

A Statement from Decatur's White Clergy on Racism and Justice

June 3, 2020

Black Lives Matter. We name that unequivocal truth. Black lives matter to God.

We speak to you as white ordained leaders of Decatur churches that for generations have sought to be faithful to the gospel of Jesus Christ. However, our beloved churches have fallen short of our call and commission to live fully into Christ's call because we have embraced the self-serving corruption of systemic racism. Too many of our Decatur churches were planted in soil tainted with racism. Too many of our Decatur churches harvested the fruit of that racism. And like too many of our predecessors, we who now serve as your shepherds have been too silent, too complicit in those systems because they benefit us. As the prophet Jeremiah writes, "[We] have treated the wound of [God's] people carelessly, saying, 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace."

The recent murders of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd force us to see what our fellow black clergy have long told us: that systemic racism is not only embedded in our city, our state, and our nation, it is also embedded in our churches and in us, your clergy.

As people set apart to be servant leaders, we ask God and God's people to hear our repentance, and if God and God's people are willing, to forgive us.

We have been silent. We will no longer be silent. As white clergy, we must engage in the faithful, ongoing work of dismantling racism, anti-blackness, and white supremacy, beginning with ourselves and our churches. Our posture must be one of humility and decentering ourselves. We must listen to and follow the leadership of our black clergy colleagues who have led this work for so long, and support their work with our labor and resources.

We trust that by his judgment, Jesus calls us to account for our sin. We trust that by his incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection, Jesus does not leave us stuck in our shame, guilt, or fear. We have this hope that Christ lifts us into new life, together.

We call on you, Christ's gathered body throughout Decatur, to join us in this work and to demand this work from us. Being anti-racist and pro-justice is not separate from the work of the church; this is at the core of the church's work. We covenant with you to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ. Imagine our churches truly living into God's vision for them.

Black lives matter to God and they must matter to every one of God's people gathered today in our churches.

Signed by:

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