

A Letter to the People of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church  
from the Clergy and Vestry

Standing Strong With All Communities of Color

June 17, 2020

The wave of demonstrations across our country in response to the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis is a stark admonition that racism and discrimination plague our lives in every community across our nation. No community is spared, not even our own. This is a crucible moment as we bluntly acknowledge that racism and oppression bring hurt, pain, despair, sadness and even death. More heartbreaking than ever, it is happening in a world where we share one Creator, one God, one Heaven and in a world where we share the same hopes and dreams for our children and their futures.

In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he describes one body, one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all. We come together at St. Stephen's as one body through a shared faith and are empowered by our Father to make a difference in this world. Our Vision Statement, "*A world made whole through God's transforming love in action*" transmutes into a battle cry for engagement.

But how? Our strength as a church relies upon each of us bringing our best selves forward using the gifts God has given us. Let us commit to educating ourselves, listening to others, engaging in productive conversations, understanding the color of one's skin creates inequities throughout society and lastly, to moving beyond our individual comfort zone. For some, it is one step, slowly yet deliberately ventured, while for others it's a fervid race to effect change. The most important thing is that all our actions come together collectively to make a difference, no single step more important than the other, because we are one body, one faith, one baptism, with one Spirit, one Lord, and one God and Father of all (*Ephesians 4:4-6*). Our diocese reminds us *we cannot be silent*.

As one body we are all called to pray for the power of prayer is real. Prayer will show each of us the way to respond over time as we pray for guidance, forgiveness, social justice, unity, love and the healing of our nation in the days, weeks and years to come.

Whitney Altopp, Rector

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Jack Herr, Senior Warden

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Tom Figgatt, Sr., Treasurer

Randy Howie

Jonathan Taylor

Steve Schroppe, Asst. Treasurer

Bruce Lombardi

Note: These resources are available to help you explore and further the conversations of racial justice, healing and reconciliation: St. Stephen's Multi-Generational Virtual VBS Anti-Racist Study Group led by Vivian Altopp and Emma Bruce, <https://ststephensridgefield.org/virtual-vbs-2020/>; Ridgefield Allies: What Can I Do? What Can We Do? ([ridgefieldallies.org](http://ridgefieldallies.org)), the CT Diocese: Black Lives Matter Resources & Organizations to Support ([www.episcopalct.org](http://www.episcopalct.org)) and the National Episcopal Church website: Responding to Racial Violence, <https://episcopalchurch.org/responding-to-racist-violence>