

June 3, 2020

Dear Friends,

I hope you are well, and I want to give you a word of encouragement.

Every Sunday morning before the pandemic we proclaimed, "These are the times! We are the people!" Instead of mumbling these words I encouraged us to shout it so the world will hear it. It is easy to proclaim in the safety of our sanctuary and each other's company, but what about now?

In this time of pandemic and social distancing we are being tested. In this time of civil unrest, we are being tested. When the horrors of life test us, then the depth of our trust in life's deep goodness is needed more than ever. This is faith.

The image of a white police officer with his knee on the neck of a black man happened in real time, captured by a camera. But is also a metaphor that conveys the political, sociological, and economic realities of our nation. It is hard to see, but we must not look away.

As protests unfold, images of violence and burning buildings dominate our consciousness. However, there are other images. And just as it is hard to see the pictures of pain and injustice, it can also be hard to maintain a comprehensive view of life. It's difficult to pull ourselves out of the spiral of despair and grief and find hope. But it's there.

There are people peacefully protesting and exercising their 1st amendment rights. Police and protesters have talked, hugged, kneeled, and prayed together. Unarmed citizens have confronted opportunists and provocateurs declaring those people and those actions in no way represent our cause of justice. People have brought trash cans and brooms to clean and reclaim their neighborhoods. There are more acts of kindness and courage that go unreported by protesters and police than there are acts of violence and destruction. I encourage us to use our eyes of faith to see the unfolding of life's deep goodness.

How are we to understand what we are witnessing? Again, I recall our words for mission. "These are the times! We are the people!"

Our simple liturgy affirms that we are the people for anything that history throws at us because we are strengthened and emboldened by our values of inclusion, justice and intimacy with the Spirit of Life and Love. This means we will respond to this time of pandemic and civil unrest choosing love over fear, and justice over security.

So, what are we doing as a congregation beyond words? I ask for your continued support as I represent you and your faith. We are creating an online discussion called The Racist Recovery Hour. I want to start a racist recovery group called Racist Anonymous. I am co-writing a public statement of hope and healing with other religious leaders. Please forgive all the "I" statements. It is not about me. It is about us and our presence in our hurting world. It is about the hurting world our faith filled perception and response.

We can do this, and we are doing it. I invite you to contact me and connect to each other in our various online offerings. Let us continue to be the people of hope in these uncertain times. Thank you for who you are and all you do.

Pastor Ken