



Missouri Mid-South Conference United Church of Christ

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A Pastoral Letter from the Rev. Dr. Ginny Brown Daniel, Conference Minister

“My anguish, my anguish! I writhe in pain! Oh, the walls of my heart! My heart is beating wildly; I cannot keep silent; for I hear the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war. Disaster overtakes disaster, the whole land is laid waste. Suddenly my tents are destroyed, my curtains in a moment.” Jeremiah 4:18-20

When the prophet Jeremiah described his anguish at the injustice and oppression in his time, there was no mincing words. He was heartbroken, as was God. I imagine God’s anguish continues today given the recent murders of persons of color. **Last week it was Breonna Taylor, a few weeks before it was Ahmaud Arbery, and this week it is George Floyd. All children of God created in God’s image.**

And yet, this is not a sudden turn of racial violence and terror. This is but a long line of persons of color murdered because they were black. The only difference now is that a camera recorded each of these lynchings for all of us to witness for ourselves. For those of us who are white, I implore you not to speak of your shock at these recent murders. Instead, we must acknowledge that our shock is a sign of our white privilege, where we can look the other way at the racism around and within us. For those who are persons of color, I can’t imagine the layers of rage, fear, anger, and demand to be treated fairly seethe within.

And here we are as the Missouri Mid-South Conference of the United Church of Christ. How will we respond to this racial terror? It is no longer acceptable to write inclusive messages of solidarity or post progressive statements. We must act. We must demand that racism in parks, businesses, neighborhoods, streets and our UCC Churches must be dismantled.

As your Conference Minister, I call upon each Church, Minister, and Member of the Missouri Mid-South Conference to take action in dismantling racism. I humbly offer a few suggestions:

- For those who are white – name your complicity in white supremacy. It is not enough to read books like “White Fragility.” We must embody our readings with actions. We must speak up and say that what happened to Ms. Taylor, Mr. Arbery, and Mr. Floyd is racial violence and lynching. We must confess our own racism, by breaking down our own racial bias in our relationships and the organizations to which we belong.
- For those who are persons and Churches of color – process your pain, triggers, anger, and rage. Give the anti-racism work back to your white neighbors (especially those who claim themselves allies). Demand equity in every circle of the United Church of Christ. Take comfort with each other that this is sometimes heartbreaking work. And live boldly as God created you in God’s image.
- For all of us – be honest and vulnerable with one another, especially in the uncomfortable moments when dismantling racism becomes personal.

I am aware that my words in this letter have no institutional authority because each Church governs itself within the UCC. I offer you my prayerful suggestions as work we must do if we are ever to truly celebrate a Pentecost of the risen Christ. May God’s prophetic righteousness be our Companion. Blessings, Ginny