



Indiana-Kentucky Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.



May 29, 2020

Dear Friends,

Today we write to you with a heavy heart. The events of the past several weeks and months with racial violence and brutality in our country has been both tragic and overwhelming. As both a Bishop in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America and a Conference Minister in the United Church of Christ sharing the same geographies of service in Indiana and Kentucky, we both wanted to join our collective voices in this moment.

In recent days we have seen alarming trends of racial violence from two white men murdering Ahmaud Arbery in Georgia, a police officer placing his knee on the neck of George Floyd in Minnesota, a drive by shooting of a mosque and the killing of Dreason Reed in Indianapolis and Breonna Taylor being killed as she slept in her Louisville apartment. The continual harming of black bodies raises to our awareness a need for us to speak out and say “No More” to this hate and harm to our siblings in the human family. As people of faith, we believe in a beloved community, where no matter who you are and where you are on life’s journey, you are welcome and ought to feel safe. When a person of color cannot jog, sleep, or pray without harm coming to them, then we must find a way to change as a society.

As people faith, we have a different narrative to share in the world than the one that is currently on display. We are people who are called to “Do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.” We are called upon to say as Paul indicates in 1 Corinthians 12 “The eye can’t say to the foot, ‘I have no need of you.’” No, we are all members of the body, all members of the human family, created in the beautiful image of our beloved Creator. Yet, the continual harming of people of color seems to suggest that we are saying “we have no need of you.” This is not our narrative as Christians. We are all children of God and we are, as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, “caught up in an inescapable network of mutuality, a single garment of destiny.” This means that, as Paul writes, “When one member suffers we all suffer and when one member rejoices we all rejoice.” Today, we mourn and grieve with the Arbery, Floyd, Reed, and Taylor families and with all of our communities of color.

We ask as your Bishop and Conference Minister that we all extend beyond our praying and begin to do the hard work of dismantling racism. It is hard work. For those of us who are white, it means coming into awareness of our biases and privilege. It means standing with others whose lives experience the trauma of racial violence. It means a willing heart to humbly learn. We will soon be inviting you to join us in a joint effort across two denominations to embrace this hard work together. We will have

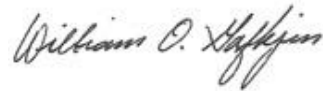
conversations across our churches and we will discern together how to develop strategies of advocacy that can address these historic and ongoing injustices in our world. We pray for God's healing and justice to roll down like an ever-flowing stream, so that there may be peace. Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with each of us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chad".

Rev. Chad R. Abbott

Conference Minister, Indiana-Kentucky Conference, UCC

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William C. Gafkjen".

Rev. Bill Gafkjen

Bishop, Indiana-Kentucky Synod, ELCA