

Dear Presbytery Family,

In a country divided against itself by racial hatred and social injustice, members of the Coordinating Council want to publicly express our grief and acknowledge the overwhelming suffering that centuries of systemic racism have inflicted on people of color. Systemic racism and injustice are sins against God and all people. We recognize that the Church in word and deed needs to be part of God's work in the world to hear the voices of peoples long silenced, and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace. As Jesus demonstrated the reality of God's kingdom being present among us, we join with Christ to confront the powers of sin and evil in our society. We join in solidarity with those speaking out against social injustice and government brutality, and join in Jesus' prayer for his disciples and future believers: that his followers might be unified, bearing witness to God's love. (John 17:20-21)

God is working to change hearts and transform lives. We seek to repent and do all we can to turn from and dismantle the demonic power of white supremacy. Slavery, Jim Crow, segregation, and mass incarceration are systems of legalized and monetized white supremacy for which generations of "non-white" people continue to pay an immeasurable price. That cost must be acknowledged and the privilege that accrued to some at the expense of others must be reckoned with and redressed.

Calling racism "a sin against humanity," the [Presbyterian Church \(U.S.A.\) Office of Public Witness](#) expressed outrage at the death of George Floyd and called on Presbyterians to take action in the wake of his death. The Office of Public Witness, issued this [Action Alert](#).

White Americans can recognize the reality of ignoring, denying and perpetuating what has been called America's "original sin." Until White America is willing to collectively acknowledge its privilege, take responsibility for its past – and the impact it has on the present – and commit to creating a future steeped in justice, the list of names that George Floyd has been added to will never end.

The Reverend Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), says there is work to be done, "If we are truly to see reform in this country and beyond, we must be a united front and place God front and center." The Stated Clerk remembers recent victims of racial violence in [this video](#), and calls for change.

The PC(USA) is strongly committed to the struggle for racial justice. We trust in God the Holy Spirit, everywhere the giver and renewer of life. The Spirit sets us free to accept ourselves and to love God and neighbor. In a broken

and fearful world the Spirit gives us courage to pray without ceasing, to witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior, to unmask idolatries in Church and culture, to hear the voices of peoples long silenced, and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace. May we fight this evil among us, for if we remain silent in such a time we give consent to such racism and injustice.

We join together in prayer:

Lord God, life's troubles overwhelm us: families are shattered, politicians fighting, news reports devastate us, darkness grows daily, and violence scares us. We are often torn between anger and love in the middle of a pandemic and social unrest over physical brutality and injustice. Grace seems, at times, to hide from us. We know Your presence sustains us in difficult times and we rely on Your strength to stand up and stand firm for what is right.

Increase our faith dear Lord so we are not swayed by despair. Calm our hearts as they rest in you and let us know that you are always near.

When we feel worries, lift up our minds and help us to see the truth. When fear grips us tight, help us to take things one step at a time. When we can't express the turmoil inside, calm us with Your quiet words of love. We know deep down that we can cast these cares on You, that you have taken these anxious thoughts upon yourself by dying on the cross.

Lord, calm our hearts, turn our hurt into understanding. Calm our mind, change our despair into gentle hope. Cover our soul, transform our resentment into forgiveness. Cover our life with love, fashion our anger into grace. Strengthen us that we may not be silent in facing the Coronavirus or the injustice that racism breeds. We need wisdom and strength, Lord.

Enable us to respect the things and people You have made. Enable our ears to hear the cries and feel the pain of the those who are discriminated against. Make us wise, so that we may know and practice the love of Jesus Christ. We seek strength, not to be superior to any of our brothers and sisters, but to be able to fight our greatest enemy, ourselves.

Dissolve this night that surrounds us. It is a dark day and a cold one. But we know You are here with us. Your presence is our only way of overcoming. Your love and forgiveness are our hope and our refuge. Let Your light shine upon us, Lord let it shine! Dissolve this night dear Lord.

Make us ever ready to come to you with clean hands and straight eyes, so that when life fades as a fading sunset, our spirit may come to you without shame or regret. Amen.