allies, find common ground, and worship together, working in support of justice and right relations. At the same time, churches have given active or passive support for anti-Black racism and oppression. As the body of Christ, the church should honour the being and to celebrate the presence and gifts of each person and all Peoples. As such, the church is called to actively dismantle all forms of racism. The International Decade for People of African Descent is an invitation to learn anew from history and discern action for our current context.

Theme: Recognition

There is failure to recognize the diverse heritage, culture and contribution of people of African descent to the development of societies. Also, in many places around the world people of African descent still encounter significant discrimination and racism, often stemming from a legacy of colonialism and the slave trade. Recognition is vital, then, for promoting and protecting the human rights of people of African because it is tied to equality. Without recognition of the rights and inherent worth of all people of African descent, true equality remains an unrealized dream. At the same time, without recognition of the wrongs and an accurate history of slavery and colonialism that still leave scars today, the wounds such evils caused will be unable to heal; the discrimination that colonialism and slavery enshrined will continue in policies and practices even today. As the materials of the decade argue, “States should adopt measures to enable the full, equal and effective participation of people of African descent in public and political affairs without discrimination, in accordance with international human rights law.” and “promote greater knowledge and recognition of and respect for the culture, history and heritage of people of African descent, including through research and education, and promote full and accurate inclusion of the history and contribution of people of African descent in educational curricula.” Churches too can and must adopt similar measures to ensure people of African descent are fully recognized members of faith communities

IDPAD Canadian Ecumenical Conversation <https://www.interculturalleadership.ca/idpad>

Theme: Justice

The three themes of the decade build on each other; without recognition, there can be no justice. Justice is a theme of the decade even beyond recognition because more than education and acknowledgement is needed to correct the wrongs discrimination and inequality have caused. Structural changes are also needed through the support of legislation and the courts. In the words of the United Nations description of the decade, “States should develop or elaborate national plans of action to promote diversity, equality, social justice, equality of opportunity and the participation of all.” Churches too can and must promote social justice, diversity, equality and the participation of all.

Theme: Development

The theme of development is largely aimed at addressing economic inequality and diminished socio-economic opportunities among people of African descent—where many of those inequalities continue to be rooted in racism and discrimination. As a means to redress these issues, the decade calls for development especially in the areas of increased access to healthcare, good public education, equitable access to employment and workplaces free of discrimination, and safe and affordable housing. These are all issues that churches not only can and must speak up for but at the same engage practically.