



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

PITTSBURGH EPISCOPAL AREA

CYNTHIA MOORE-KOIKOI
RESIDENT BISHOP

RENEE MIKELL
ASSISTANT TO THE BISHOP

Breonna Taylor

Ahmaud Arbery

George Floyd

As I sit watching news coverage of protests happening all over my beloved country, I am flashing back to my days in Baltimore when protests erupted after the killing of Freddie Gray. And I am devastated.

How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?
How long will you hide your face from me?
How long must I bear pain in my soul,
and have sorrow in my heart all day long?
How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?
Consider and answer me, O Lord my God!
Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death,
and my enemy will say, "I have prevailed";
my foes will rejoice because I am shaken.
But I trusted in your steadfast love;
my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.
I will sing to the Lord,
because he has dealt bountifully with me. (Psalm 13)

I stand with those who peacefully protest the violence that has been perpetually, systemically perpetrated against African Americans in this country.

The violence that is concomitant with some of the protests is part of a vicious cycle of violence that has been occurring in this country for over 400 years. This cycle began when my African ancestors were brutally torn from their homeland and brought to this land. It is a cycle that is fueled by the evils of racism and greed. The oppressor perpetrates an act of violence. The oppressed then responds with an internal or external expression of violence. The oppressor then feels justified in responding with violence. It is time for this cycle to end! But it will not end until the demonic systems of racism and white privilege that run rampant in our country are dismantled.

Racism can lead one to murder an unarmed man who you think might have committed burglary. Racism can lead one to press a knee on a man's neck until the life literally wanes out of that man.

White privilege can lead you to assume Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and George Floyd must have done something to warrant their deaths. White privilege can lead you to want to respond to "Black Lives Matter" with "All Lives Matter".

While African Americans and other people of color can help identify issues of racism and white privilege, it is not our work to address those issues or dismantle those systems. The only way for this violence to end is for members of the white community to rise up and do the work of dismantling racism and combating white privilege. Our annual conference needs members of the white community to step up and take the lead in addressing issues of racism and white privilege throughout western Pennsylvania. It is your obligation as a disciple of Jesus Christ and a United Methodist to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves.

Breonna Taylor

Ahmaud Arbery

George Floyd