

In bearing witness to this gospel, we cannot stand idle in the face of racism that has infected and poisoned our systems. We cannot be complacent and simply shake our heads as we witness the horrors affecting our siblings in Christ.

This does not mean that we become violent. This does not mean that we raise the sword, or the gun, or flame the fires of hatred, or burn or break or tear down or destroy. No. These are not the tools for change God has given us. Listen to these words from Martin Luther King, Jr. who fought tirelessly, but not violently, for racial equity: "We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again, we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force."

As people of faith, we begin to use our soul force when we acknowledge the reality of systemic racism, the kind of racism that is embedded in the systems of our nation that have been in place for decades, and even centuries. This kind of racism is sneaky and can be denied. But when it infects our hearts and minds it emerges as violence, hatred, targeting, profiling, suspicion, fear, and even murder against black bodies. What has happened and continues to happen to people of color in the US is unconscionable and will require that every white person take a long, hard look at the systems long established to promote white supremacy and white privilege. So much must change - HAS to change - and the church should lead the way. Instead, many churches remain silent, denying the existence of personal or corporate racism and avoiding a conversation about how systemic racism could possibly be either real or problematic. We cannot remain silent in the face of such horror, in the face of real and constant evil rearing its head and brutally taking the lives of black individuals who should yet be alive. This is wrong. Speak the words. Say the names. Test our assumptions. Challenge the systems that have racism embedded in them. We have to work for change.

Fortunately for us, we have the Holy Spirit to guide us where we need to go, to teach us how to be the church, to renew us, even in this confusing pandemic time. On this Pentecost Sunday weekend, we remember how the Spirit came to set the world on fire with love, to build the most inclusive and multicultural community of Christ that has ever been, and to blow the winds of change into our lives and into our world.

One action we can take for transformative change is to join in the **21-Day Race Equity Challenge** put together by our friends at Myers Park Presbyterian Church in Charlotte, NC. They have invited others to participate in this challenge, which involves daily reading selections, video watching, and other opportunities to listen and learn. Click on the link above for more information and to sign up. Please also join our summer adult Sunday school class as we read Sandy Darity's book *From Here to Equality*.

Another action is daily confession for the ways the sin of racism infects all our lives, and particularly the lives of those who benefit from white privilege and systems of power that elevate white lives over black and brown ones. We can also support, participate in, and make space for peaceful demonstrations and protests that call for reforms in our police training, including the addition of de-escalation training and banning of choke holds.

Friends, there is much we can and must do. Let us not be idle. May our feet follow in the path of Jesus and may our hands, hearts, and voices move in the way of peace, justice, and equity for all God's children.

With love and gratitude for you all,  
***Mindy***