This past week, we all saw the footage of George Floyd, unarmed, handcuffed, pleading for breath, pleading for his life while a police officer knelt on his neck … until he died. Of course the streets of Minneapolis exploded with rage that spread throughout our nation. How many people can we lose? How much injustice can go unanswered as black men, women, and children (think Tamir Rice) are killed by police with little or no accountability. Rachel is indeed weeping for her children because they are no more.

Once more the reality of racism and the reality of white privilege and white supremacy are starkly visible. As followers of Jesus the Christ we cannot be silent. As the heavily armed police used tear gas and rubber bullets on peaceful protesters, white supremacists and self-professed militia are carrying guns, confronting police and protesters while the police stand by silently.

Enough! We, the staff and clergy of the Vermont Conference of the United Church of Christ condemn the killing of George Floyd and the staggering string of killing/lynchings stretching back to 1619 and before. This is a sickness of the soul of our nation. As the African-American spiritual says, we are in need of a balm “to heal the sin sick soul.”

We confess that the drive for power and economic advantage at the expense of black and brown people has sickened our nation. We confess that the glorification and reliance on military-style solutions has driven a wedge between communities and increased the danger to our black and brown siblings.

Rev. Dr. Lynn Bujnak, Conference Minister
Rev. Paul Sangree, Associate Conference Minister
Jesse Davis, Operations & Ministries Coordinator; Tanya Frazier, Bookkeeper
We also confess our complicity and silence in the face of racism, the jokes we didn’t call out, the Word we did not proclaim, the white privilege we refused to see, the fear of the other we hid in our hearts.

We believe that healing can come when our society and the individuals in that society are transformed by the power, love and grace of God. We call for specific steps towards such transformation including: listening deeply to our black siblings and seeking to understand their experience and their reality as black persons in a racist society. We will be allies, willing to use our privilege to call out acts of violence, degradation and humiliation. We will be willing to put our lives on the line as our black siblings do each day. We will immerse ourselves in prayer knowing that God can and will open our eyes and transform our souls. We will organize. We will write to our governmental leaders repeatedly demanding justice and protection for all, not just those who look like us.

As many of you know, last November I joined my Conference Minister colleagues for an immersion experience in Birmingham and surrounding areas in Alabama around slavery and the civil rights movement. The most powerful experience of many was a trip to the National Memorial for Peace and Justice dedicated to victims of white supremacy in Montgomery. (see photo above) There were no words - only tears - as I walked through an imposing hallway under suspended coffin shaped iron blocks filled with name after name of Black men, women and children killed, lynched by the virus of white privilege and white supremacy. I made a pledge there - I would not be silent. I would not be complicit. I hope that many of you will make the same pledge, for the sake of all God’s people.

Praying for equality and justice,

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