



Bishop Jeremiah J. Park

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
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*“And what does the Lord require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy
and to walk humbly with your God”
(Micah 6:8)*

Dear Sisters and Brothers of the Susquehanna Conference,

Grace to you in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, Prince of Peace, Healer of our brokenness, and Hope of the world!

It was a year ago on August 11-12 that the eyes of the world turned toward Charlottesville, VA. It was on those two days that our country and the world witnessed the sinfulness of hatred and violence of racism. Racism that was, and still is prevalent.

How will we as Christians on the anniversary of Charlottesville proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ? I would invite you and your congregation to engage in worship, prayer, reflection and action that would give God glory and witness to our commitment to the Kingdom so that all may see there is no room in human family for racism, bigotry and hatred.

As we prepare to remember the anniversary of Charlottesville, I invite you and your congregation to consider doing one or more of the things that would address the sin of hatred, combat racism, and lift up the vision of the Beloved Community of Christ such as:

During worship, you may want to read aloud the powerful words of Dr. Martin Luther King’s “I have a Dream” speech. His speech was given August 28, 1963, almost 55 years ago. Sadly, the blatant display of hatred and racism of Charlottesville has been repeated again and again in so many places for so long. But we, as God’s people should never stop dreaming Dr. King’s dream. You may want to invite your congregation to spend significant prayer time at the altar praying for forgiveness for the times in our lives when we have judged people by their beliefs, the color of their skin, their country of origin or anything that we would view as different from ourselves. As part of the prayer time you may invite persons to pray for healing and peace with justice of our community, nation, and the world. You may want to use the time with children to talk about God’s love through Christ that commands and compels us to treat all persons with kindness and love and respect.

Your small groups may want to study the sermons of Dr. Martin Luther King. Or read and study Holding Up Your Corner, Talking about Race in Your Community by F. Willis Johnson. Your pastor should have a copy of this resource. You may want to utilize the resources of the General Commission on Religion and Race at www.gcorr.org.

As a congregation, you may want to make a commitment during the fall to have at least one ongoing study/small group to build an understanding of the systemic nature of racism and how to dismantle racism. You may want to invite persons of differing faiths and ethnic backgrounds to times of dialogue, discussion, and fellowship to begin to build bridges from your church to your diverse community.

The Baltimore Washington Annual Conference is inviting United Methodists of the Northeastern Jurisdiction to participate in United in Love: Rally for Love, Peace and Justice. The invitation from Bishop LaTrelle Easterling includes these words, "We invite all individuals, faith communities and organizations across lines of difference to gather as we uplift the human spirit, renounce all forms of hate and show that we are #unitedtolove. The rally will be Sunday, August 12, 2018 from 11 am. - 3 pm at the National Mall-4th Street NW DC. For more information go to www.unitedtolove.org.

Maybe a Sunday School class, your youth group, the UMM or UMW would like to go as a group to this rally.

Last year after the Charlottesville tragedy, I wrote to you. In that letter I concluded with a quote from the hymn, "For the Healing of the Nations". It comes from the UM Hymnal, page 428. I would like to conclude this pastoral letter the same way.

*All that kills abundant living, let it from the earth be banned;
pride of status, race, or schooling, dogmas that obscure your plan.
In our common quest for justice may we hallow life's brief span,
may we hallow life's brief span.*

*You, Creator God, have written your great name on human kind;
for our growing in your likeness bring the life of Christ to mind,
that, by our response and service earth its destiny may find,
earth its destiny may find.*

Let it be so. Amen and Amen!

With You In Christ's Ministry,

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Jeremiah J. Park