



June 4, 2020

Dear sisters and brothers,

The last few weeks have been painful. We have watched in disbelief, anger, horror, sadness, shock and outrage, the public lynching of George Floyd in the street of Minneapolis, MN. Those emotions were further exacerbated by the actions of the President of the United States and the escalation of violence in cities across our nation. All the while peaceful protesters have taken to the streets to demand justice and to call our nation to live more fully into its ideals.

These past few weeks I have ranged from profound sadness to a simmering anger; sadness that this is happening in 2020 and anger because I am George Floyd, my eight year old son is George Floyd. I have marched with clergy of our diocese to call for justice and I have lamented the countless men, women, and children whose names and lives have been sacrificed to racial inequity. We have been here before.

While I do not condone the use of violence, I know that at the heart of the protest and acts of vandalism lives the festering sins of racism and white supremacy, the legacies of chattel slavery. At the core of racism and white supremacy, lives fear. Fear often masquerades as conviction and certainty. Fear would tell us that dignity belongs to some and not to others. As followers of Jesus, we must live and know that perfect love casts out fear. We must, in the words of the Prophet Micah, "do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God."

As we see through the glass of this time dimly, we as followers of Christ are called to defend the rights and dignity of all God's children, seeking and serving Christ in all people, even those with whom we disagree. We must be about the mission of working for justice and showing God's love in this time and place. We must be about the mission of speaking truth to power and making no peace with oppression. Lest we get distracted by the schemes and gimmicks of those who peddle in fear, we must be about the business of the loving our neighbors as ourselves in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Therefore, my sisters and brothers in Christ, let us work tirelessly to eradicate from ourselves, from our churches, from our neighborhoods, and our nation the fear which denies, divides and destroys. May we work towards the beloved community and together pray that God might, "grant us wisdom, grant us courage for the facing of this hour."

May God's peace be ours today and always.

Yours in Christ

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Deon +".

The Rev. Deon K. Johnson
11th Bishop-elect

I invite congregations in the Diocese of Missouri to pray for the healing of our nation and an end to the sin of racism and white supremacy.

God of justice, in your wisdom you create all people in your image, without exception. Through your goodness, open our eyes to see the dignity, beauty, and worth of every human being. Open our minds to understand that all your children are brothers and sisters in the same human family. Open our hearts to repent of racist attitudes, behaviors, and speech which demean others. Open our ears to hear the cries of those wounded by racial discrimination, and their passionate appeals for change. Strengthen our resolve to make amends for past injustices and to right the wrongs of history. And fill us with courage that we might seek to heal wounds, build bridges, forgive and be forgiven, and establish peace and equality for all in our communities. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.