

Statement Against Racism

We stand with the people of Virginia, the United States, and the world who decry the murder of George Floyd and countless others and who seek to dismantle systemic racism in all its forms.

We, who are white, acknowledge our country's centuries-old practice of and complicity with the tyranny leveled against people of color in this land. We confess, even now, even unconsciously, in ways that we do not see, that we have sinned by what we have done and what we have left undone. We confess our sinfulness and repent of our continued silence and our participation in perpetuating systematic racism.

All of us recognize that Virginia was the epicenter for slavery in this country, and that for four hundred years the African American people have been exploited for the benefit of the white population. The African American people of our country have endured unimaginable brutality in slavery, Jim Crow laws, segregation, mass incarcerations, and other terrors up until the present. We also acknowledge that pastors, churches, and church members owned slaves and promoted the corrupt and insidious belief that African American people were inferior in intelligence, rationality, and ability. Our stained-glass windows and the foundations of our churches have been stained by the sweat and blood of African Americans who built our institutions and whose subjugation provided wealth to its members and churches.

African Americans alone were brought to this country for the purpose of slavery but they were not alone in being viciously oppressed. From the genocide of Native Americans until the discriminatory practices of our time, our society has relegated all people of color to less than human status. Our housing, banking, lending practices, and laws have and continue to benefit those who are white and deny basic needs to those who are not.

Our faith stands in opposition to the oppression of any person or group. The faith of us all flows out of the experience of enslaved people in ancient Egypt whom God liberated. In our scriptures, God gives us laws and guidance about creating a community of love and justice, which includes protecting and including all people, even those whom we see as alien. Our prophets condemn trampling upon the poor and cry out for "justice to roll down like mighty waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 5:24). Jesus blesses those who work for justice and peace, and teaches us to love; that is, to act for the benefit and well-being of all people.

Therefore, we, who are pastors, church leaders, and congregations of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in the Presbytery of the James

- Affirm that all people are created equal and that equality, no matter how unrealized, is part of America's founding principles.

- Mourn and condemn the systemic racism that has produced oppressive laws and police brutality, and the lack of opportunity for health care, justice equal housing, pay, lending, and education.
- Believe that this moment is an unparalleled opportunity to work for change that benefits all people of color.
- Believe that, when the potential and gifts of all our citizens are realized, we all benefit and
- Commit ourselves to the work of anti-racism.
- Support public protest – and pray for it to be peaceful, and pledge to work for significant, lasting, and on-going change to establish a more just society.