



★ The Episcopal Diocese of Texas

Press Release

For immediate release

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Episcopal Diocese of Texas Bishops' Statement

We grieve for the most recent deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery.

We hear the voices of people of color who live, daily, as victims of prejudice, contempt, and violence in America.

We support peaceful protests.

We speak out against the actions of authorities who tear-gas peaceful protestors.

We reject the government's removal of clergy from church property without cause.

We reject the use of the Episcopal church as a political prop.

We condemn destruction of property.

Dear Friends,

We, in America, are living again in a moment when unjust actions have brought us to protests, riots, and burning. Our cities are on fire, quite literally, because there are deep wounds over continuing American racism. This moment invites us to answer a call to be a different kind of people.

We name that there is bitter division, also, because of partisan politics. There is a spewing forth of projected feelings upon each other across social media platforms, by phone, by text, by letters, and on video. There is also humiliation and shaming, which seeks to silence difference. These behaviors are not constructive. We need to be reminded that our public behavior must represent our very best Christian selves.

We know you well after these many years. We can imagine you are grieving, each in your own way. You are grieving because we are separated from each other because of the pandemic. We are grieving because we can't gather quick enough. We grieve because of the politics at play in the world and across the nation. We grieve the loss of feeling safe. We grieve in many different ways with our brothers and sisters of color who are in deep pain because of racial violence. We grieve for the deaths of the most recent victims of racism. We weep with our brothers and sisters and join in calling for justice for the lives of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery. We are unconsolated over these losses as was Rachel (Jeremiah 31:15-17).

President George W. Bush wrote,

"It remains a shocking failure that African Americans, especially young African American men, are harassed and threatened in their own country. It is a strength when protesters, protected by responsible law enforcement, march for a better future. This tragedy—in a long series of similar tragedies—raises long overdue questions: How do we

end systemic racism in our society? The only way to see ourselves in a true light is to listen to the voices of so many who are hurting and grieving. Those who set out to silence those voices do not understand the meaning of America—or how it becomes a better place.”

Our country has been here before so we know what we need to do. We have to rise above partisan politics to our better selves. We must rest upon the deep Christian virtues that bind us together. We must pray privately and daily. We must pray together for peace, justice, and to come together rising above partisan loyalties.

We also need to call upon our Federal and Civic leaders to listen carefully to the pain of our people in this moment. We must invite our leaders to see a better way because the present course is not one of dignity.

Part of what is very difficult, is to figure out how to support each other as we act out our citizenship with faith and authenticity. What does it mean to be a Christian friend who disagrees? How will you support those who see this situation differently than you? It is very easy to lean away from each other right now. Yet, we know that it is exactly at this moment that we need to lean towards one another. We need to lean towards each other in a posture of prayer, and with a listening stance.

We recognize that each of us has a responsibility to act, too. What does that look like? We might join the church in [Walking the Way of Love](#), which Presiding Bishop Michael Curry introduced at General Convention in 2018 in Austin.

What we must recognize is that we, as religious leaders and faithful Christians, do have a voice in this work. Our country rests upon religious freedom—not so that it might be silenced in the public square, but so that it might inform the public square. We must certainly recognize the difficulty this brings. Nevertheless, the church must have a voice about justice and the care of people. The church must speak for peaceful means of engagement. The church must speak out against violence, whether it is violence towards one individual, or groups of people. The church has a responsibility to speak out when people are not protected. Our country does not do well when religious leaders are silent.

We also believe in peaceful and nonviolent protest as a means for people to gather and be heard. We remember the words of Archbishop Desmond Tutu who said, *“When we see others as the enemy, we risk becoming what we hate. When we oppress others, we end up oppressing ourselves. All of our humanity is dependent upon recognizing the humanity in others.”* For Tutu, nonviolence is a discipline, a matter of conscience. He believed that nonviolence presupposes a minimum moral level of the state. We believe that America has the capacity to do the moral work that is set before it when it comes to racial justice. We should not be afraid to name it. We should not be afraid of engaging it by name. We should not be afraid to protest peacefully for a better country.

In 1966, Presiding Bishop John Hines wrote these words:

“We can grapple with the demonic powers that make a Watts or a Selma or a Vietnam morass because Christ has identified and helps us overcome those same powers within ourselves. We can speak the truth in love amid hostility because He first loved us and gave Himself for us. We can mitigate, as much as lieth in us, the weariness and pain and tragedy of a broken world because there is sufficient healing in The Broken Body. We can live in simple joy amid the insecurities of this present age by the power and surety of the age to come. For our future is not in doubt. Neither is our freedom to be "real persons" regardless of circumstances. For these have been won for us by the Lord of Life who holds the universe and all of its mysteries within the hollow of His hand.”
(You can read the rest of the message [here](#).)

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry said,

“But we need not be paralyzed by our past or our present. We are not slaves to fate but people of faith. Our long-term commitment to racial justice and reconciliation is embedded in our identity as baptized followers of Jesus. We will still be doing it when the news cameras are long gone.” (You can read the rest of the message [here](#).)

It is God’s cruciform future that pulls us forward, that lifts our eyes, and invites us to lean towards one another at just such a time as this. Let us weep, as Rachel wept—unconsoled. Let us pray and do so together. Let us work together peacefully to bring about justice. Let us take our place as a generation to end racism in all its forms.

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