

Social Justice invitation and resources from www.FaithfulAmerica.org (with additional resources from HTCC prayer partners.)

It's Pentecost for most Christians around the world. Today, we remember that the church was founded when tongues of fire descend to fill the disciples with the Holy Spirit -- even while fires blaze in cities across America. Today, we recite the story of the resurrected Jesus breathing the Spirit on his disciples -- even while we remember the last words of George Floyd, Eric Garner, and countless others murdered by lawless police:

"I can't breathe."

Given Pentecost's reminder that the Holy Spirit alights on all God's children equally -- as well as the checkered racial history of majority-white churches and denominations -- **Christians have a special obligation to rise up and speak out against the evils of police violence and white supremacy**, offering our concrete support to young organizers who are leading non-violent protests in the streets today. Many of us may already be deeply engaged, but more is clearly needed -- from all of us, no matter how much we've done so far.

Different places require different steps depending on what local organizers are calling for and what your church may already be doing. Instead of a one-size-fits-all national approach, **we ask you and your church to do even more to keep educating yourselves about white supremacy, police violence, and antiracism -- and to take additional new action for justice.**

1. Study the issue

We recommend this [online master class on antiracism, taught by the prophetic Rev. Dr. Jacqui Lewis](#). There are also great United Church of Christ denominational resources and educational opportunities at www.ucc.org.

Consider also, either as an individual or better yet in a church book group, taking the time to learn more about black theology, the history of race in America, and how you can respond. No matter how much of this work we have already done, we can always brush up or go deeper.

We recommend starting with *Black Theology & Black Power* or *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* by the Rev. Dr. James Cone, *The New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander, *White Fragility* by Robin DiAngelo, or *How to Be an Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi. (Please consider ordering directly from the publisher or from an independent bookseller.) For kids, see this list of [31 antiracist children's books from Embrace Race](#).

If you missed it last week, you can also still watch the Rev. Dr. Otis Moss, III's powerful sermon film, "[The Cross and the Lynching Tree: A Requiem for Ahmaud Arbery](#)" -- as well as his message today, "[When is 'Someday?'](#)" (While these links are on Facebook, you should not need a Facebook account to be able to watch them.)

[Institutionalized Racism: A Syllabus](#) -- an excellent resource for understanding George Floyd's death in the context of institutionalized racism.

2. Pay attention to your local context

Talk to local organizers of color and antiracist organizations to learn what's happening in your area and what new reforms are needed. Consider getting involved with a local organization -- perhaps a chapter of [Showing up for Racial Justice \(SURJ\)](#), [Black Lives Matter Nashville](#) or [the NAACP](#). [Gideon's Army](#) in [Nashville](#) (Facebook), [Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition](#) (TIRRC). Invite a speaker to our church.

Another great resource is Color of Change, which has recently launched an exciting [Prosecutor Directory to show where your local prosecutor stands on six civil rights demands](#), and when they're up for re-election.

Here are just a few of the questions you might consider asking local organizers: How many complaints have been lodged against local law enforcement? What is the department's process for handling complaints? How often does your prosecutor hold officers accountable? Is there a citizens' oversight board, and if so, does it have actual

authority or is it just for show? How rigorous are your local department's hiring standards? Have local officials considered a new department of unarmed first responders to handle non-violent calls?

3. Put faith into action

The Minnesota Council of Churches has asked Christians to do four things: be **Present** with those who grieve, **Protest**, push for **Prosecution**, and **Pray**.

The easiest thing to do is to [sign Color of Change's petition calling for all four officers involved in Floyd's murder to be charged](#), not just their leader. (*Signing will add you to an email list other than Faithful America; you'll be able to unsubscribe if you so choose.*) You can find additional worthy petitions at the NAACP's webpage "[We Are Done Dying](#)."

Find out if there are protests in your area -- and then show up tonight, tomorrow, Tuesday, and beyond. In the Civil Rights Movement, people of faith and their clergy led the protests. Today, we support new organizers, letting the voices of diverse young Black leaders show us the way. If you're a faith leader, wear your collar, stole, or other visible identifier and ask the organizers how you can help. Then listen to them.

Black Tuesdays – support small African-American owned businesses in Nashville on [Facebook](#) and [Online Resources](#).

Next, donate to those on the front lines. Minneapolis groups include [Black Visions Collective](#), [Reclaim the Block](#), [Minnesota Freedom Fund](#), [CTUL](#), [COPAL](#), [NAACP Minneapolis](#), [Voices for Racial Justice](#), [Lake Street Council](#), and [the family of George Floyd](#).

Our last request is to examine your own life, workplace, alma mater, kids' schools, and church. Have your schools severed their police contracts like the Minneapolis Public Schools just did? Have you worked to make sure that people of color are promoted at equal rates in your job, or is the leadership disproportionately white? Do you engage in subtle, unintended microaggressions of your own? How often are the stores, parks, and other spaces you inhabit all-white, and how can you help change that?

Relatedly, what is your church's relationship with the local police? If you contract with the police for special events but are unsure of your department's track record, reconsider that contract. [SURJ-Faith has resources for this work](#).

What is our church relationship with predominately African-American congregations? Stand in solidarity with [Howard United Church of Christ](#) (our sister UCC church in Nashville – [FB page](#)) and [Tabernacle Baptist Church](#) (our future neighbors in West Nashville). Reach out and show your support to these sister churches!

[Government funding for social services in Davidson County](#). Know the issues when voting. See presentation of 2021 budget [HERE](#).

There's a lot here. Less is often more, to keep us from becoming overwhelmed -- but sometimes, the moment demands more of us. This is how we love our neighbor, and how we join Jesus and the Hebrew prophets in responding to the injustices of our time.

In peace,
Rev. Nathan and the Faithful America team
(with additions by Pastor Brice and HTCC prayer partners)

"[The Lord] has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty." - Mary, singing in Luke 1:51-53

Faithful America is the largest online community of Christians putting faith into action for social justice. We can be reached through traditional mail at Faithful America, 206 Elm Street, Box # 202898, New Haven, CT 06520-2898 or join via our homepage, faithfulamerica.org.