

NORTH AVENUE

presbyterian church

A Statement of our Commitment to Racial Justice and Healing

June 2020

We, the Elders, Deacons, and Staff of North Avenue Presbyterian Church ache over the violence in our country today against Black people and specifically in the most recent deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd. We believe this violence has been directly and indirectly perpetuated by the sin of racism both from individuals and through systems and institutions in our society. As a church and as individuals, we lament our complacency, our complicity, and the ways in which we have compromised the Gospel and injured our brothers and sisters through our sin. We pray for, and are committed to working towards, a different future for Blacks in America and all people who may suffer from prejudice.

We believe that God is deeply concerned for God's creation, evidenced in the incarnation. We believe we are broken and need a Savior and despite our best efforts, we cannot save ourselves. We need Jesus.

We believe that when one of God's children is in danger, God entrusts the others to care about that child in support of the Good Shepherd who seeks and saves the one in danger. Today in America, Black lives are in danger. We believe that God has called His Church, the Body of Christ, to shepherd God's people into a deeper understanding of, and commitment to, racial healing. We are called to work for the eradication of racist practices and beliefs in our hearts, in our speech, in our relationships, and in our institutions. In obedience to the Gospel, we are speaking out against the subjugation of Black Americans. Galatians 6:2 instructs, "Bear one another's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfil the law of Christ."*

We lament that both individuals and institutions, including our Church, have contributed to the multifaceted on-going forms of racism and bigotry that Blacks in America have experienced and continue to experience today, disproportionate to any other group. We grieve the times when we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. At times, we have failed to demonstrate courageous leadership to a world hungry for the Gospel.

We believe that Black Lives Matter and our church desires to be a robust ally to our Black brothers and sisters. We believe that God created every human being in God's image and that intimate act of creation was declared, "Very Good" (Genesis 1:31). "From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:16-18).

In the last four decades, we have grown into a more global-oriented congregation that seeks to honor the gift of our diversity and pursue authentic relationships with people different from ourselves. However, the spring of 2020 has shown that we must newly challenge ourselves in the pursuit of justice, peacemaking, and reconciliation. We are committed to growing together. "As God's chosen ones, holy and dearly loved," we are called to "clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, and love, which binds all things together in perfect harmony" (Colossians 3:12-14).

Because we believe that hearts and minds are changed through relationship, we commit ourselves, as a church and as individuals, to the following:

- We will seek a deeper understanding of the sin of racism that is made manifest in our lives and in our culture. We will repent of our complicity and learn to lament our brokenness in order to encounter the redemptive work of Jesus in our own hearts.
- We will prioritize racial healing. We will be led by the Reconciliation Task Force and we will do so by engaging in education and discipleship. Through this we will learn to listen, lament, love, and act.
- We will continue to seek diversity in our leadership and staff.

With the psalmist we declare,
Search us, O God, and know our hearts;
test us and know our thoughts.
See if there is any wicked way in us,
and lead us in the way everlasting. (Psalm 139: 23-24)

Soli Deo Gloria