



“Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord; Lord, hear my voice!” (Psalm 130:1)

To our Village family,

We have witnessed a challenging season in our Nation’s life these last few months with COVID-19, which we have been speaking to as regularly as we can. (Pastor Ken and the Management Team have been sending regular updates via email or video message in order to keep the congregation up to speed on the evolving challenges, opportunities, and trajectory of our COVID response).

During these last months, we have also witnessed the rise of violence and racism against Asian Americans and the disproportionate effect the coronavirus has had in communities of color including in particular Latino, Native American and African American communities. The effects of this disease, like so many other things in our nation, break differently along racial and socio-economic lines.

More pointedly, recent weeks have painfully brought to the surface racial disparity, divide, and bias with regard to skin color, that has existed as America’s original sin and continues to erode our country.

We, the Leadership Team at Village (the elders, elder advisors, and staff management team) feel compelled and burdened to speak, not just to the COVID-19 crisis, but to this insidious racial injustice that is in opposition to the things of God. We desire to name the wrongs and the outrage felt by all—especially our African American brothers and sisters—and acknowledge the deep history of complicity and silence by the American church with regard to racial inequality and violence against black and brown bodies.

We want to speak clearly: if any part of the body suffers, the whole body suffers.

We have members of our church and members in the body of Christ suffering greatly under the wrong, inexcusable, and terrifying violence against George Floyd in Minnesota, Ahmaud Arbery in Georgia and so many others. We feel the pain of mothers. We sense the hopelessness of fathers. We see the ache of a community. We have an obligation to suffer with, lament with, and pray with our African American brothers and sisters. We must use our voices to call out and name that things are not as they are supposed to be—especially when instances of violence follow well-trodden and historic patterns of racial inequity.

Let us be clear, we respect and have compassion for our first responders. We value them, suffer with, lament with, and pray for them. Our love for those who put their lives on the line regularly compels us not to remain silent when those same brothers and sisters are suffering trauma in these moments as well. Both trauma from a nation that lives with stereotypes of race, and trauma from having to pick up the pieces and continue to stand strong for our society when they themselves are struggling with the effects of violence, injustice, and instances of needless loss of life. In these moments, we all lose. There should be no sides.

We are Christian leaders. We seek to stand with the God of justice. We seek also to stand with all who labor in pursuit of that justice. Pursuing justice is never easy. Rev. William Barber puts it succinctly, “There is not some separation between Jesus and justice; to be Christian is to be concerned with what’s going on in the world.”

As many around the country take to the streets to voice their pain and to make known their protest with full-throated voices, we declare our solidarity with this action, remembering that Jesus too turned tables. We in no way

condone violence against persons or property and urge peace and non-violence in the manner of Christ's full teachings on evil and injustice. We don't want to let non-violence, however, be confused with inaction.

We cannot talk about other troubles, seek to nurture our community spiritually, and not name what is so clearly and unmistakably in front of us. We name it not simply to join a chorus, but seeing it as a necessary step of faithfulness in leading our church into righteousness.

While there are many issues in the news deserving of discussion, at this point, we want to clearly address the very real issue of race before us. As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "There comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe nor political nor popular, but he must take it because his conscience tells him it is right."

We are committed to the way of love and of unity. And we remain committed to the dignity of all God's children. "What you do for the least of these, you do for me." Matt 25:40

We seek to faithfully remain a multicultural community in Christ.

Serving you in humility,

Village Board and Advisors

Village Staff Management Team