

Dearly Beloved Church,

When the Apostle Paul wrote to the Church in Philippi, he implored them:

“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross.” (Philippians 2:3-8)

The early Christian movement was rooted in the Jewish tradition of looking to the needs of the people around them, and responding appropriately in ways that lifted them up and made right the wrongs they had experienced. They endeavored to embody this ethic as they lived the faith, as we hear from the Apostle Paul and in the book of Acts.

It continues to be clear that in our world, today, such an ethic continues to be needed. The sins of white supremacy, racism, and injustice continue to deal death to many in our communities, as we have recently witnessed in the killings of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd, among others. In times such as these it is important to take on a posture of learning and openness, which allows us to discern how we can be part of just and equitable solutions going forward, as individuals, as communities, as the Church, and as a nation.

We as the people of God in this time and place must continue the important work of recognizing the implicit biases we hold that make these conversations so difficult, so that we can deconstruct white supremacy and the racist systems of which we are part. I recognize that I have been deficient in this work personally, and have not stepped forward to be part of the needed solutions. I know that we will make mistakes along the way, but we cannot let that fear stop us from acting.

Please spend some time today and tomorrow reviewing the statements I have linked below from ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, our NE-OH Synod Bishop Abraham Allende, and Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry here in Cleveland. I implore you to prayerfully consider how we together might faithfully repent and respond to God’s call to love our neighbors in ways that bring rightness and justice that are so desperately needed.

May our Mission Prayer be on our lips this week: Gracious God, through belief in Christ and through the presence of the Holy Spirit within us, empower us to share the word; care and support each other and God’s community; worship as a family in Christ; and be Christ-like examples to those whose lives we touch. Amen.

-- Pastor Paul

From Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton: www.elca.org/News-and-Events/8039

From Bishop Abraham Allende: conta.cc/2ZYEmTs

From LMM Cleveland:

www.lutheranmetro.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/LMM_Statement-on-Death-of-George-Floyd_053020.pdf



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Follow-up next page -->

Dear Church,

Last week, I sent out a message in response to the police killings of people of color around our country, and the protests that have arisen seeking justice and social change. I have heard from many of you, and I thank you for your thoughtful responses and insights. As I listened, I heard some themes emerge: the need for further education, including learning more about the untold parts of the history of our country that have to do with race and oppression, and opportunities to discern how we can be part of making positive change going forward.

In an effort to address these themes, we have begun compiling a resource list of media (below) that you may consider for study and reflection. *Please note that some of these resources contain adult content and are not necessarily suitable for all ages.*

FILMS and TELEVISION

Just Mercy (Warner Bros., available streaming online)

13th (Netflix)

Dear White People (Netflix)

The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon Season 7; episodes 147, 148, 149, 150, 151

BOOKS for ADULTS

Dear Church by The Rev. Lenny Duncan (a pastor in the ELCA)

The New Jim Crow by Michelle Alexander (regarding mass incarceration)

How to Be An Anti-Racist by Ibram X. Kendi

Waking up White by Debbie Irving

Luther's Small Catechism with African Descent Reflections, Edited by Joseph Bocko

BOOKS for CHILDREN and YOUNG FAMILIES

See: www.nytimes.com/2020/06/02/parenting/kids-books-racism-protest.html?referringSource=articleShare

Anti-Racism Books for Kids - The New York Times

The conversation about race needs to start early and keep happening. By Jessica Grose As protests over the killing of George Floyd (and Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor) spill into a second week ...

www.nytimes.com

Please continue to reach out and keep the conversation going. I am thankful that God continues to be active in our lives and world, pressing us forward to be part of the transformative resurrection life Christ brings.

~Pastor Paul



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