



**Council of Bishops**  
The United Methodist Church



June 8, 2020

## **Council of Bishops statement on the Scourge of Racism**

The past few weeks have left many hurt, angry and outraged as we have witnessed the deaths of unarmed Black persons at the hands of police and racism; Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd and the countless others whose names are known only to mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers and friends.

Many bishops have worked to amplify and magnify one another's voices. The words of Bishop Bruce Ough, resident Bishop of Minneapolis area, were a clarion call to the crisis before us, "There is more than one pandemic ravaging Minnesota and our country at this time. In addition to fighting COVID-19, we are besieged by a pandemic of racism, white supremacy, and white on black or brown violence."

The voice of Bishop LaTrelle Easterling, resident Bishop of the Baltimore-Washington area, gave power to the realities, "Being Black is not a pre-existing condition; being Black is not justification for probable cause; being Black is not to be inherently suspicious nor suspect. Being Black is a gift from Almighty God and a manifestation of an aspect of God."

These prophetic voices and those of others have provided words when we had none.

As bishops of the United Methodist Church, **we ask every United Methodist to reclaim their baptismal vows** to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves.

**We ask every United Methodist to name the egregious sin of racism and white supremacy** and join together to take a stand against the oppression and injustice that is killing persons of color.

As bishops of the whole church **we affirm the peaceful protests** as a means of giving voice where it is needed most.

We are clear that it is beyond time for all United Methodists to act. **It is time to use our voices, our pens, our feet and our heart for change.**

We join with other church leaders and boards and agencies of the United Methodist Church to add strength to the message that we **will no longer remain silent nor complicit** but must act now!

As a next faithful step **we ask United Methodists to read all they can on the subject of anti-racism and engage in conversations with children, youth and adults.** Have conversations with coworkers and friends. These will not be easy but they will help us gain a greater appreciation for one another. In a recent podcast, “Unlocking Us,” lecturer, author and podcast host, Brene Brown, hosted author, historian and American University professor, Ibram X. Kendi who said, “By not running from the books that pain us, we can allow them to transform us. I ran from antiracist books most of my life. But now I can’t stop running after them – scrutinizing myself and my society, and in the process changing both.” May we listen not only with our ears but with our hearts and run after books, podcasts and conversations that transform entire communities.

For at least the next 30 days, **we ask every United Methodist everywhere to join in prayer at 8:46** a.m. and p.m. for 8 minutes and 46 seconds, the time the officer held his knee on George Floyd’s neck. Do this for at least the next 30 days. Pray for all persons of color who suffer at the hands of injustice and oppression. Pray for our church as we take a stand against racism. Imagine the power of a concert of prayer heard around the world.

And finally, to borrow from Bishop Easterling once again, “The time is now. Dismantle the architecture of whiteness and white supremacy; stop creating, implementing and supporting policies that perpetuate economic injustice; stop the dog-whistle political maneuverings which incite violence against people of color; commit to being an anti-racist; stop over-policing Black and brown bodies; stop using deadly force in ordinary police interactions with Black and brown people. Stop killing us.”

May the God of Grace and Peace be with you.



Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey  
President - Council of Bishops  
The United Methodist Church