

Dear Friends,

On June 24, 2020, the Session of Westminster affirmed the following statement:

Westminster believes Black Lives Matter and works to eradicate systemic racism.

We have been deeply grieved at the continued assault on Black lives throughout our country and our own community. We acknowledge our own complicity in the systems of white supremacy and confess the ways our congregation has benefited from those systems of power. We also acknowledge that our congregation members are at various places on the journey toward education and understanding. However, our leadership is committed to learning more, transforming hearts and minds, and working actively to undo systems of injustice in our community.

We are grateful that some of this work has already been underway. As a founding and dues-paying member of the Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance (GHIAA) our congregation is actively at work in promoting justice in the areas of education, healthcare, housing, criminal justice reform, and gun violence. Each of these action areas seek to address the racism and implicit bias built into the systems and structures of power in our communities.

We are also active in offering education opportunities for our congregation. We know that book studies, guest speakers, and conversations about racism are only one way we address systemic racism, but we acknowledge that as a predominately white congregation we have much to learn before we can become a truly anti-racist church. We will continue to seek and promote opportunities of learning for our congregation.

We know that this statement is a small act and comes, for many, too late. Too many Black men and women have died at the hands of the state while white congregations and people have looked away. Too long have we allowed the shadow of slavery fall upon our country, dividing and destroying the soul of our communities. We confess that we have waited too long to stand up and say something, so that we might not offend or upset privileged and white community members. We will try to do better.

We pray that God will continue to transform our hearts and minds, and the heart and mind of our community so that we might all be more Christ-like. We pray that, as followers of Christ we might be emboldened to stand where Christ stands: with the wronged and against injustice. We pray that, as followers of Christ we can be courageous enough to speak out even when it is difficult, even in admitting when we were wrong.

Most importantly, we pray that God's Spirit be at work in our country and communities to be a place where God's love is visible in our congregations and communities, so that all People of Color and especially those in the Black community, might feel safe, whole, affirmed and blessed.

With thanks,

Rev. Julie Emery