

To: Nekima Levy-Pounds, NAACP Minneapolis President
P.O. Box 3881
Minneapolis, MN 55403

October 18, 2016

To: Dave Nelson, Edina Chief of Police
Jim Hovland, Edina Mayor and City Council Members
4801 West 50th Street
Edina, MN 55424

As people of faith, grounded in love and our shared humanity, we want to live into the vision of a Beloved Community—a society based on justice, equal opportunity, and love of one's fellow human beings. The confrontation between two Edina police officers and Mr. Larnie Thomas that took place in Edina on October 12th, raises questions of justice and has created a very real tear in the fabric of this community. The incident and its aftermath is complex, messy, emotionally charged, hard, and it is real. We believe that we must together address this issue openly and with courage.

Our congregation is still on the journey of unlearning our individual and collective biases as a predominantly white faith community. We've made some mistakes along the way and we have a long way to go. We're also deeply committed to creating a world that works for all. With each new challenge, we're learning that we must find the humility required to stand back and see ourselves as implicitly biased, and then find the courage to listen to those who have been oppressed.

Earlier this year, a group of Edina Community Lutheran Church members created the following statement in response to the growing racial tensions that persist across our country, admitting our own privilege and complicity in systemic racism:

Racial injustice continues to thrive in our country and communities. Our Christian response is to walk in solidarity with people of color, because standing silent sanctions continued violence. Recognizing that those of us who are white are intertwined in a network of unearned privilege, we are compelled to be allies advocating for racial justice. We invite other congregations to join together in expressing their commitments to live out our shared faith—active in love—in the struggle for equity and justice.

The Minneapolis NAACP has made specific demands in light of Mr. Thomas' experience. We believe their concerns deserve to be heard and merit a thoughtful response. We applaud the city's decision to dismiss all citations against Mr. Thomas, and we support Mayor Hovland's commitment to review protocols and "...work with the Edina community and invite other organizations to participate in this very important conversation. There are lessons we should and will learn from this experience" [*startribune.com, 10/17/16*]. We also believe additional immediate action is needed.

To that end, we encourage you to convene a dialogue between Edina civic leaders and African American community leaders to address the NAACP's demands. We commit to actively supporting all the people engaged in this work through our prayers, our public advocacy, (i.e. hosting a community forum, organizing interfaith engagement across Edina, being a citizen resource to the city/police), and our presence. As individuals and as a congregation we welcome any opportunity to be part of the solution.

Sincerely,

Rev. Stephanie Coltvet Erdmann

Rev. Erik Strand

Cc: Dr. Jack Van Marion, Calvary Christian Reformed Church
Rev. Jonathan Yarger, Calvary Lutheran Church
Rev. John Crosby, Christ Presbyterian Church
Rev. Alan McNamara, Chapel Hills United Church of Christ
Rev. Daniel Harrell, Colonial Church
Rev. Steve Wheeler, Crossview Lutheran Church
Rev. Ed DuBose, Good Samaritan Methodist Church
Rev. Oby Ballinger, Edina Morningside United Church of Christ

(continued on reverse side)

Rev. Ben Swanson, Mercy Commons
Rev. John March, New City Covenant Church
Rev. Paul Petterson, Normandale Lutheran Church
Father Kevin Finnegan, Our Lady of Grace Catholic Parish
Rev. John Peters, St. Alban's Episcopal
Father Tim Rudolphi, Church of St. Patrick-Edina
Rev. Mark Shockey, St. Peter's Lutheran Church
Rev. Tom Cook, St. Stephen's Episcopal
Rev. Scott Searle, Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church