

Dear Friends,

We continue to hold our neighborhoods, the city and country, and the world in prayer. My heart is heavy with grief and righteous anger. I find myself falling to my knees in prayer and rising up determined to not be silent. Our faith, God's Scriptures, the sacred church building are not just props for a photo op. In our baptismal vows it was promised to renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world, and repent of our sin. It was declared at our baptism to accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves.

Over generations since the church that God birthed started putting up walls and separating people we have become complicit in a system that interrupts the flow of the Holy Spirit.

When I heard George Floyd say those words, "I can't breathe."
perhaps like you, I heard the echo of Eric Garner.
I can't breathe.

In George Floyd's words I heard the echo of the disproportionate number of people in communities of color who are sick or have died from Covid 19 unable to breathe in this pandemic that reveals the deep inequalities that we always knew were there whether or not we wanted to address them.

The echoes of Emmett Till, Eleanor Bumpers, Trayvon Martin, Sandra Bland, Sean Bell, Michael Brown, Freddie Gray, Tamir Rice, Keisha Anderson, Alton Sterling, Philando Castile, Samuel DuBose, Walter Scott, Amaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Sean Reed, Nina Pop, Tony McDade and all those who go unnamed but whose breath was stolen through a system of racism that permeates this nation's history.

The grief and lament rightfully should bring us to our knees.
The patterns of racial injustice demand our attention as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Breathe on us Breath of God. We can't breathe in this toxic, racist, broken environment anymore.

Breathe on Us Breath of God. We can't breathe, while our siblings in Christ live in fear of suffocation because there are White people in this country who still do not believe that Black Lives Matter.

Breathe on us Breath of God. We can't breathe in this cycle of pain and grief and suffering and sin anymore.

And God, we need your Holy Spirit to move your church to repent, heal, and no longer cause harm.

I am so thankful for the PSUMC Pentecost Act of Repentance for the sins of the church against people of African ancestry. This was a first step in acknowledging our own complicity in the sin of racism. Now more than ever we must focus our energy on peace with justice. Focus on dismantling economic, health, housing, law enforcement systems in the church and in society that too often devalue black and brown people.

Please keep your eyes out for a list of resources and opportunities to continue to engage in this work. We know that there cannot be true peace until there is justice for all people. From our prayers, to our votes, to our ministries, how are we working for lasting systemic change? I will be hosting small group listening sessions to hear from you ideas about how we can be stronger in our peace with justice ministries, dismantling unjust systems in our church and society, and building up new systems that reflect God's beloved community.

Holy Spirit Breathe on us.

Breathe new life into us.

Liberate us from this pandemic of racism.

From this pandemic that is infecting our very souls.

With prayers for God's peace with justice,

Rev. Melissa Hinnen, Pastor

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