



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

June 5, 2020

"Out of my distress I called on the Lord" (Psalm 118:5).

We are a nation in distress. We are a church in distress. The coronavirus has killed 103,000 of us. The virus of racism has taken hundreds of thousands more throughout our history. Now these two deadly viruses converge. Under this distress the veneer of equality has cracked and we see the pain, anger and frustration of those who have been denied the rights and dignity so many of us expect and often take for granted.

I have heard it said that slavery ended with the Civil War. Why don't people of color "just get over it." Here is the question we need to ask, "How do you get over something that isn't over?" The extrajudicial killings of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and George Floyd that we have seen have laid open the wound in our country that has never been fully dealt with and has never healed. The officer's knee suffocating the life out of George Floyd "reminds us that blatant acts of intimidation, hatred, and violence continue" ([Freed in Christ](#) social statement, page 3).

Continued peaceful protests, vigils and demonstrations are not only legitimate but essential to move this country and this church to honest and deep self-examination. Just as the body of Christ is COVID positive, so is the body of Christ infected with racism and white supremacy. We cannot turn away from this truth. To deny it is dishonest and dangerous.

Let us stand with those peacefully protesting and acting responsibly. Looting and destruction of property does not further the cause of justice. Government has a role to uphold civil order while also a role to respect peaceful protest. There are those in law enforcement who are acting wisely, even while others have acted irresponsibly. I ask you to support the many people, including those in our church, who are working to de-escalate tensions between law enforcement, protesters and the community.

Psalm 118 continues: "I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation. The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it" (21-24). Christ, the cornerstone, has already broken down the wall that divides us. The time is now. This is the day.

In Christ,

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton
Presiding Bishop
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