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*New Hope
Missionary
Baptist Church*

"Glorify God on All Levels"

June 2, 2020

Mayor Jenny Durkan
City of Seattle

Lorena González, President
Seattle City Councilmembers
Seattle City Council

RE: Black Lives Matter in the Central Area

Dear Mayor Durkan, Council President González and Councilmembers,

As our elected leaders of Seattle, we ask you to act locally to redress the great injuries, the injustices, and the racist policies inflicted upon African Americans in the Central Area.

We ask you to see the connection between two pandemics that are not isolated: you must fight the pandemic of the coronavirus on the lives of African Americans and fight the pandemic of racism that killed George Floyd and other black men and women.

The Covid-19 pandemic as documented by Public Health shows disproportionate impact on blacks in terms of hospitalization and death compared with whites. Poverty, poor health, housing insecurity and homelessness put individuals at high risk for infection, complication and death from Covid-19. Nothing highlights our plight more than the thousands of African American families and individuals who are homeless. Black families make up 55% of all homeless families with children. Black teenagers and young adults make up 34% of homeless YYA. What kind of future do our young people have? Blacks make up 32% of those experiencing homelessness while comprising only 6% of King County's population.

As city leaders, you must acknowledge the existence of persistent and institutional racism that has decimated Seattle's African American population. Compared to other racial groups, African Americans have the highest arrest rate in King County and the highest conviction rate in the state. This is why the Black Lives Matter movement is so important and why so many of us have taken to the streets to protest racial injustice, economic inequality, police brutality and mass incarceration.

The displacement of long time African American residents from Seattle's Central Area is the result of racist policies that originated in slavery, segregation, racial covenants, redlining, urban renewal, and now gentrification. Blacks families are priced out of Seattle's unaffordable housing market.

1 Corinthians 10:31

...Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God

The New Hope Baptist Church in cooperation with other historic churches in the Central Area want your support for a Central Area Housing Plan to build 1,000 new affordable apartments for existing residents of the Central Area. We also want to bring back households who have been displaced or forced to leave Seattle.

In a city as progressive as Seattle, you too can honor the life of George Floyd and the many unsung heroes who fight for justice and an end to racism. You can change the trajectory and improve the lives of African Americans in Seattle. We ask you to implement these initiatives:

1. Central Area Housing Plan - Create 1,000 new affordable apartments over three years for historic residents and those displaced from the Central Area. Launch this effort initially with the \$40 million raised from the sale of the Mercer Mega Block. Support African American churches and nonprofits who wish to build low-income and mixed-income housing.
2. Historic African American Churches - The Mayor and Council should implement H.B. 1377 to permit churches to increase density on church-owned or controlled properties if they build low-income housing.
3. Homeless Housing - Build 5,000 units of permanent supportive housing (PSH) as quickly as possible. Address racial disparity in housing programs.
4. Unsheltered Homelessness - New Hope and Truevine Church are sponsors of True Hope Tiny House Village at 1714 E. Yesler Way. We see the successful outcomes of homeless families and individuals moving into permanent housing after short stays in tiny houses. We ask you to provide heated tiny houses to help 2,000 unsheltered homeless people survive. Set up 10 to 20 more tiny house villages on city, private and religious controlled land. Target people of color and underserved populations.
5. Pre-apprenticeship Training - Enable YouthBuild, Seattle Vocational Institute, Sawhorse Revolution, Wood Technology Center, Urban League, and ANEW to train students, with a focus on students of color, in the construction field by building tiny houses.
6. Encampment Removals - Stop the sweeps except in extremely limited situations to preserve life.
7. Progressive Tax - Implement a progressive tax to raise a minimum of \$500 million per year to address the housing and homelessness crisis.

8. Councilmanic Bonds - Issue \$500 million in councilmanic bonds for construction of low income housing. Prioritize housing and human services over police and law enforcement in the city budget.
9. Reform Police - Demilitarize the police department and implement stronger citizen oversight.

It has been eight days since George Floyd was murdered. We hope you will take bold steps to honor the rights of African Americans to live in the Central Area; end homelessness for African Americans and thousands of others who are living in misery on the streets; listen to the aspirations of young black men and women; and change the landscape after the pandemic so that Seattle becomes a great place for African Americans to live and thrive for generations to come.

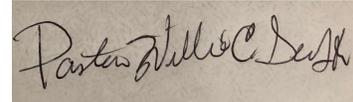
Sincerely,



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Rev. Lawrence Willis
Pastor
Truevine of Holiness Baptist Church



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The Christ Spirit Church