

**June 7, 2020**



**ST. JOHN UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
Fairview Heights, IL 62208  
618-397-6323**

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:** First of all, I apologize to those who receive this bulletin by regular mail. I realize you may have received it after Sunday. The church calendar says June 7 is Trinity Sunday, so I spent more than 4 days working on a message about the Holy Trinity.

But then George Floyd was murdered. I think it is time for us to talk about this. Maybe some of you are thinking, “why should I care about a Black man being murdered by a white man?” My goal is to explore that question right now.

First of all, our church tradition understands worship as **covenant renewal. In worship we remember our covenant relationship with God and how that is connected with our relationships with our neighbors.** We recommit ourselves to living as God would have us live. As the people of God, we come together to recall and proclaim the history

of salvation, the story of God’s delivering power in this world—a story filled with God’s special love and passionate concern for the poor and excluded, the enslaved and oppressed. In worship we celebrate God’s past, present, and future deliverance and proclaim the already-but-not-yet kingdom of God in which peace will exist in its fullness and all people, regardless of age, race, or gender, will flourish in God’s presence.

Next, we look to the scriptures for guidance in this situation of racial disparity:

**Micah 6:6-8 What does the LORD require? (CEB)**

<sup>6</sup> With what should I approach the LORD  
and bow down before God on high?  
Should I come before him with entirely burned offerings,  
with year-old calves?  
<sup>7</sup> Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams,  
with many torrents of oil?  
Should I give my oldest child for my crime;  
the fruit of my body for the sin of my spirit?  
<sup>8</sup> He has told you, human one, what is good and  
what the LORD requires from you:  
to do justice, embrace faithful love, and walk humbly  
with your God.

**PSALM 146:5-10**

The person whose help is the God of Jacob—  
the person whose hope rests on the LORD their God—  
is truly happy!

<sup>6</sup> God: the maker of heaven and earth,  
the sea, and all that is in them,  
God: who is faithful forever,  
<sup>7</sup> who gives justice to people who are oppressed,  
who gives bread to people who are starving!  
The LORD: who frees prisoners.  
<sup>8</sup> The LORD: who makes the blind see.  
The LORD: who straightens up those who are bent low.  
The LORD: who loves the righteous.  
<sup>9</sup> The LORD: who protects immigrants,  
who helps orphans and widows,  
but who makes the way of the wicked twist and turn!  
<sup>10</sup> The LORD will rule forever!

Zion, your God will rule from one generation to the next!  
Praise the LORD!

**Luke 4:16-19** Common English Bible (CEB)

<sup>16</sup> Jesus went to Nazareth, where he had been raised. On the Sabbath he went to the synagogue as he normally did and stood up to read. <sup>17</sup> The synagogue assistant gave him the scroll from the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

<sup>18</sup> *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because the Lord has anointed me.  
He has sent me to preach good news to the poor,  
to proclaim release to the prisoners  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to liberate the oppressed,  
<sup>19</sup> and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.* <sup>[a]</sup>

**MARK 12:28-31** <sup>28</sup> One of the legal experts heard their dispute and saw how well Jesus answered them. He came over and asked him, “Which commandment is the most important of all?”  
<sup>29</sup> Jesus replied, “The most important one is *Israel, listen! Our God is the one Lord, <sup>30</sup> and you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, with all your mind, and with all your strength.* <sup>[a]</sup> <sup>31</sup> The second is this, *You will love your neighbor as yourself.*<sup>[1]</sup> No other commandment is greater than these.”

Notice that Jesus **does not say** love **only** white people. Love **only** those in our social economic status. Love **only** those people who look like us. We may feel comfortable with those who are most like us, but as Christians, followers of Jesus, we are called to celebrate another’s diversity, not conformity. And though there is no one right way to express the presence of Christ or the welling up of God’s Spirit in your life, unity in diversity should be the joyful affirmation of the Body of Christ – which is another way of saying, “the church.”

We are all individuals with various gifts and personalities and limits and creativity, but we worship the same God with an unchanging vision for God’s world – that we all may be one in Spirit. And sometimes we live that out very well, and other times we fail miserably - especially when we use **our standards instead of God's.**

Some people get upset when they see or hear the slogan “Black Lives Matter.” I get that, but Bishop Michael Curry gave an example of what that means. Say your house is on fire. Do you want the fire department to hose down every house on your block or just yours? I think you would say that your house had the greatest need at that point in time. That’s what people of color need right now – a little extra attention.

Actually, I do not know how you stand on racial issues; we’ve never talked about it. I am willing to listen to your opinions on this issue. There are many resources in the UCC that we can use to help us with this discussion. We can have “Sacred Conversations About Race.” Just ask me how I can help.

In the meantime, I asked our Conference Minister, Rev. Shana Johnson, how we, in an all-white church can help. Here are her suggestions:

“I think a good first step is to start with your personal story. How have you grown in your understanding about the presence of racism and white supremacy in our country, in our community and in our lives? What are the areas in which you struggle? What are the things you wonder about or do not understand?

“How can white people start?  
“By educating themselves about the black experience.  
Reading, watching films, having conversations.

“By seeking to understand the justified anger and rage.

“By calling out family members, church members and neighbors when a racist joke or slur is made.

“By calling ourselves and others on why we think, act or respond in a certain way.

“By supporting black owned businesses.

“By working on their own racism.

“The importance is saying we need to start the conversation and commit ourselves to doing better.”

We can also support organizations that are already helping: The Deaconess Foundation in St. Louis provides education and support for children in the area, The Deaconess Faith Community Nurses also in St. Louis provides health care to those in need, especially in north St. Louis where not many of us want to go. The Southern Poverty Law Association helps people of color with legal issues. Unipres Kindercottage, helps educate and care for children in East St. Louis. And there are many other ways to help including providing food for the food pantries.

**There is one way the Holy Trinity applies to this situation.** “Just as the three persons of the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) are unique, diverse, and yet unified, we also are to live as unique and diverse people who can be unified. God created us all very unique and different. However, the Trinity models for us how three can work together as one.” (Anonymous quote).

**I await your response.** Pastor Rosemary Captain

**OFFERING:** Thank you for continuing your gifts to the church. The doors may be closed, but the work of the church continues.

**LET US PRAY:** (UCC Website)

God to whom we belong, we know...  
that each person is of infinite worth to you,  
that You delight in all our colors, shapes, and sizes,  
and that You dwell in the love that holds us together  
as your One Body.  
  
Held captive by the bondage of racism,  
we confess that at times  
we have failed to love -- alienating ourselves  
from You, our community, and our very souls.  
May we overcome the temptation to live in fear:  
insular and distant from one another.  
  
May we find strength in You  
to stop quietly accepting the system  
that divides, excludes, and crucifies your Body.  
Source of all that is just and true,  
fortify us with the courage and integrity  
to draw one another out of numb, collective amnesia  
and remember your love that holds us close.  
Let us never forget who we are in You,  
because it is only in You that we are freed  
from the shackles of guilt and sin  
to act with sincere passion for justice.  
Trusting in your future promise,  
we anticipate the day when racism will be no more.  
Living and moving in your Spirit,  
strengthen us to be active participants  
in the fulfillment of that promise! Amen.

**ST. JOHN PRAYER LIST:** Dave Seneczyn,  
Eric White, Lori Riess, Charles Chamberlin, Donna Isselhard,  
Mitch Nallie, Candy Pearce, Greg Talley, Carol Meyer, Leah  
Williams, Pat Holtgrave, Jane Riess, Rich Schmitt, Shari  
Hamilton, Charlotte Watson, Becky Ballard, Hanna Mosco,  
Bill Underwood, Luke Doctolero (Pastor's grandson).

The family and friends of Jeff Tambo-ong, friend of Pastor's youngest daughter.

**PS Whenever the Governor allows 50 people to gather, our church will open; possibly by July 5.**

Peace and Blessings, Pastor Rosemary  
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"Love of neighbor is an essential aspect of Jesus' theology. Love for neighbor is not optional, numerous scriptures provide Jesus' theological premises that love for others is most clear and illuminates one's love for God. When we violate love for our neighbors, we send a clear message to God that we do not love the Creator, Jesus and his teachings, and the Holy Spirit's Pentecost message to be the Church are ignored."

(UCC Racial Justice Resources)