



Central
District
Conference

A conference of
Mennonite Church USA

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**Knowing
Christ's love...
Answering
God's Call**

Dear Central District Conference Churches,

On behalf of CDC leadership, I give thanks for each congregation of CDC. Over the past three months I have witnessed tremendous flexibility, creativity, faithful witness and extremely hard work from pastors and congregations as you have responded to COVID-19. Since the May 25 murder of George Floyd, a second (but always present) virus is being confronted through our communities; systemic racism and all its variant strains.

On June 1, approximately 200 members of the Bluffton, OH community walked in silence for nine minutes to acknowledge and remember George Floyd and the many other Black people who have died over the past several years at the hands of police. We prayed. We heard stories of racism experienced in our small community. We were offered resources to read and ways to become more involved in changing our racially divided society. We also experienced a passer-by shout, "All lives matter!" in response to a "Black Lives Matter" poster carried by one of us. I was angry. I felt ineffective. I felt guilty. I felt emboldened. I felt solidarity.

CDC leadership affirms and supports the statements provided by MC USA executive director, [Glen Guyton](#) and the statement on [Racial Injustice](#) which reflect similar perspectives offered by other denominational leaders such as [Catholic Archbishop Wilton Gregory](#) of Washington, DC. As the words "All lives matter" continue to ring in my ears, I appreciated the paragraph in the MC USA statement that answers *Why is it inappropriate and tone deaf to say, "All lives matter"?*

Our CDC theme this year is, *Spirit, bless our souls with yearning*. As a conference of 46 congregations spread across 11 states, I yearn for a united voice condemning racism. I yearn for God's spirit to open our hearts to the ways we participate in and benefit from the injustices and inequalities of systemic racism. I yearn for courage and a humble spirit to welcome transformation as we labor to create anti-racist communities and a more just society. I yearn for God's Spirit to bless us with words and actions that provide healing and hope in our broken and beautiful world. I welcome ways our collective voice and actions as a conference can make a difference both personally and in our nation.

I echo Glen Guyton's words; *We need to engage in more costly peacemaking, rooted in radical discipleship, which seeks to dismantle systems of oppression*. I look to the Palm Sunday story as an invitation to call-out sinful and unjust systems and as a reminder that God's mission of peace and justice must be proclaimed and lived out by all of Jesus' disciples. I have included a short reflection on the meaning of Palm Sunday.

Also, worth much reflection are Martin Luther King, Jr's words; *"Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice. Justice at its best is love correcting everything that stands against love."* May the wisdom, peace and courage of Christ be with each of you today and always.

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