



For Immediate Release

June 5, 2020

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CHARLESTON, WV – West Virginia Council of Churches Statement concerning the deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor:

Two basic tenets of the Christian faith are that all human beings are created in the Image of God and that we are called to love God and to love one another.

Once again, as our nation is witness to the senseless deaths of three African Americans: George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor, we find these tenets violated by the endemic sin of racism in our society and assaulted by the ideology of white supremacy. As a nation, we have failed to recognize the Image of God in our sisters and brothers; we have failed to love one another as God has loved us; and we have failed in our efforts to bring justice to all people.

We view with great disappointment that the response of our national leadership has been to emphasize the threat to use military force. We urge our national leadership to acknowledge that most demonstrations have been energetic, but peaceful, and to spend more time speaking to the justice of the complaints of demonstrators. Where protests have turned destructive, responses should be measured, appropriate, and not serve to escalate the situation.

It is the responsibility of those in high office in the United States to bring the nation together in a time of crisis. Instead, we saw a dismaying use of violence in the clearing of peaceful demonstrators from Lafayette Square and from the grounds of St. John's Episcopal Church, and by the use of the sacred to divide rather than unite our nation.

We believe Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s words that:

"Hate begets hate; violence begets violence; toughness begets a greater toughness. We must meet the forces of hate with the power of love"

and we believe Dr. King's words that:

"The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy, instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it. Through violence you may murder the liar, but you cannot murder the lie, nor establish the truth. Through violence you may murder the hater, but you do not murder hate. In fact, violence merely increases hate. Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

We stand with those who seek to oppose racism and white supremacy in our nation through peaceful protest. There can be no doubt that now is the time for our nation to commit once and for all to end the injustices inflicted upon our African American sisters and brothers; to repent of our nation's grounding in racism and white supremacy; and to build a nation worthy of being called "A city that is set on a hill" (Matthew 5: 14, KJV).

The West Virginia Council of Churches (WVCC) represents 15 Christian denominations in West Virginia. Its mission is to make visible the unity of Christ's church, and to provide a Christian witness on public issues, as well as to engage in cooperative mission and service for all West Virginians.

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