

An Anti-Racism Commitment from the Extended Cabinet of the East Ohio Conference

May 28, 2020

We, Bishop Tracy S. Malone and the Extended Cabinet of the East Ohio Conference, sign our names below as an act of repentance for our silence in the face of the racially motivated brutality that is pervasive throughout the nation. We are appalled by the recent killings of unarmed black people – George Floyd killed at the hands of police officers in Minnesota, Breonna Taylor killed in her own home in Kentucky, and Ahmaud Arbery killed while jogging on a public street in Georgia. We have witnessed the abuse of white privilege and power, in events such as the recent incident in Central Park where a black man's life was put at risk.

In our baptismal vows we affirmed that we would “accept the freedom and power God gives us to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves.” We affirm that power and accept our shared responsibility as we lament the death of these children of God. They are beloved by Jesus and mourned by their families. George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Christian Cooper and many others have had their life cut short or diminished by racist intimidation and violence. This pervasive evil is documented every day by cellphone cameras – although many suffer without evidence. We have been silent when it happened within our own communities. We say the names of Tamir Rice, Matthew Burroughs, Timothy Russell and Malissa Williams and acknowledge that others go unnamed and unknown to us but mourned by their families and friends.

We have been frustrated into silence – not knowing what we can do – or how we can make a difference. We will be silent no longer.

We call upon our national leaders to make a high priority of addressing the systemic racism that exists within and poisons our legal system. We call for courageous leadership, that works both cooperatively and relentlessly, to ensure that all citizens enjoy equal protection under the law – including those who may be accused of committing a crime and are taken into police custody.

We call upon the U.S. Department of Justice to respond immediately and vigorously to the deprivation of civil rights wherever it may occur. Further, we ask that effective training and supervision be provided in the area of race relations and equal protection under the law, and that this training be shared with local police departments, prosecuting attorneys, and magistrates or judges.

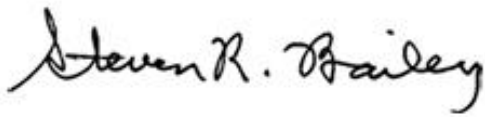
We demand that people who act out of racial hatred be held accountable for their actions – whether they wear a police uniform or not – and demand that those incidents where a life has been taken or significant physical injury has occurred are investigated by independent agencies who have the capacity to hold accountable those whom they investigate.

We acknowledge and accept our own responsibilities:

- We commit the East Ohio Conference to develop Racial Justice training similar to our Sexual Ethics training seminars. All clergy under appointment would be expected to attend. Every clergy member will be equipped and expected to stand for racial justice and against white supremacy as a manifestation of our Christian witness.

- We shall review and – where appropriate – update the Conference’s policy on racial harassment that was created by bold leaders several years ago.
- We commit the districts of the East Ohio Conference, at their annual leadership academies or other venues, to offer training to our church laity on addressing the problem of racism in North America. We will seek to empower our laity to be leaders in their workplace and community, informed and empowered to stand for racial justice.
- We, the Bishop and Extended Cabinet of the East Ohio Conference, dedicate ourselves to additional training, to engage in learning conversations, and to step out into public arenas in the wider community. We will spend intentional time reaching into the greater community, building intentional relationships and exerting leadership wherever possible in the cause of racial harmony and social justice. We invite all clergy to join us in these efforts.
- Recognizing that sheriffs, prosecutors, judges, legislators, and other elected officials are responsible to serve the common good, all citizens should be able to count upon them to protect their liberty and freedom from intimidation. We therefore encourage our members to host or attend public forums within our churches and communities where voters can be more fully engaged with those seeking public office around this question: “How will you ensure that all people enjoy the same basic human rights and protection that our laws guarantee to all people?”

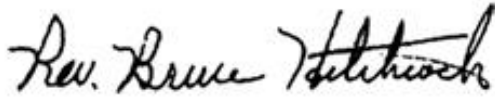
We recognize that racism and injustice are deeply embedded and vexing issues within our Church and our communities. We will take action, we will learn together, and we will continue to press forward in transforming our Church, our communities, and our world into the “beloved community.” How can we be silent and stand by when those whom Christ loves are killed by those who are supposed to serve and protect them? How can we further empower our clergy and members to “accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves?” Will we be among those who recognize Christ saying, “I can’t breathe” (Matthew 25:31-46)? We do not have all of the answers but we commit to take these next steps together.



Steve Bailey
Superintendent, North Coast District



Bishop Tracy S. Malone
EOC Resident Bishop



Bruce Hitchcock
Superintendent, Ohio Valley District



Abby Auman
Superintendent, Mahoning Valley District



Kimberly Green
Conference Lay Leader



Gary Jones
Director, Camps & Retreat Ministries



Cara Stultz Costello
Incoming Superintendent, Tuscarawas District



Edgar Brady
Superintendent, Western Reserve District



Steve Court
Director, Connectional Ministries



Kathy Dickriede
Coordinator, Missions/Community Engagement



Vera Rebrovich
Director, Financial & Administrative Services



Will Jones
Director, Multicultural Vitality



Benita Rollins
Superintendent, Tuscarawas District



Doug Lewis
Superintendent, Firelands District



Nestor Nazario
Superintendent, Mid-Ohio District



Ed Peterson
Superintendent, Canal District



Rick Wolcott
Director, Communications



Kaye Wolfinger
Director, Young People's Ministries



Brian Sheetz
Exec. Director, Methodist Foundation of Ohio



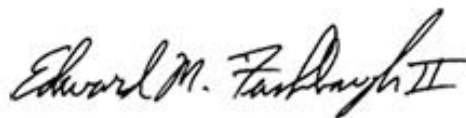
Gail Angel
Superintendent, Southern Hills



Kelly Brown
Director, Congregational Vitality



Gary George
Assistant to the Bishop



Ed Fashbaugh
Superintendent, Three Rivers District