Death of George Floyd and the Protests in American Cities

Compilation of statements on the death of George Floyd and the protests in American cities. These statements were collected from churches and organization's websites. If any communion or organization participating in CCT is not included, it is only because we could not easily identify such statements on the website; omissions are not intentional.

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A letter from our National Director Phil Strout

"Dear Vineyard Leaders,"

"Wow, 2020 – and we are not halfway through it yet. How is that for a positive greeting? Right now, there are so many feelings, thoughts, laments, ideas, and convictions being expressed through many venues, and in the end, we will be better for them. If you would, allow me just a few minutes to express, on behalf of Vineyard USA, a collective, “Oh God, we need you now more than ever.”

To all people of color in the Vineyard, we want to say that we are sorry. We are sorry for what has existed for so long and yet not been known nor understood by so many of us. We see you, we love you, and we seek to listen well to you. In a posture of charity, repentance, and humility, please forgive us.
As we have read, watched, and talked with many of you over the last several days, there has been a gathering storm of emotion, reflection, bewilderment, and resolve. In this pivotal and painful moment, we weep with you for all that has been lost and stand with you to confront injustice head-on.

We all agree that acknowledging racism is one thing and being anti-racist is a whole other reality. We cannot step back one inch from naming racism as evil, anti-human, and unacceptable in any form.

We, the people of the Vineyard, are going to stay the course of believing in and longing to see the Kingdom come, on earth as it is in heaven – people from every tribe, tongue, and nation as ONE. This is not something we wait for someday, when all the trouble has gone, because we hold a theology that says that future reality has invaded the present. We will settle for nothing less, right now, as the Kingdom continues to come.

Diversity in the Vineyard is not part of a slogan but a destiny. To that end we commit ourselves.

We have far to go and much to learn, so let’s do the heavy lifting now, no matter the cost and the uncomfortable seasons and experiences that await us. Our African American and minority brothers and sisters have been uncomfortable for centuries.

We have assembled a list of resources for you here. Not comprehensive resources, but food for thought, articles, sermons, stories, and tools to be used. We hope they will help you lead well and disciple well in the midst of this pain and opportunity.”

"To the Greater Glory of God, and the well-being of all people,"

"Phil
Phil Strout National Director Vineyard USA"

In times like these, taking a step toward the first Pentecost

By Paul Baxley
The second chapter of Acts makes clear that from our very first day, the Church of Jesus Christ included people “from every nation under heaven.” By the powerful gifting of the Holy Spirit, the first disciples were able to preach the Gospel in ways understandable to people who came from many cultures and spoke many languages, drawing them into a community held together by Jesus Christ. If you look at the list of nations mentioned, it is clear that Africans, Europeans and Asians all found themselves in one faith community because of their response to the good news of Jesus. Today there are Christians literally in every corner of the world.
Yet, on Pentecost Sunday 2020 this is an incredibly challenging vision. We live in a time when our nation and our communities are torn apart by racial conflict, intense anger, unmistakable fear and mounting violence. The global pandemic has afflicted people all over the world, but those most devastated were already those most at risk due to economic and racial injustice.

Now, a brother in Christ, George Floyd, was the latest to die the victim of senseless brutality, and the image of him pleading for life and breath has traumatized, terrified and enraged us. He died with a knee on his neck; to see that and not feel deep pain is to not be human at all. It was and is so difficult because George Floyd was not a stranger to those of us who follow Jesus. He was a brother in Christ, to whom we are joined in our profession of faith and baptism. We cannot help but be deeply moved by his death, for as Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians, if one suffers, all suffer. Furthermore, George Floyd is a beloved child of God, and that by itself is more than enough reason to grieve.

George Floyd’s death is also exceedingly painful because he is not the only person to die in acts of violence that were motivated by fear and racial prejudice. In recent weeks, we also saw Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor die in crimes motivated by the same kind of hate. We have seen these vividly, but we know there are others. The world around us on this Pentecost Sunday is diametrically opposed to the reality the Holy Spirit made on the first Pentecost: a community from every nation on earth bound together by Christ. The culture around us this Pentecost is torn apart by economic separation, even though the early church in Acts was a model of economic unity and mutual provision.

This moment requires that followers of Jesus around the world allow the Holy Spirit to bind us into one community where people of different races, cultures and experiences can be forged into oneness in Christ. Such a community is not about the erasing of racial difference—racial difference is part of the image of God. Every black person I know reflects the image of God at least as much as I do. The image of God is not racially constrained, it radiates beautifully in all of us. The Church of Jesus cannot be a community that practices racial division, traffics in fear and hate, preaches white supremacy or suggests that one nation is more loved by Christ than others. All of that is contrary to the Gospel, the love of Jesus and the witness of Pentecost. The Church of Jesus cannot turn a blind eye to poverty and economic injustice, because the Scriptures bear relentless witness to a God’s compassion for the poor.

How might the Church today take a step toward the first Pentecost? Those of us who are white Christians need to listen carefully to the pleadings, laments and testimonies coming from our black sisters and brothers, because hearing their stories and responding in faith is key to the healing and renewal of the Church’s divided witness. Those of us who are white need to be honest about our own experience with privilege and our own story of prejudice, so that when we confess our sins to God and our black brothers and sisters, we can experience grace and cleansing. We need to be clear that
those of us who grew up white had very different experiences than our black friends and fellow disciples. More than ever we need to allow the Spirit to draw us into meaningful and transforming community across lines of nation and race so that our cities, our nation and our world can be redeemed.

In the midst of that, those of us who are white Christians need to ask ourselves what the bodies of Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and others are calling from us? More than a half century ago, the body of Emmett Till stirred some in this nation, including some white Christians, to begin a quest for racial justice in the United States. Several years later, Dr. King stood in the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church and prayed that the bodies of four beautiful young women, killed just as they were growing up, would awaken the conscience of the white Church.

Now, as we see the bodies of black brothers and sisters fall victim to senseless violence, and we know there are so many more, I am convinced that the Spirit of Pentecost is blowing among us and calling us to join our black brothers and sisters in the resolve that this cannot continue! That justice and dignity must be afforded to all the children of God! If we take seriously our calling to follow Jesus, we must participate in the repair of our broken world. We are called to a love marked by truth and action.

The Church needs to be an embodiment of the Holy Spirit’s ability to draw people who were once dramatically different into dynamic and real community focused on Christ and Christ’s mission. We cannot invite the world into a redemption we are not experiencing or extending.

We also need to call on the leaders of states and nations to lead by word and example. Democrats and Republicans alike must hold our leaders accountable to lead toward healing and away from division and injustice. For too long the fires of partisanship, discord and manipulation have been the order of the day in the political arena. Part of the Church’s prophetic responsibility is to speak boldly and truthfully to power, rather than either being co-opted by power or turning a blind eye toward its abuses. Peter and John did so in Acts 4, Paul did late in his life, and Christians of every generation have been called to follow their example. Today, I ask the leaders of our nation and our states to lead in ways that inspire rather than divide, that put the common good above personal accomplishment, and to decide that this moment requires something better. Our nation’s founding documents speak of a government for the people, not against them.

We must also ask local, state and federal government officials to deal swiftly and systemically with police brutality and racial profiling in law enforcement wherever they exist. While there are certainly outstanding and admirable law enforcement professionals who are of every racial identity, our history clearly reveals brutality and profiling targeting black and Hispanic persons. If you are white and are blessed as I am to have black or Latino friends, you know this is true because you have heard
testimonies that have opened your eyes. A Church truly drawn from every nation under heaven cannot turn the other way as systems and structures hold back or hold down other children of God. The gifted and just law enforcement officers I have known in my life are absolutely scandalized by the abuses. The Church must be as well.

What about our common life as Cooperative Baptists? Our congregations and our Fellowship are called to be instruments of grace, repair and love in this time. That will require listening. It will require breaking silence. It will require confession. It will require speaking. It will require acting. It will require courage. This is about the redemption of the world and the repair of our own souls. In other words, it is not optional. It is what a Church born from every nation under heaven is called to do.

Pentecost reminds us that, planted deep within the Church’s soul, is a yearning for a community that binds nations, cultures, races and languages so that we can be a witness to love that causes the world around us to ask: what do these things mean?

On Pentecost Sunday 1990, I was in Jerusalem with a professor from Wake Forest University and a group of traveling pilgrims. We worshiped in an Anglican church that Sunday, and I still remember what the priest said in his sermon. “What the world needs now is another Pentecost. Who among us is willing to pray Lord, send your Holy Spirit and begin with me?”

Thirty years later I believe we need another Pentecost. I pray that Cooperative Baptists will join Baptists and Christians from every nation under heaven in praying: “Lord, send your Holy Spirit and begin with us.”

Paul Baxley serves as the Executive Coordinator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIACONE OF NORTH AMERICA

June 2, 2020
Beloved Faithful in Christ,

Greetings and blessings to you and your families as we prepare for our celebration of Holy Pentecost!

As we stand between these two great feasts of the Ascension of our Lord and Holy Pentecost, our festal joy is intermingled with profound sadness and grief. We witnessed the brutal murder of a defenseless man, George Floyd, by men entrusted by our society to uphold peace and justice. As Orthodox Christians, we are appalled by this act of
unjust violence, and we fervently entreat the Lord to grant repose to George’s soul and comfort and peace to his grieving family and loved ones.

We are also witnessing protests that speak to the wider issues of racial prejudice and injustice in our society. We do not condone chaos and violence as a means of protest, as they only serve to fan the flames of anger and hatred and harm the very communities the peaceful protestors are working to improve. As Antiochian Orthodox, we can offer our broken-hearted empathy, as many of our faithful have come from countries where they have experienced injustice, and we must forcefully proclaim the equal dignity of every human person as created in the image and likeness of God.

As we see the images of so many places set aflame, let us contemplate the images of fire that the Church will offer us this weekend. On Sunday morning, we will chant a festal hymn: “All the nations in the city of David beheld wonders, when the Holy Spirit descended in fiery tongues.” This hymn and many others speak to the teaching that the feast of Pentecost healed the division of humanity into competing nations as a result of the Tower of Babel. In the Old Covenant, God fashioned for Himself a people to receive the Law. In the New Covenant, God brings all the nations into unity through the Gift of the Holy Spirit — as Christ foretold to the Samaritan Woman a few short weeks ago that all would worship God “in spirit and truth.”

“The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch” (Acts 11: 26)

We live in a time when events provoke us to burn with the passions of anger and divisiveness. This weekend, the Church will call us to burn with love and reconciliation towards all. I would like to pose the question: Which fire will we welcome into our hearts?

There is an instructive note placed before the Prayers of Preparation for Holy Communion that reads: “If thou desirest, O man, to eat the Body of the Master, approach with fear, lest thou be scorched; for it is fire. And, before drinking the divine Blood unto communion, reconcile thyself to them that have wronged thee. Then dare to eat the Mystical Food.” To receive the fire that is communing with our Creator, we must put out the flames of our anger and judgments of others and seek reconciliation — even with those who have wronged us.

As we celebrate Pentecost in the midst of these tumultuous days, let us as Orthodox Christians quench the flames of our hatred and passions that we be set afire with the Gift of the Holy Spirit. Let us cultivate the fruits of the Spirit — love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control — and work towards the love and reconciliation of all.

With fervent prayers for healing and peace, I remain, Your Father in Christ,

+JOSEPH
Archbishop of New York and Metropolitan of all North America
‘We need to be the Church we say we are’

(Disciples of Christ)

“I consider the sufferings of this present time not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God.” Romans 8:18 – 19. NRSV

Dear beloved Disciples,

We are hurting.

We are haunted and outraged by the anguished cries of George Floyd, the gasp of “I can’t breathe” as a police officer knelt on his neck until the breath was completely taken from him. Floyd’s murder, like that of Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery in recent weeks, is just the latest in a long history of violence against Black and Brown people in our country. The protests that are happening in big cities and small towns across the nation are an outpouring of grief and anger born of centuries of pain and injustice.

As members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), we condemn this injustice. We weep not only for George Floyd, but for the entire system of oppression that has kept us from seeing each other as beloved children of God.

Racism and the denial of human dignity is counter to the call of Jesus Christ. Racism is a sin that breaks the heart of God.

Disciples, we call ourselves a Pro-Reconciling, Anti-Racist church. We have named it as a mission priority, and we have worked hard – though often imperfectly – to live that out in every expression of our ministry. In this moment, when protests rage and our hearts are broken again and again, we need to be the church we say we are.

We know that this moment calls for more than statements and prayers. In this moment, God is calling us to act.

We invite you to accept this call to action in one or more of these ways:

1. Add your name to this statement affirming your commitment to Pro-Reconciliation and Anti-Racism as a mission priority of our church. (form below)
2. Educate yourself about the history of systemic racism in this country and the ways racial injustice impacts every bit of our life together, from education and health
care to jails and courtrooms and financial institutions. There are many good resources for learning; we’ve consolidated some of them [HERE](#) and will keep this page updated regularly.

3. **Sign up** to participate in the **Mass Poor People’s Assembly and Moral March on Washington: A Digital Justice Gathering** on June 20, 2020. This event is part of an effort that seeks to address the interlocking injustices of systemic racism and poverty, and Disciples have been key leaders in this movement.

4. Join in town hall discussions hosted by Disciples leaders about how the church can do more to help dismantle systems of racism. These virtual gatherings will be held later this summer; be sure to **sign up** for **Disciples News Service email updates** for more information.

5. Get to work in your own community or church. Each context is different, so work where you are and with what you have. We want to hear from you about what you’re doing. Send a photo, video, or short paragraph describing what you’re doing to [news@disciples.org](mailto:news@disciples.org), or tag us on social media (Facebook and Instagram: @christianchurchdoc; Twitter: @DisciplesNews) with #ccdoc. We’ll share those stories [here](#) so we can support and inspire one another in this hard, holy calling.

Something is happening right now, Church, and the Spirit of God is moving in it. May we be bold enough to join the work.

Yours in Christ,
Rev. Terri Hord Owens, General Minister and President
Rev. April Johnson, Minister of Reconciliation

**Addressing Grief and Rage in Minneapolis (CRC)**

Dan Crapo took his sons, Zeke and Nate, to help clean up the mess from a riot that took place the night before in southern Minneapolis.

On the way there, they drove by buildings still smoldering from fires and showing gaps where walls had caved in and windows had been smashed. Graffiti scarred some structures; people milled about in places.

It was a solemn ride as Crapo, a CRC hospice chaplain, tried to explain to his sons why their city had erupted in violence after a white police officer — on the night of May 25, Memorial Day — had knelt on the neck of a black man named George Floyd.

The police officer, Derek Chauvin, kept his knee planted for nearly nine minutes, and in the process, according to a criminal complaint charging Chauvin with third-degree murder, killed Floyd. Three other Minneapolis police officers were also on the scene.
Wearing masks to protect themselves from the COVID-19 virus, Crapo and his sons arrived near the area where Floyd had been killed and began, along with many others, sweeping up debris.

Police say they sought to talk to Floyd because they believed he had tried to pass counterfeit money in a nearby store. Today, a large memorial of flowers encircles the area where Floyd died — a death chronicled on cell-phone and security cameras and now shown countless times to people around the world.

“What happened there is just awful,” said Crapo, who works for the Mayo Clinic health system, visiting hospice patients in rural areas outside Minneapolis.

“The video footage showing what happened is horrific. The brutality perpetuated on black men is real,” he said, and watching the police officer kneel on the neck of Floyd is a stark, unrelenting example of that brutality.

That video footage and the unmistakably metaphorical image of a white police officer impassively kneeling on the neck of a black man have been so powerful that they have led to riots and violence and protests in cities across the U.S. and Canada in recent days.

“We hope this will be a moment in which those who feel that someone has his foot on their neck can scream out, ‘Please lift it off — so I can breathe and participate in the full democracy of the U.S.,’” said Rev. Reggie Smith, the CRC’s director of diversity.

Smith attended a protest march on Saturday evening in Grand Rapids, Mich., that grew violent in the hours after he and his family and others left for home.

“This is a moment in which our souls need to be redeemed,” said Smith. “This is a time when the church needs to be the church — a time when the church needs to be about courageous participation in freeing us from the stuff that is killing us.”

In a blog post on The Network and shared with CRCNA employees, Colin Watson, Sr., acting executive director of the CRC in North America, addressed this issue, explaining that it is a problem that has simmered and boiled, simmered again and then boiled again for hundreds of years in the United States.

“The murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis by four police officers sparked many days of unrest and outrage, not only in Minneapolis but in cities around the country. Though some are shocked by this reaction, none of us should be surprised. As Martin Luther King, Jr., reminded us more than 50 years ago, ‘a riot is the language of the unheard,’” he wrote.

Watson went on: “America is a society suffering from the infliction of a major head wound. It is a wound that was self-inflicted four hundred years ago through the institution of slavery, and has never healed. It is an issue foundational to America. The black/white, slave/free legacy and current mindset must be dealt with before any peoples can be free in this nation.”

As Dan Crapo cleaned the streets with his sons, he reflected on why people would burn down stores, a police precinct, and libraries in their own neighborhood. As Martin Luther
King, Jr., said, riots are the result of pain that has no voice or outlet. Even so, explaining this to his sons was not easy, said Crapo.

“Why would people ransack the local Target where their mother goes to get diapers and their grandmother goes to get her medications?” he asked. “Someone told me it is like someone who cuts off his nose to spite his face. Your nose is already broken; you might as well cut off the rest.”

You turn inward; you destroy yourself out of a rage that runs so deep that it is hard to place and even harder to express.

But the issue of racism and its ramifications is not an alien topic for discussion in their home, said Crapo.

He is married to Ruthanne Crapo Kim, who teaches philosophy at Minneapolis Community College and is a member of a racial equity training team that works both in the community college and other settings as well. Kim grew up in Busan, South Korea, and knows firsthand what it feels like to be a person of color in a country run largely by people of one race. Living in the U.S., she has felt the brunt of white privilege — that sense of being empowered simply because you are white — turned against her.

On Saturday, the day Crapo and his sons cleaned up after the riot of the previous night, Kim was taking part in a protest elsewhere in the city.

As a white man, Crapo said he has little firsthand experience of being shunned or mistreated because of his skin color.

And while his wife has shared her own experiences, it is what she has told him about what has happened to her students at the Minneapolis Community College that saddens him the most.

It also makes him angry.

“My wife tells me about students of color who have been stopped dozens of times by the police simply because they are persons of color,” he said. “They are targeted with the crime of driving while black.”

Crapo laments the reality that he failed to join his black friends in calling last week for the city of Minneapolis to arrest Chauvin for murder. But he planned to remedy that this week by joining the chorus of calls for the arrests of the other three officers who were there as Floyd died.

Before becoming a CRC chaplain, Crapo worked as a youth pastor in Indiana and then as a residential coordinator at a high school.

After he and his sons helped clean the streets, they ventured over to the nearby Hope Academy, the Minneapolis Christian school where Zeke and Nate attend classes when the school is open. Crapo and Kim send their sons there because it has a large, multiracial student population.

The school is located in a former hospital; a Christian organization for substance-abuse rehab uses the top floor. Near the school is the Little Earth Native American community,
which includes many homeless people and has been the site of protest actions to draw attention to the needs of Native Americans.

After Floyd was killed, the Mayo Clinic held a Zoom meeting at which minority physicians and scientists and others spoke about the challenges they face working in the health system. Among other things, they spoke of the pain they have felt recently as a disproportionate amount of the population contracting and dying from COVID-19 are people of color — perhaps, said Crapo, an underlying reason for the pent-up anger that exploded following the death of Floyd.

But particularly galling for him was to hear participant after participant speak of the many ways in which they have been shoved aside, repressed, and oppressed by the health system for which they work.

Here is a health system, he said, that bills itself as doing a lot of good for a lot of people — and it does. But there are flaws in the system.

“It was eye-opening for me to be reminded how the white power leadership structure doesn’t pay much attention to [people of color]. We heard real stories of how people have experienced racism, and that really choked me up,” said Crapo.

As a Christian, Crapo keeps asking what he can do to help dismantle racism and ease the civil unrest that has swept across his city.

“Certainly we can pray, but we need to learn more about racism and why it exists” — and we need to take non-violent actions in which we stand shoulder to shoulder with black friends, he said. “During this time, we also need to think about the grief that George Floyd’s family is going through — those who will be carrying memories of him” — and especially of what happened to him on that street on Memorial Day 2020.

At this moment, added Reggie Smith, it is imperative that we realize that police brutality focused on minorities, and especially blacks, will continue unless those in power take a hard, honest look at themselves, and become aware of their own racism and the unwillingness to share the power that they have. Voices of the oppressed will only grow in intensity unless they begin to sense that they are heard and that change is occurring.

"This will continue to happen until America finds the courage to acknowledge its deep-rooted racism and deal with it to dismantle a culture that perpetuates what happened to George Floyd," said Smith.

Chris Meehan, CRC Communications

Church of the Brethren Newsline
June 4, 2020

“What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” -- Micah 6:8
Our hearts break for the loss of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and so many others who have lost their lives due to the color of their skin. Each death represents injustices disproportionately affecting the Black community.

Many across our country have protested in the wake of George Floyd’s death because of the way authorities delayed arresting and charging the police officers involved, but most importantly because his killing is a perpetuation of the injustice, violence, and racism that have devalued and harmed Black Americans for centuries.

Many protests have remained peaceful; violence has erupted in some. What is clear is that the nation, and especially our sisters and brothers from various racial backgrounds are hurting and in mourning.

In Matthew 3:8 we find John the Baptist’s call: “Bear fruit worthy of repentance.” Bearing the fruit of repentance, we stand in solidarity with all who suffer from injustice, violence, and racism.

Brethren have long recognized the inherent worth of all human beings while also recognizing that our church, and we ourselves, are not free from racism. Our denomination has recognized that we have participated in and benefited from racism, whether we have been aware of it or not. The Church of the Brethren Annual Conference in 1991 issued a report on “Brethren and Black Americans” (www.brethren.org/ac/statements/1991blackamericans.html) that said, in part:

“Members of the Church of the Brethren face the subtle temptation of thinking that because there are not many black Americans in the denomination, or because many of us do not live in physical proximity to black people, that the problem of racism is not our concern. Nothing could be further from the truth. Many of us benefit from racist practices, without being direct participants, because of decisions and policies already in place in our religious, economic, and political institutions.”

Jesus spoke strongly to those who choose willful ignorance for their own benefit, saying in Matthew 23:23: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint, dill, and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith.” And we find this in James 4:17: “If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn’t do it, it is sin for them.”

As a denomination we must reaffirm that racism is sin, and that there is good we ought to be doing to combat it. Racism is indeed our concern as we strive to truly love both God and neighbor. When we are not concerned and do nothing, we sin.

We must repent for ways we have participated in the racism that has caused so many deaths. We must repent for the ways we have not spoken or taken action against systemic racism’s structures and institutions. We must repent for the times we have witnessed overt racism yet remained silent.
The 1991 report recommends that congregations “stand in solidarity with black Americans and other victims of racial hate by speaking out against overt expressions of racially motivated violence and offering assistance to victims.” In doing so, we identify ourselves as disciples of Christ, who said: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free” (Luke 4:18).

Let us commit ourselves to be a part of the healing of the nation. Let us pray, and let us act to undo racism in these times.

**ELCA reaffirms commitment to combat racism and white supremacy**

*What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8).*

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) reaffirms its commitment to combating racism and white supremacy following the recent murders of Black Americans. Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Dreasjon (Sean) Reed, and George Floyd were our neighbors. Ahmaud Arbery was chased down, shot, and killed by a retired police officer and his son while jogging in Brunswick, Ga. (Feb. 23, 2020). Breonna Taylor, a 26-year-old emergency medical technician, was shot eight times by Louisville Metro Police Department officers who entered her apartment while serving a "no-knock warrant" (March 13, 2020). Dreasjon (Sean) Reed, a 21-year-old from Indianapolis died after being shot at least eight times by an Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department officer (May 6, 2020). George Floyd was killed by police in Minneapolis while begging for his life, a block away from Calvary Lutheran, an ELCA congregation (May 25, 2020).

As the Conference of Bishops, we condemn the white supremacy that has led to the deaths of so many unarmed Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color in our country. We grieve with, pray for and stand in solidarity with the families and friends of all whose loved ones have been and continue to be victims of injustices run amok, racist violence and the insidious venom of white supremacy.

The ELCA's social policy [resolution](#), "Condemnation of White Supremacy and Racist Rhetoric," adopted by the 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly, states: "As persons called to love one another as God has loved us, we therefore proclaim our commitment to speak with one voice against racism and white supremacy. We stand with those who are targets of racist ideologies and actions." As church, together we must work to condemn white supremacy in all forms and recommit ourselves to confront and exorcize the sins of injustice, racism and white supremacy in church and society and within ourselves as individuals and households.
On May 21, the ELCA Southeastern Synod hosted a webinar: “Becoming the Body of Christ – Condemning White Supremacy” in response to the killing of Ahmaud Arbery. This is one of many strategic opportunities happening across this church to address white supremacy and racist rhetoric. On June 17, we will gather again as church to commemorate the Mother Emanuel 9 and to repent of racism and white supremacy. An online ELCA prayer service, including leaders from across the church and Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton as preacher, is being planned for June 17, 2020, marking the fifth anniversary of the martyrdom of the Emanuel 9. We encourage congregations to reaffirm their commitment to repenting of the sins of racism and dismantling white supremacy that continue to plague this church by marking this day of penitence with study and prayer leading to action. https://www.elca.org/emanuelnine

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton
Presiding Bishop

(many other signatures are included in the original post)

Raise your signs and voices. Then raise your church’s race awareness

*Nikki Toyama-Szeto is the executive director of Evangelicals for Social Action*

(RNS) — At a prayer vigil held on Monday (June 1) outside St. John’s Episcopal Church in Washington, D.C., where President Trump used a Bible as a prop, clergy came out to pray and protest. Prayers were prayed. Kneeling happened. There were words from the Episcopal bishop of Washington, the Rt. Rev. Mariann Budde, and support from leaders of DC’s historic African American churches. There were signs for “Black Lives Matter” and others like “God hates racism.”

Protest is my act of intercession. Each of my steps is a prayer, asking God to heal our land. It is a ministry of presence, the call to bear witness and testify to God in the public square.

But my hope is that churches will regard protest as only the start of our response to racism. To testify in the public square that God grieved when George Floyd was killed, protest must be paired with sustained action. Raise signs, raise fists, yes! But we must see these protests as we do our baptism: a public expression of repentance and personal commitment to life with Jesus. But the test is in the life after this public expression to see if this commitment is actually lived out.

The church has so many resources at its disposal in terms of finances and people that can be put toward strategic action to change the racial climate of our society. I long for the church to see how much we have that we can use to help move toward the full flourishing of all of God’s people.
What can we do? How can we raise awareness in our congregations and our staffs to the ways we support racism in our everyday living?

A first step may be to take an honest inventory of ways that a faith community's finances contribute to the subjugation of black folks. Churches that have an endowment or support a pension for staff can assess whether these funds' investments pass a “justice audit” — do mutual funds offered for staff retirement accounts, for instance, invest in for-profit prisons? Having reviewed its own finances, the church may consider sharing its findings with its members and prompt them to check their personal finances.

We can also honor this week's charged feelings by studying the history of our denominations, some of which once prevented black people and those of other races from attending their worship services. Perhaps, as an act of repentance for that history, your church can identify a local black, Latino, or immigrant church in an economically disadvantaged area and tithe 10% of its operating expenses to support the life of that church. Churches planning a large building project might consider tithing 10% of the cost of that new building to help build God's church in other communities.

Look at the theologians, scholars and writers your church accesses for guest speakers, Bible studies and other forums. Does the list contain names from the black church or non-Western traditions? For next season's events, invite non-white teachers like Lisa Sharon Harper at Freedom Road or Latasha Morrison at Be the Bridge. Try including books such as the late James Cone’s “The Cross and the Lynching Tree” in your next Christian formation class or other titles that might promote your congregation’s ability to see with a racialized lens. Browsing the (virtual) shelves at black-owned bookstores, such as Washington, D.C.'s Mahogany Books, can be an education in itself.

Look as well to your community beyond the church. When the church hires contractors or makes purchases, consider supporting black-owned businesses and entrepreneurs. For church events or for providing food for your parishioners in need, partner with a black-owned restaurant or caterer.

In many places, churches want to reach out to black or other minorities but are in a community that is racially isolated. It may be good to ponder why that is. What real estate practices, lending practices or other factors helped to contribute to the racial makeup of your community? What can your church do to engage with those questions in our community with city leaders? This is hard work that may take teaming with other churches and other faiths to negotiate real solutions.

But if the church is going to testify with its actions what it testifies in its baptism, then when the protests end, it will be time to begin.

(Nikki Toyama-Szeto is the executive director of Evangelicals for Social Action and co-editor of the books “More than Serving Tea: Asian American Women on Expectations, Relationships, Leadership and Faith” and “God of Justice.” The views expressed in this commentary do not necessarily reflect those of Religion News Service.)
Archbishop Elpidophoros Marches in Brooklyn

New York, NY – At the invitation of the Borough President of Brooklyn, Eric Leroy Adams, and State Senator Andrew Gounardes (New York’s 22nd State Senate District), His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros attended a peaceful protest and march today in Crown Heights, Brooklyn over the killing of Louisville EMT Breonna Taylor. (Breonna Taylor, a 26-year-old emergency medical technician, was killed when the police raided her apartment in Louisville, KY in March.)

Borough President Adams said of the presence of the Archbishop:

“I am so happy and proud to be marching with the Archbishop. It’s important that he has taken the time to acknowledge how significant this issue is."

Senator Gounardes also commented on today’s march:

“I'm incredibly proud to march alongside His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros and our Brooklyn Borough President in the pursuit of greater justice for those who are no longer here to speak for themselves.”

In remarks following the march, Archbishop Elpidophoros stressed:

“I came here to Brooklyn today in order to stand in solidarity with my fellow sisters and brothers whose rights have been sorely abused. This was a peaceful protest, one without violence of any kind, and I thank all of those involved, because violence begets only more violence. We must speak and speak loudly against the injustice in our country. It is our moral duty and obligation to uphold the sanctity of every human being. We have faced a pandemic of grave physical illness, but the spiritual illness in our land runs even deeper and must be healed by actions as well as words. And so, I will continue to stand in the breach together with all those who are committed to preserving peace, justice, and equality for every citizen of goodwill, regardless of their race, religion, gender or ethnic origin.”

Habitat for Humanity

ATLANTA (May 29, 2020) – Habitat for Humanity International CEO Jonathan Reckford issued the following statement regarding the killing of George Floyd:

The killing of George Floyd is hard to watch. As a former resident of the Twin Cities region, I can’t put into words the sadness and outrage I know I share with so many others. I can say this: As Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey said, being black in America should not be a death sentence.
As a white man, I know that my path through this world is different. I would not be gunned down like Ahmaud Arbery while jogging. I would not be shot in my home like Breonna Taylor. I would not be choked to death by police like George Floyd.

Habitat for Humanity was born on a farm in South Georgia on the theory of radical inclusivity, at a time when inclusivity was seen by some as an existential threat. It’s a vision of a world we still believe in and fight to build every day.

As I said after white nationalists descended on Charlottesville, “Our vision is one that is welcoming to all. Our vision embraces diverse views. Our vision knows that no matter who we are or where we come from, we all deserve to have a decent life.”

The way we approach our work at Habitat has been a vehicle for reconciliation and has broken down barriers between people. We work alongside those willing to partner with us, no matter their background or walk of life, and that will always be true.

Our colleagues at Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity are standing with those who are fighting for justice for George Floyd. They are also leading the way, showing how Habitat can be a tool for healing racial divides. “We need to be as intentional in closing those disparities as we were in creating them.”

It’s easy to feel powerless now, even hopeless. I feel ashamed. I feel sad. I feel angry. But we also must act. We must speak out against injustice, listen to those who have been unheard, and demand better of ourselves and of our leaders.

We must pray. And when Jesus commands us to love our neighbor, we must listen.

**Mennonite Church USA issues statement on racial injustice**

(Mennonite Church USA) — Mennonite Church USA (MC USA) released a statement on racial injustice today in response to events surrounding the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The statement calls for its congregations “to stand in solidarity with communities of color, walk alongside them and, indeed, be led by them.”

“Our historic peace church needs to speak to the growing injustice in our country,” said Glen Guyton, executive director of MC USA, in an impassioned open letter to the denomination that accompanied the statement. “Along with thoughts and prayers, we need action. We need to be unified around who we are as transformative peacemakers…”

Guyton, an African American and the first person of color to lead the denomination, also calls all MC USA congregations to unite in prayer to “lament the violence, pain and
injustice plaguing our country,” while encouraging congregations to actively seek peace in their own communities.

The denomination’s statement on racial injustice acknowledges the structural oppression and racial inequities in our society, naming white supremacy, institutionalized violence and police brutality and drawing a parallel to Jesus' own unjust execution. It also addresses two difficult questions:

- Why do protests often turn violent?
- Why it is inappropriate and tone deaf to say, “All lives matter?” (in response to the “Black lives matter” outcry)

In response, MC USA urges congregations to “continue to pray for, seek out and lend [their] voices and bodies to God’s healing, justice and peace.”

Guyton amplifies the need for action in his letter, saying, “We need to engage in more costly peacemaking, rooted in radical discipleship, which seeks to dismantle systems of oppression.” He encouraged the church to #BringThePeace, a reference to the denomination’s current peacemaking initiative.

MC USA also concurrently published a series of laments, written by a diverse group of pastors, leaders, lay people and students, in response to the recent and persistent violence upon black bodies. Individuals are invited to pray along and write their own laments as a spiritual practice.

For more information on MC USA’s peacebuilding efforts, visit http://mennoniteusa.org/what-we-do/peacebuilding/.

An Anabaptist Christian denomination, Mennonite Church USA is the largest Mennonite denomination in the United States, comprised of 16 conferences, approximately 530 congregations and 62,000 members.

Reformed Church in America - A pastoral letter from Earl James

Coordinator for African American Black Council and Advocacy

This pastoral and advocacy letter differs from other ones that I have written or helped write. The central concerns are not church focused or in condemning racism per se. The central concerns here:

- Reflect from my perspectives on how the recent murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery fit into an overall experience of being African American.
- Highlight being an ally in this cause of racial equity and justice in our communities.
- Promote addressing “use-of-force” policies that govern police actions.
- Share some ways forward.

The recent murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery, are awful and evil in their own rights. For many of us, they are also part of a soul-damaging heritage of being of this country.
In George Floyd’s murder, former police officer Derek Chauvin’s knee was on Floyd’s neck for nearly nine minutes. It remained there for nearly three minutes after George was unresponsive.

Chauvin’s knee on the neck is merely the latest of an American heritage of noose around the neck. Regardless of knee or noose, the result is “I can’t breathe.” Both kill. Take several moments. Sit or lie silently. Calm your body and mind. Then imagine for as long as you can a knee pressing hard on your throat. Can you imagine the pressure? Can you imagine struggling to breathe?

Keeping ourselves and our children breathing has been a bane of our existence. To stay watchful and prepare our children and grandchildren to be watchful:

- Requires an enormous strength of will, and
- Expends a huge amount of physical, mental, emotional energy.

Our and their watchfulness, we fully hope, will help keep us alive. Our watchfulness is exhausting.

“Our” does not only mean “those of us now.” Our parents had to be watchful and taught us of the Boomer generation to be so. For many of our parents, there was a close relationship between fear and respect. And in their parents’ time, fear was a tool they used to keep their children safe. Yes, there was prayer. Yes, there were worship services and vigils. Yes, there were beliefs that Christ is the answer. Yes, there were efforts to promote racial reconciliation and harmony. Despite faith and action and hope and love, from nooses to knees, the anxiety continues.

Like many of us, I have for over 40 years frequently had “the talk” with my children and very young grandchildren. Yet, still, this. A day after Derek Chauvin murdered George Floyd, two of my grandchildren woke up from frightening dreams. One dreamt that she and her friends were carted off into slavery. She and her closest friend were forced by White women to scrub floors. Another dreamt that his close buddy who is White warned him repeatedly to watch out for White police. We listened quietly to both of them tell about their dreams and how they felt about the murder. Afterward, we shook with rage and hurt that this evil even entered the lives of our little ones. This was not a history lesson. This wasn’t read from a book. This was real-time, in-the-moment, and life shaping for them.

What is the teachable moment here for them? I was so grateful their parents took them to our local protest rally. Yes, a small number of people ended up defacing and destroying property. Yes, the police dealt with them. But, a massive number of protesters were peaceful, active, and united. When faced with evil, my grandchildren took steps to confront it. They are sifting themselves and taking stands. Taking stands for themselves, for those they know and love, and for this community they are part of. I must add, in my time, I have learned about and been part of events and movements led by people of the Builder and Boomer generations. This one in my community was led by people from Generations Y and Z (my grandchildren’s generation). It warms my
soul to see them owning this challenge. It warms my head and heart to follow their leadership.

I want to share on economics. In the Civil Rights movement, pastor- and church-led groups conducted economic boycotts to overturn Jim Crow. What started with lunch counter sit-ins at businesses that refused to serve Blacks helped create much wider opportunities in American life for Blacks and other oppressed people. The Blackout Coalition, a national racial justice effort launched in response to George Floyd’s murder, has joined that economic strategy. On July 7, 2020, Black people and all other allies are asked, for that day, to not buy anything. As was the case historically, the Coalition hopes to raise awareness and promote justice through this economic protest.

For more information and to join the Coalition, see its Facebook page.

To close this section, a couple of beautiful references:

A few days ago, I read a powerful piece by a Black person, Stratton C. Lee III. He sifted through his sense of self and place. His words are elegant and eloquent. I wholeheartedly recommend you read it, reflect on it, and take his lead and sift yourself. May your heart race like mine as you read Stratton’s post.

I recently read this elegant and eloquent testimony on being an ally. Its author is a young White police officer, Justin Pletcher. In his post, he sifted his own heart and mind. He wrote about what he does with other White people. He shared about some things he did with people of color. Justin described how he measures the usefulness of him being an ally—he listens to those he serves. I wholeheartedly encourage you to read Justin’s post.

Use of Force Law Enforcement Policies

Police departments must hire, promote, and champion people of good will. But in this matter of killing, whether an officer is loving or racially reconciled is secondary. The primary issue is the murders, such as in George Floyd’s case, must stop. In their time, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and others spoke like that about lynching. Regardless of hearts and racial reconciliation, lynching had to stop.

We need to understand far better what “use-of-force” policies are and why police murders of unarmed people normally do not appear to violate established use-of-force police policies.

Typically, use-of-force is a law or policy that guides when police can use different amounts of force to control situations. Use-of-force goals typically surround matters of arrest and protection of officers or others. In many jurisdictions, use-of-force is supposed to be a last resort tactic. Examples of elements of use-of-force policies can be found here.

We have a federal government and not a national one. Therefore, use-of-force laws and policies are determined at every governmental jurisdiction. A single or uniform law or
policy is not possible. I strongly recommend that existing use-of-force policies in your area:

- Be examined
- Be measured against biblical and theological principles of love and justice
- Be challenged against actual incidents of police killings of unarmed people and
- Be changed in ways that radically reduce deaths by police of unarmed people.

Some Ways Forward and Some Next Steps

- Continue embracing peaceful public demonstrations for racial equity and justice, and for elimination of police brutality. (I reached out to an organizer of the protest I was part of to learn more and serve.)
- Find and continually express great care to those among your families and friends, of any generation. In frequent and diverse ways, tell them they matter and are of great value. Tell them specific things about their character and actions that impress you and that you hold dear. Always let them know in various and diverse ways they are gifts from God to you and to life itself.
- Work to re-craft use-of-force policies in your location to ensure that deaths of unarmed persons by police are eliminated or carry swift and substantial penalties. (I am talking with some people where I live who might want to conduct this work.)
- Review, talk about, and incorporate into conversations, education, sermons, advocacy, and so on the two postings mentioned previously from Stratton C. Lee III and Justin Pletcher. Explore how they practically live out the Belhar Confession’s principles of justice, reconciliation, and unity.
- Have inter-generational conversations and activities that can nurture inter-generational racial equity and justice understanding.
- Host one or more virtual or in-person congregational, family, or town hall meetings on any part of this matter. (Others and I are planning two or three virtual engagements to occur in June and/or July.)
- Learn about and participate in The Blackout Coalition’s July 7, 2020, day of not spending money.
- Watch the movie “Just Mercy” and discuss it. It is an exceptional telling of a true story about the dangers of systemic racism in American life. During June 2020, it may be streamed at no cost. Here is how.

Yours in Christ,
Earl James, coordinator for African American/Black Council and Advocacy

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PRAYER IS ESSENTIAL. PROTEST IS REQUIRED. POLICY IS NECESSARY.

BY JIM WALLIS
In my lifetime, I have never seen more white people involved in the deep and growing movement to address systemic racism, structural injustice on many fronts, and, specifically, the violent policing and killing of black people. Never. What does that mean? What will it change — and how?

Yesterday in Washington, D.C., up against police lines protecting the White House, Sojourners partnered with the Episcopal Diocese and others for a “Solidarity Prayer Vigil,” just up the street from St. John’s, Lafayette Square, where on Monday, militarized police teargassed and removed peaceful protesters from all around Lafayette Park and the church. Donald Trump did that so he could stride over for a photo op in front of the church, lifting a Bible over his head while having nothing to say, using both the sacred space of a church and our holy scriptures as political props. The whole nation and the world have now seen that infamous picture, and many have noted that the Bible was held upside down — both literally, and indeed, all of its teachings.

There in front of the historic pale yellow sanctuary, known as “The Church of Presidents,” Trump was asked if the Bible he was holding was his own; he answered, “It’s a Bible.” Asked if he had any thoughts, Trump said, “We have a great country. That’s my thoughts. Greatest country in the world. We will make it greater. We will make it even greater. It won’t take long. It’s not going to take long. You see what’s going on. You see it coming back.”

Princeton professor Eddie Glaude Jr. has rightly named the violent White House walk to St. John’s as “dictatorial theatre.” The words that came to mind for many of us were sacrilege and blasphemy. Here’s the dictionary’s definition of blasphemy: “Impious utterance or action concerning God or sacred things.” Another word that came to mind was authoritarian. At the epicenter of political power in the United States stands a little church that Donald Trump has decided to violently use — and now St. John’s stands inside a police perimeter surrounding that seat of power.

The vigil yesterday, led by Bishop Mariann Budde of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington, Robert Fisher, the Rector of St. John’s, and many other clergy and bishops took place as thousands of mostly young people — diverse across faiths and ethnicities — were exercising their power to protest. I have never in my life seen so many white people who care so deeply about America’s Original Sin, structural racial injustice, and the 400 years of violence against black lives, following the lead of their black brothers and sisters to voice that concern to the police and military, and all the political leaders behind them.

Last night on CNN, Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms was asked about “the difficult balance” of addressing injustice and protesters facing judgment for their anger.

“The only thing I know to do is to be true to who I am,” she answered. “By that I mean I have to articulate my pain, I have to articulate my frustration and anger; and I think that is what so many people across this country have wanted for so long. So when I hear Secretary Mattis speak out against Donald Trump, that’s what we have been looking for
and asking for — people of good conscience to say, ‘I know you are hurting and I may not have understood it on yesterday, but I get it today; and I’m not going to be silent anymore.’"

Earlier in the day, four-star general and former Secretary of Defense James N. Mattis published his warning in *The Atlantic*. I encourage you to read the entire thing, but it says, in part:

*The words “Equal Justice Under Law” are carved in the pediment of the United States Supreme Court. This is precisely what protesters are rightly demanding. It is a wholesome and unifying demand—one that all of us should be able to get behind. We must not be distracted by a small number of lawbreakers. The protests are defined by tens of thousands of people of conscience who are insisting that we live up to our values—our values as people and our values as a nation.*

*… We must reject any thinking of our cities as a “battlespace” that our uniformed military is called upon to “dominate.” At home, we should use our military only when requested to do so, on very rare occasions, by state governors. Militarizing our response, as we witnessed in Washington, D.C., sets up a conflict—a false conflict—between the military and civilian society. It erodes the moral ground that ensures a trusted bond between men and women in uniform and the society they are sworn to protect, and of which they themselves are a part. Keeping public order rests with civilian state and local leaders who best understand their communities and are answerable to them.*

*… Donald Trump is the first president in my lifetime who does not try to unite the American people—does not even pretend to try. Instead he tries to divide us. We are witnessing the consequences of three years of this deliberate effort. We are witnessing the consequences of three years without mature leadership. We can unite without him, drawing on the strengths inherent in our civil society. This will not be easy, as the past few days have shown, but we owe it to our fellow citizens; to past generations that bled to defend our promise; and to our children. We can come through this trying time stronger, and with a renewed sense of purpose and respect for one another. The pandemic has shown us that it is not only our troops who are willing to offer the ultimate sacrifice for the safety of the community. Americans in hospitals, grocery stores, post offices, and elsewhere have put their lives on the line in order to serve their fellow citizens and their country. We know that we are better than the abuse of executive authority that we witnessed in Lafayette Square. We must reject and hold accountable those in office who would make a mockery of our Constitution. At the same time, we must remember Lincoln’s “better angels,” and listen to them, as we work to unite.*

When asked “What is your best cause for hope today?” Mayor Bottoms called for a “monumental shift” in order to “signal to our country that it is time to heal.” The Atlanta mayor added, “I am so inspired when I see protesters across this country and see police kneeling with protesters across the country because they are saying to each other, ‘I hear you, I feel you, and I want something better for our country too.’"
It is time to name and pursue a new and deliberate timeframe. Prayer is essential. Protest is required. Politics must engage. Policy changes that are real and concrete must then follow until, as one young woman asked by a reporter how long she will protest replied, “Until I feel safe.”

This is a very dangerous moment. While governors and mayors are trying to deescalate the nation’s unrest, the president is escalating the violence to solidify his “Law and Order” bona fides come November.

Standing in front of the church, surrounded by federal forces, a Bible in one hand, Trump said America is the greatest country in the world. The president’s cynical and dangerous appeals to Christian nationalism are an affront to the mission of the church and the integrity of the gospel. His inflammatory words and reckless actions only pour gasoline on the flames of anger and racial injustice.

The president can violate our sacred spaces and Holy Bible, but he cannot take away our faith and our obedience to Christ. We, in our many faith traditions, will stand against such religious offenses, which are a threat to our democracy. Can I hear an Amen?

Editor’s Note: This column has been updated with a name correction. The Rector at St. John’s, Lafayette Square is Rev. Robert Fisher.

Presiding Bishop Curry’s Word to the Church: When the Cameras are Gone, We Will Still Be Here

May 30, 2020

A word to the Church from Presiding Bishop Michael Curry:

“Our long-term commitment to racial justice and reconciliation is embedded in our identity as baptized followers of Jesus. We will still be doing it when the news cameras are long gone.”

In the midst of COVID-19 and the pressure cooker of a society in turmoil, a Minnesota man named George Floyd was brutally killed. His basic human dignity was stripped by someone charged to protect our common humanity.

Perhaps the deeper pain is the fact that this was not an isolated incident. It happened to Breonna Taylor on March 13 in Kentucky. It happened to Ahmaud Arbery on February 23 in Georgia. Racial terror in this form occurred when I was a teenager growing up black in Buffalo, New York. It extends back to the lynching of Emmett Till in 1955 and well before that. It’s not just our present or our history. It is part of the fabric of American life.
But we need not be paralyzed by our past or our present. We are not slaves to fate but people of faith. Our long-term commitment to racial justice and reconciliation is embedded in our identity as baptized followers of Jesus. We will still be doing it when the news cameras are long gone.

That work of racial reconciliation and justice – what we know as Becoming Beloved Community – is happening across our Episcopal Church. It is happening in Minnesota and in the Dioceses of Kentucky, Georgia and Atlanta, across America and around the world. That mission matters now more than ever, and it is work that belongs to all of us.

It must go on when racist violence and police brutality are no longer front-page news. It must go on when the work is not fashionable, and the way seems hard, and we feel utterly alone. It is the difficult labor of picking up the cross of Jesus like Simon of Cyrene, and carrying it until no one – no matter their color, no matter their class, no matter their caste – until no child of God is degraded and disrespected by anybody. That is God's dream, this is our work, and we shall not cease until God's dream is realized.

Is this hopelessly naïve? No, the vision of God’s dream is no idealistic utopia. It is our only real hope. And, St. Paul says, “hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit” (Romans 5:5). Real love is the dogged commitment to live my life in the most unselfish, even sacrificial ways; to love God, love my neighbor, love the earth and truly love myself. Perhaps most difficult in times like this, it is even love for my enemy. That is why we cannot condone violence. Violence against any person – conducted by some police officers or by some protesters – is violence against a child of God created in God’s image. No, as followers of Christ, we do not condone violence.

Neither do we condone our nation’s collective, complicit silence in the face of injustice and violent death. The anger of so many on our streets is born out of the accumulated frustration that so few seem to care when another black, brown or native life is snuffed out.

But there is another way. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, a broken man lay on the side of the road. The religious leaders who passed were largely indifferent. Only the Samaritan saw the wounded stranger and acted. He provided medical care and housing. He made provision for this stranger's well-being. He helped and healed a fellow child of God.
Love, as Jesus teaches, is action like this as well as attitude. It seeks the good, the well-being, and the welfare of others as well as one’s self. That way of real love is the only way there is.

Accompanying this statement is a card describing ways to practice the **Way of Love in the midst of pandemic, uncertainty and loss**. In addition, you will find online a set of resources to help Episcopalians to LEARN, PRAY & ACT in response to racist violence and police brutality. That resource set includes faithful tools for listening to and learning from communities too often ignored or suppressed, for incorporating God’s vision of justice into your personal and community prayer life, and for positively and constructively engaging in advocacy and public witness.

The Salvation Army Statement on the Death of George Floyd and the Ongoing Protests Across the United States

ALEXANDRIA, Va. (June 2, 2020) — The Salvation Army joins in the sorrow, anger and confusion felt by Americans all across the country following the death of George Floyd. Mr. Floyd was a former Salvation Army employee in Minneapolis, and the nature of his death is shocking to all of us who believe in a just, lawful and equal society.

The Salvation Army believes that God’s love is all-encompassing and it urges us to reject racism and discrimination. The Bible commands us to “be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble.” We are committed to fighting racism wherever it exists and will speak up wherever we encounter it. As we pray for God’s will to be done on earth as in heaven, The Salvation Army will work toward a world where all people are loved.

We do not claim to be perfect as an organization or as individuals; we can all be better, and we can all do more. We encourage people of good will to look closely at their own attitudes to determine how they can contribute peacefully to solving this problem. We will do the same to make sure that George Floyd’s life serves as a reminder of the goal we all strive to achieve.

The Salvation Army supports the peaceful protests and dialogue that have come from this tragedy. Our clients, staff and leaders are encouraged to compassionately and passionately display love for all, in non-violent ways. For our communities affected by the violence, we are here for you.

Never has our mission been more imperative: to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and to meet human needs in His name without discrimination. We call on all individuals to work together toward a common cause in the spirit of love, tolerance and forgiveness.
Bishop Farr Expresses Outrage, Need to be Antiracist (UMC)

June 01, 2020

I am outraged. I hesitated posting what I really wanted to say yesterday because my blood was boiling.

The arrest of the white officer, seen pressing his knee to the neck of Mr. George Floyd, a black man who later died, does little to quiet my outrage. I am tired. I’m tired of the senseless killing of black people. But, I am not as weary as black people or, in a broader sense, as people of color, who have had to endure the aggression and violence that racism has produced for centuries at the hands of white people. I’m not as weary as my black brothers and sisters because I do have breath in my lungs. I have the ability to run down the street without concerns of being assaulted. I don’t have to tense up when I am pulled over by the police. I am not as weary because I have white privilege.

I have witnessed both explicit and implicit racism. I’ve been complicit in racism throughout my life. In the face of my outrage, I know that my faith calls me to get active and stay engaged even when it is hard. If the conversation around #blacklivesmatter and the news reporting creates a sense of discomfort, tension or uneasiness in you, I invite you to spend some time talking to Jesus about WHY it bothers you. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your heart to a place of conviction so that we might create God’s kingdom on earth where all people – regardless of their skin color, ethnicity, religion, identity or sexuality – might flourish.

It is not the job of black people to explain the structures of white supremacy, white privilege, racism, police brutality or any of the other byproducts that advances the white standard as the "normative" view. This is white people’s work and our need to engage in this work is urgent. Lives depend on it.

I am asking that every white United Methodist in Missouri but especially our appointed and assigned pastors, paid church staff and lay leaders read a book that has helped me better understand my own sin and complicity to the horrors of racism: White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard For White People To Talk About Racism (2018) by Robin DiAngelo, PhD.

Please read this book. Read it as church, a staff and within small groups. If you’ve finished White Fragility, begin the next book which may give you some ideas on moving from not being racist to antiracist: How To Be An Antiracist by Ibram X. Kendi. We will have conversations as a Conference later this fall with these two books as our guide. I want Missouri United Methodists to be leaders in transforming their communities into less racist ones. Please join me. Lord in your mercy...
Assembly of Bishops’ Executive Committee Calls All to Prayer for Justice and Peace during Nationwide Civil Unrest

June 1, 2020

We, the members of the Executive Committee of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the U.S.A., express our strong concern and deep sorrow for the recent unrest throughout our beloved country.

We stand in unequivocal solidarity and peaceful protest with all those who condemn racism and inequality, which betray the spirit of democracy in our nation, i.e. “one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all”. The unjust and unjustifiable murder of Mr. George Floyd, as well as so many before him, is deplorable as anti-Christian and immoral.

At the same time, we denounce all expressions of violence and revenge, including those despoiling and detracting from peaceful demonstrations. Peaceful marches of protest are a distinctive hallmark of American freedom and progress. “Repay no one evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all ... so far as it depends upon you, live peaceably with all” (Romans 12:17-18).

Violence is a horrible and tangible manifestation of the reign of sin in our world. It is expressed in many faces, all of which seek to deny the image and likeness of God in each human person, in whom God has placed an irreducible dignity and sacredness.

Thus, as Orthodox Hierarchs, we condemn all actions and words that promote hatred and racism, but also all acts of violence and destruction.

Moreover, in a gesture of collective appeal, on Wednesday, June 3, 2020 at 12:00 PM EDT, we invite all clergy, faithful, and people of good will – of all traditions, faiths, and walks of life – to participate in a moment of silence and solidarity for all victims of racial violence followed by prayer for peace and reconciliation in this country.

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23). Therefore, as we kneel, invoking the coming of the Holy Spirit as the Comforter, let us offer up our prayers to our loving God for the victims of hatred and racism, to safeguard us all from such prejudice, and also vengeance and destruction, as well as preserve unity and peace in our country, our common home.
Statement of U.S. Bishops' President on George Floyd and the Protests in American Cities

May 31, 2020

WASHINGTON – Archbishop José H. Gomez of Los Angeles and president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has issued a statement on George Floyd and the protests in American cities that have taken place over the last several days. This follows the Friday statement from seven U.S. bishop chairmen of committees within the USCCB.

Archbishop Gomez’s full statement follows:

The killing of George Floyd was senseless and brutal, a sin that cries out to heaven for justice. How is it possible that in America, a black man’s life can be taken from him while calls for help are not answered, and his killing is recorded as it happens?

I am praying for George Floyd and his loved ones, and on behalf of my brother bishops, I share the outrage of the black community and those who stand with them in Minneapolis, Los Angeles, and across the country. The cruelty and violence he suffered does not reflect on the majority of good men and women in law enforcement, who carry out their duties with honor. We know that. And we trust that civil authorities will investigate his killing carefully and make sure those responsible are held accountable.

We should all understand that the protests we are seeing in our cities reflect the justified frustration and anger of millions of our brothers and sisters who even today experience humiliation, indignity, and unequal opportunity only because of their race or the color of their skin. It should not be this way in America. Racism has been tolerated for far too long in our way of life.

It is true what Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, that riots are the language of the unheard. We should be doing a lot of listening right now. This time, we should not fail to hear what people are saying through their pain. We need to finally root out the racial injustice that still infects too many areas of American society.

But the violence of recent nights is self-destructive and self-defeating. Nothing is gained by violence and so much is lost. Let us keep our eyes on the prize of true and lasting change.

Legitimate protests should not be exploited by persons who have different values and agendas. Burning and looting communities, ruining the livelihoods of our neighbors, does not advance the cause of racial equality and human dignity.
We should not let it be said that George Floyd died for no reason. We should honor the sacrifice of his life by removing racism and hate from our hearts and renewing our commitment to fulfill our nation’s sacred promise — to be a beloved community of life, liberty, and equality for all.