

June 10, 2020

To our sisters and brothers in Winston-Salem,

What a moment we find ourselves in.

Tensions continue to mount over the handling of the coronavirus and its economic impact, and the recent outcry against the unjust treatment of people of color—adding the deaths of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and George Floyd to an egregious list compiled over centuries—has created a firestorm. We worry that our nation may be splitting at the seams, unable to reconcile its differences of perspective and opinion.

This is a critical moment for our country, and for pastors and ministry leaders who serve in predominantly white spaces. Witnessing the great pain of our brothers and sisters of color, will we continue to tolerate things as they are? Will we remain silent as we hear the cries of injustice? We rise up today to say unequivocally, “No.” At the heart of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we hear God’s call to pursue justice and reconciliation.

This pursuit demands ongoing humility and courage, listening and lament. It requires daily taking up the mantle of Jesus, who looked not to his own interests, but to the interest of others. It requires standing against hate at every turn. It requires boldly calling for equal treatment of our brothers and sisters of color. It requires messy conversations, with no easy answers. And, even for those who have been learning about and working toward justice and reconciliation for a long time, it will require that each of us allow the Holy Spirit to examine our hearts to reveal where we are hardened, indifferent, or blind to the suffering of others.

In response to the call of the Gospel, we encourage everyone to raise their voice in **lament** on behalf of all those who suffer. Will you join us as we cry out to the God who willingly suffered a death that was undeserved?

We also encourage everyone to **stand in solidarity** with people of color who have, for far too long, been treated inequitably in this country. Change must come.

We encourage everyone **to listen and learn**. Listen to and learn from the voices and experiences of our black, brown, and Hispanic brothers and sisters. And listen to and learn from the biblical narrative that points clearly to a God who has promised to bind together God’s broken and fragmented people, to pour the oil of healing upon this world’s wounds, and to let the rivers of God’s justice flow like mighty waters.

We encourage everyone **to act**. Ask God, “What would you have me do? How can I be a part of the solution and not a part of the problem?” One next step we would encourage is to financially support the long-time underfunded, local, grassroots and black-led efforts to effect change.

And we encourage everyone to **join us as we submit ourselves in prayer** to the Lord who is our hope. By our own reason and strength we cannot bring lasting change in our community, and by our own reason and strength we cannot become the Beloved Community of which Dr. King dreamed. We need God’s help.

Yours in the service of Christ and for the sake of his Church,

Rev. Dr. Peter Barnes
Senior Pastor
First Presbyterian Church

Rev. Greg Basch
Campus Pastor
Elevation Church, WS

Rev. David Beaty
Pastor
River Oaks Community Church

Rev. Andrew Boyd
Area Director, Greater Forsyth County Young Life

Rev. Dr. Steve Corts
Lead Pastor
Center Grove Church

Rev. Matt Farabow
Senior Pastor
Ardmore United Methodist Church

Rev. Dr. Randy Harris
Pastor
Highland Presbyterian Church

Rev. Giorgio Hiatt
Senior Pastor
Redeemer Presbyterian Church

Rev. Emily Hull McGee
Pastor
First Baptist on Fifth

Rev. Mark Key
Senior Pastor
Mt. Tabor United Methodist Church

Rev. Dr. P. Glenn Kinden, III
Senior Minister
Centenary United Methodist Church

The Rev. D. Dixon Kinser
Rector
St. Paul's Episcopal Church

Rev. Gary McGhee
Lead Pastor
Restoration Community Church

Rev. Ben Milner
Senior Pastor
Salem Presbyterian Church

Rev. Johnny Pereira
Senior Pastor
Salem Chapel

Rev. Matt Peterson
Lead Pastor
Awake Church

Dr. Mike and Darla Rakes
Co-pastors
Winston-Salem First

Rev. Lane Sapp
Senior Pastor
Calvary Moravian Church

Rev. Dr. Bob Setzer, Jr.
Pastor
Knollwood Baptist Church

Rev. David Speakman
Senior Pastor
Hope Presbyterian Church

Rev. Chuck Spong
Executive Director
Love Out Loud

Rev. Tyler Tankersley
Senior Pastor
Ardmore Baptist Church

Rev. Virginia Hege Tobiassen
Pastor
Home Moravian Church

The Rev. Ginny Wilder
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St. Anne's Episcopal Church

Rev. Paul A. Wollner
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President, Sharing the Light