

Dear friends,

Nobody can say that those of us who are part of the year 2020 have not been confronted with exceedingly difficult challenges. Since March we have had to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic, a health crisis that the world has not seen since the 1918 flu pandemic. Now we have had a terrible tragedy in the death of George Floyd, which has been the culmination of a string of deaths, (which includes at least one such death locally) , of unarmed African Americans that has sparked massive protest, mostly peaceful in this country and the world. Some of this protest in Austin has taken place not far from our church.

For those of us who were around during the protests, and riots of the 60's, you can't help but ask the question: "Didn't we go through this before?" But the tragedy for those of us who thought we worked through this before was that what we dealt with was what was on the surface. Racism was much more rooted in our culture, and we never did the hard work of pulling up racism out by the roots, because the roots have been strong and embedded in our culture even before all of us were born.

How do we respond as people of faith? Our response is rooted in the Biblical command to do justice. Justice to all was commanded even in the earliest days of the people of Israel when they left Egypt to become a nation, even to the stranger in their midst. When justice was perverted and not done, God called it out through his prophets. The theme of justice cannot be ignored as if it is just a few verses. It is a major theme that you can find throughout the Bible.

So, we have some hard work to do if we are to embrace God's standard of justice as well as love to defeat the harm, ugliness and division deep seated racism has inflicted on our society.

But let us be assured that God will be with us as we humbly seek the standard of God's justice for all. Let us go forward as Hosea tells us to *"return to your God, hold fast to love and justice, and wait continually for your God."* Hosea 12:6 NRSV

Your brother in Christ,

John