



Prince of Peace Lutheran Church

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Prince of Peace family & friends,

It has been said that silence, is itself, a statement. Martin Luther King Jr. said, "The ultimate tragedy is not the oppression and cruelty by [the] bad people but the silence over that by [the] good people." Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, "Silence in the face of evil is itself evil: God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act."

Recent events, surrounding the senseless and tragic death of George Floyd, has sparked protests around the country and has again brought to light racial injustice. If you grew up in the sixties, as I have, you have seen this type of unrest as the result of racial prejudice before. It is with a heavy heart, that we realize that racism and racial injustice is still with us. Why are we still so far away from a country without racism and without racial injustice?

In the light of the tragic death of George Floyd, and the resulting protests I feel it is important, to speak.

I speak for two (2) reasons:

First, I speak from a personal perspective. As a child growing up in a mixed raced household on the Southwest side of Chicago, I have always been sensitive to racism. My father was a Filipino immigrant and spoke with a thick accent. In my youth, I witnessed people, not all people mind you, but some who most definitely acted out in fear and prejudice against my father because he looked and sounded different from them. I do not pretend to say that I have an equal understanding of how an African American experiences prejudice. In no way, can I ever say that. My personal experience is a small fraction of the prejudice that our black brothers & sisters continue to experience. Racial prejudice is a sin and not acceptable in either the right kingdom (that is to say, God's kingdom) or the left kingdom (that is to say, the world). (Galatians 3:28 ESV [28] There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.)

Secondly, Prince of Peace Lutheran Church has a long history of being diverse and welcoming to all people. Many of our members are African American. I am saddened and shocked to see what happened to George Floyd. I echo our Synod President's statement (see below), "We weep for George Floyd, for his family and

loved ones because he was robbed of life. “ As pastor of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church it is important to recognize the senseless loss of life and also call for an end to such tragic deaths. Further, that racism against African Americans or any other race is not tolerated. As pastor of Prince of Peace, I am concerned that there are underlying fears and prejudice that remain in our country and even within our community. At Prince of Peace we stand against racism and racial prejudice. (Acts 11:17–18 ESV - [17] If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?” [18] When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, “Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life.”)

Prince of Peace supports peaceful, non-violent protests. However, we do not condone looting, violence or harming anyone in the name of justice. The recent looting, senseless damage, and even violence against law enforcement officers that have occurred in Over-the-Rhine and Clifton are sinful acts. We do not condone violence of any kind in the name of justice. (Matthew 26:52 ESV - [52] Then Jesus said to him, “Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword.)

As servants of the Word of God, pastors that are living in the left kingdom, that is the culture in which we live, we are called to speak if not act against injustice. Scripture is clear on the need for justice in the world (see Rev. Harrison’s statement below). Jesus gave us an example of brotherly love crossing over racial lines, with the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). As disciples of Christ, we are called to reflect Jesus’ love to all people regardless of race.

So, what are possible action steps in terms of what Prince of Peace can do to address racism? **1)** For starters, we can all perform a prayerful introspective examination of our hearts, minds, and actions critically and humbly for both conscious and unconscious racism. Quite often, we aren’t aware of our prejudices (myself included) or how we may come across to others. **2)** Reach out to others in active listening to those impacted by racism. Do this with love, an open-mind, and pray for the Holy Spirit to guide your discussion. **3)** Spend time praying for healing for our church, our city, and our broken nation. **4)** Ask the Lord to gift you with eyes that daily look for opportunities to bring Christ-like love (both in word and action) to anyone anywhere and to remove anything that would be a barrier to being what He wants you to be. **5)** Attend Bible studies and discussions / webinars on the subject of racism and systemic racism. Prince of Peace has a Monday 6pm Bible study on racism (using Zoom). There will be additional opportunities addressing racism and social injustice in the upcoming future as well. I will be presenting resources with books, videos, and links to websites for your consideration.

As many of you know, Prince of Peace has a strong focus on serving the homeless, people with addictions and mental illness, and those struggling with poverty (Matthew 25, Isaiah 58). Empowering adults, and youth to transcend restrictive environments to achieve meaningful change is the goal. Meaningful change can only be accomplished through the Holy Spirit. Pray for our church and ministry, especially our leaders to courageously follow the Holy Spirit in doing His will in our lives, the lives of our members, and our church.

In Jesus’ name,
Rev. John Suguitan
Pastor – Prince of Peace Lutheran Church
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*Finally, we echo the statement made by our Synod President, Rev. Matthew Harrison.
Here is his statement in its entirety:*

LCMS President Matthew Harrison' statement:

Discriminatory treatment of human beings on the basis of race is irrational evil and results in evil. It is folly, which can produce only anger and hatred. “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” America’s original sin of legal racism, the denial of human rights based on race, has reaped the whirlwind.

God’s Word rejects racism. “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). “No one is righteous, no, not one” (Romans 3:10). “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). All are equally created by God. All are equally accountable to God. The sins of all are equally atoned for by Christ. All are equally precious to God. Racial animosity is the result of sin and is sin in itself. Racism is not acceptable in the church. Jesus Himself bids us love our neighbors as ourselves (Mark 12:31) and did so precisely while rejecting racial preference (cf. Good Samaritan, Luke 10:25–37).

Unity in the church according to the Augsburg Confession is defined by Article VII: “For it is sufficient for the true unity of the Christian church that the Gospel be preached . . . and that the sacraments be administered in accordance with the divine Word.” Christ and His gifts bring unity and equity in the church. Racial discrimination in or by the church is sin. Racial conflict in our nation calls every Christian to introspection. “It is time for judgment to begin at the household of God” (1 Peter 4:17). “Righteous indignation” without self-reflection and repentance is meaningless, or worse, hypocrisy.

The one who grievously and unjustly took the sacred gift of life from George Floyd — resulting in a charge of 3rd-degree murder — will, ironically, be given the very thing he denied his victim, due process of the law. Justice must be meted out according to the law. Others may be charged.

We weep for George Floyd, for his family and loved ones because he was robbed of life. We weep for our nation. We weep for those across our nation who believe their only recourse is destruction. We weep for police officers everywhere, who carry out their honorable vocations with courage and goodwill but find their task infinitely more challenging and dangerous in the wake of the sad events in Minneapolis. We pray for the safety of all and the welfare of those who have lost property and livelihood. We pray for the police who must stand against mayhem. We support the First Amendment rights of the peaceful protestors.

We deplore injustice. We deplore destruction, robbery and doing physical harm to others. That, too, is injustice. We plead to citizens and governments of this nation for communities beset by poverty, crime and injustice. We plead for rational and unifying policies that will end injustices and address social breakdown, lack of economic access, and other factors that fuel anger, hatred and dissension.

We shall pray, but we shall do even more. We shall follow the ancient mandate of the prophet of Yahweh: “He has told you, O man, what is good; and 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).

And we shall proclaim Christ, “in season and out of season” (2 Timothy 4:2). “For one will scarcely die for a righteous person — though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die — but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:7–8).

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him (Colossians 3:1–17 ESV).

Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison

President

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod