

**A Statement from Clergy of the Episcopal Diocese of West Tennessee  
Regarding Racism  
Wednesday, July 15, 2020**

Friends -

Aligning ourselves with the Bishop's pastoral statement of June 2, 2020, we, the undersigned clergy of The Episcopal Diocese of West Tennessee, declare that we know that in the eyes of God, all of God's people matter. We know that we cannot say and mean that all lives matter without specifically acknowledging that Black Lives Matter. We condemn the recent spate of violent incidents that resulted in the killing of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd and Rayshard Brooks. We denounce the racism and hatred, excessive use of force, abuse of power and unconscionable and callous disregard of life that lie at both the heart of these killings and the killings of an untold number of other brothers and sisters in our Black communities and other communities of color. We confess the painful history and present reality of racism and that it continues to be imbedded in the very fabric of our society at all levels. We confess the original sin of slavery upon which our country was founded and which begat centuries of killings, segregation, discrimination, denial of voting rights and fair employment, denial of fair housing and equal education and other sinful actions.

We are called beyond words - we are called to action. We commit to come together as a body of clergy to engage in the holy and hard work of addressing the sin of racism and the need for personal and systemic reform. We pledge to dedicate ourselves to difficult yet crucial conversations with one another regarding racism, white supremacy and justice, to listen and learn from one another, and to commit to the inward journey to confession, deconstruction and a new creation in Christ. We repent that we have long avoided these conversations.

By engaging in intentional, authentic conversations and deep listening as a body of clergy, we hope to foster trust and understanding among ourselves which is to then be carried into our respective faith communities in order to build toward a larger diocesan conversation and transformative work on racism. It is only in this way, by doing this work of confronting racism within ourselves, our faith communities and as a diocese that we will truly be in solidarity in a meaningful way with the Black community and other communities of color who have borne the brunt of racial oppression in our country for far too long.

We honor the work in which our colleagues are already engaged. The ultimate collective actions to which we will be called to take as a body of clergy will bubble forth from our intentional conversations to which we now commit - which we must undertake.

Those of us not of African descent see the deep grief and pain of our clergy sisters and brothers of color and stand with them in outrage and in commitment to action. We can follow the example of

the courageous and sacrificial leadership of those who have gone before us, especially The Very Rev. William A. Dimmick, Dean of St. Mary's Cathedral, who wrote these words in his April 7, 1968 Palm Sunday sermon following his leading the ecumenical march of faith leaders from the Cathedral to City Hall after the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "This is an hour of trial for all of us, for our city and for the whole world. Let us make this not only an hour of pain but one of promise -out of this darkness let burn the light of freedom, life and love that shall bring hope to the whole world." He further preached, "Whatever we had to do or not to do with the climate of the past, we can with God's help have something to do with the climate of the present and the future. It will mean that we must be changed in our hearts and minds and lives."

Jesse Abell

James Boyd

Don Brooks

Katherine Bush

Noah Campbell

Anne Carriere

Amber Carswell

Jonathan Chesney

Jerry Crook

Samuel Cross

Jamie Cubine

Miranda Cully

Chip Davis

Meredith Day

Gerri Endicott

Eyleen Farmer

Laura F. Gettys

Colenzo Hubbard

Mimsy Jones

Gillian Klee

Bill Kolb

Peter Kuria

Hester Mathes

Gayle McCarty

Randy McCloy

Paul McLain

Chuck McMillen

Gary Meade

Tom Momberg

Nancy O'Shea

Ollie Rencher

Jack Rogers

John Sewell

Terry Street

Bob Van Doren

Scott Walters

Sandy Webb

Dorothy Wells

Patrick Williams

Drew Woodruff